



High court to name names

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Supreme Court will get rid of a little bit of its secrecy next week when it abolishes the practice of keeping justices' names out of the official record of argument sessions.

For decades, transcripts listed "Question," without identifying the questioner.

Reporters and legal scholars have complained that the practice was unusual, especially because the sessions are open to the public.

"The notion of an oral argument, keeping it secret, that's just silly," said American University constitutional scholar Herman Schwartz. "You're talking about an institution that tries to shroud itself in mystery and stay out of the limelight as much as possible."

The court announced this week that names will be included "in the interest of the accuracy and completeness of the transcripts for reporting, research and archival purposes."

It is the latest in a series of steps to bring the court into the computer age, including putting the transcripts on the court's Web site -- <http://www.supremecourtus.gov>

Cameras and tape recorders are banned in the courtroom. But in 2000, the court immediately released a court-made tape recording of the Bush v. Gore argument over the contested presidential election results in Florida.

Since then, the court has released audio of other high-profile cases such as the recent terrorism appeals that tested the Bush administration's wartime powers.

The camera ban is not expected to change anytime soon. Sketch artists provide the only glimpse of the black-robed justices.

The Supreme Court first began regularly providing transcripts of oral argument in 1968, and adopted the practice then of excluding justices' names. Transcripts were sometimes done of arguments dating back to 1935, by private shorthand reporters who would include justices' names, according to the court.

Find this article at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/LAW/09/30/naming.names.ap/index.html>