



Speech Rights of Scholastic Journalists Act HB5902 /Public Act 99-0678

What the Law Says

"School-sponsored media" means any material that is prepared, substantially written, published, or broadcast by a student journalist at a public school, distributed or generally made available to members of the student body, and prepared under the direction of a student media adviser. School-sponsored media does not include media intended for distribution or transmission solely in the classroom in which the media is produced.

* * *

Free speech. Except as otherwise provided in Section 15 of this Act, a student journalist has the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press in school-sponsored media, regardless of whether the media is supported financially by the school district or by use of school facilities or produced in conjunction with a class in which the student is enrolled. The appropriate student journalist is responsible for determining the news, opinion, feature, and advertising content of school-sponsored media.

What it means to you

The law applies to student journalists in all Illinois public schools. A point of emphasis is it that the law covers media for general circulation. Classroom assignments specifically for class use are not covered by the law.

The law entrusts students with the final gatekeeping responsibility for their own content, which challenges them to use that authority in a lawful and journalistically sound way.



Speech Rights of Scholastic Journalists Act HB5902 /Public Act 99-0678

What the Law Says

"School-sponsored media" means any material that is prepared, substantially written, published, or broadcast by a student journalist at a public school, distributed or generally made available to members of the student body, and prepared under the direction of a student media adviser.

Exceptions. This Act does not authorize or protect expression by a student journalist that

- (1) is libelous, slanderous, or obscene;
- (2) constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy;
- (3) violates federal or State law; or
- (4) incites students to commit an unlawful act, to violate policies of the school district, or to materially

What it means to you

The law addresses only student media produced as a public school class or activity.

Student journalists writing for public school-sponsored media do not have carte blanche freedom. The Act clearly defines exceptions. Item four is, in essence, the Tinker Standard.