

# Victims can watch trial

■ Under pressure from Congress, the Oklahoma City bombing trial judge reverses his ruling.

DENVER (AP) — Bowing to the wishes of Congress, a judge reversed himself Tuesday and allowed survivors and relatives to watch the Oklahoma City bombing trial even if they plan to testify in a penalty phase.

U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch had barred survivors and victims' relatives who want to testify at a possible death-penalty sentencing hearing or provide statements about the bombing's impact on their lives.

But in his reversal, Matsch said it



**McVeigh**

son, P.J. Allen, was severely injured in the blast. "The more I know about the trial helps me with the healing process."

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is clear under a law signed Thursday by President Clinton that Congress intended those victims to be allowed to attend the trial of Timothy McVeigh, which begins next week.

"I'm elated," said Delores Watson, whose grandson, P.J. Allen, was severely injured in the blast. "The more I know about the trial helps me with the healing process."

Later Tuesday, McVeigh's lawyers

continued to pursue a trial delay, this time telling a federal appeals court that prosecutors have refused to hand over crucial evidence.

"Our patience is exhausted," said attorney Stephen Jones, citing numerous government documents about right-wing groups, previous plots against the government and the possibility of foreign involvement in the bombing.

Prosecutors wouldn't comment but Matsch has denied many similar requests, saying it's not the duty of the government to provide Jones with a defense.

Furthermore, in his ruling Tuesday, Matsch said any further debate on the issue would delay the trial. The

judge also said he could protect McVeigh's rights by allowing victims to be questioned outside the jury's presence.

Prosecutors have already chosen the victim-impact witnesses they intend to call if there is a sentencing phase to the trial. Their number is believed to be between one and two dozen.

Matsch said his ruling also extends to those victims and relatives who want to watch the trial on closed-circuit television in Oklahoma City.

The historic closed-circuit provision also was passed by Congress last year.

"It's a great deal for the victims. ... It's really a load off those peo-

ple's backs," said Roy Sells, who had given up the opportunity to testify so he could watch pretrial hearings.

His wife, Lee, was among the 168 people killed April 19, 1995, when a truck bomb ripped through the Oklahoma City federal building. More than 500 others were injured.

Matsch had barred the victim-witnesses from his courtroom last June out of fear their testimony might be tainted by watching the trial. An appeal failed, so victims' relatives turned to Congress.

The Senate and House passed the bill last week, and Clinton's signature effectively overturned Matsch's ruling.