

Sinclair's Use of Shield Law Unanimously Upheld by the Supreme Court of California

BALTIMORE, Nov. 3 /PRNewswire/ -- On November 1, 1999, the Supreme Court of California unanimously overturned the California Court of Appeal and upheld the right of a Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc. (Nasdaq: SBGI) news director at KOVR-TV in Sacramento, California to invoke the California Constitution's shield law in refusing to disclose unpublished information to a State of California prosecutor. The State unsuccessfully asserted that its state right to "due process of law" was being violated. In its decision, the California Supreme Court emphasized the importance of protecting the autonomy of the press.

The case (Miller vs. The Superior Court of San Joaquin County) involved the refusal by KOVR-TV's news director, in the face of contempt of court charges, to turn over to a state prosecutor unpublished portions of a videotaped interview with a prisoner who had confessed to sheriff's investigators that he had killed his cellmate. KOVR-TV invoked the shield law in support of its decision to submit only the broadcast portions of the interview rather than the entire interview which had been subpoenaed by the State of California. The Supreme Court of California upheld the use of the shield law and stated that the California shield law provided an absolute right, under California's state constitution, to protection for unpublished information that may only be overcome by a countervailing federal constitutional right (such as by a defendant's right to due process), and perhaps by a state constitutional right, but not by a "prosecutor's right to due process" (i.e., to receive information that may help the prosecutor win his case).

Barry Drake, CEO of Sinclair's Television Division, commented, "A free press is the backbone of our democracy. We are committed to defend the rights of our news departments under the law, and we applaud the decision of the Supreme Court of California."

Sinclair was represented by Charity Kenyon and her firm of Riegels, Campos & Kenyon and Samuel T. McAdam and his firm of Diepenbrock, Wulff, Plan & Hannegan. The following organizations submitted amicus briefs in support of Sinclair's position: The Times Mirror Company, Hearst-Argyle Television, Inc., A.H. Belo Corporation, Knight Ridder, Channel 58, Inc., California Newspaper Publishers Association, California First Amendment Coalition, The Society of Professional Journalists, Northern California Chapter, The Copely Press, Inc., Freedom Communications, McClatchy Newspapers, Inc., the Ontario Bulletin, the San Francisco Examiner, the San Francisco Chronicle, the San Bernardino Sun and the Santa Rosa Press Democrat.

Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc. is a diversified broadcasting company that currently owns or programs 58 television and 52 radio stations. Upon completion of all pending transactions, Sinclair will own or program 59 television stations in 38 separate markets and six radio stations in one market. Sinclair's television group reaches approximately 24.4% of U.S. television households and includes ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, WB, and UPN affiliates.

SOURCE Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc.

Web site: <http://www.sbgi.net>

Company News On-Call: <http://www.prnewswire.com/comp/110203.html> or fax, 800-758-5804, ext. 110203

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