

Ruling delayed again by judge in cyber-bullying case

May 19 2009, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

A federal judge in Los Angeles has once again delayed a ruling in the criminal case against Lori Drew in a St. Louis-area cyber-bullying linked to the suicide of teenager Megan Meier.

U.S. District Judge George H. Wu was scheduled to rule Monday afternoon on a pending motion to dismiss Drew's criminal conviction and, if he rejected the motion, to sentence her on three misdemeanor charges of illegally accessing a protected computer.

He did neither.

Thom Mrozek, spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office, said that Megan's parents, Ron and Tina Meier, both testified before Wu said he needed more time. The sentencing was reset for July 2.

Prosecutors and the Meiers want the maximum possible sentence: three years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Drew's lawyer, H. Dean Steward, wants probation and no fine. Steward did not return a message seeking comment Monday.

A jury in California found Drew guilty Nov. 26, after a trial in which prosecutors accused her of masterminding the creation of a fake profile of a boy on the [social networking](#) Web site MySpace and using that profile to find out what Megan had been saying about Drew's daughter. The girls were neighbors in Dardenne Prairie, Mo.

The online relationship eventually turned into an ugly free-for-all and Megan, 13, hanged herself in her bedroom closet after reportedly receiving a final instant message: "The world would be a better place without you."

Jurors who heard the case in California, where [MySpace](#) is based, could not agree on a felony conspiracy charge, which has since been dismissed.

Steward has repeatedly argued that violating a Web site's terms of service is not a crime. He has also argued that Drew could not be prosecuted because she neither read MySpace's terms of service nor intentionally violated them.

Prosecutors claim she knew she was breaking the rules.

Wu has repeatedly leaned toward ruling in favor of Steward, only to change his mind or postpone a ruling.

In September, Wu delayed the trial after Steward challenged the case. The next month, he again postponed a decision.

In early November, Wu appeared to favor barring any mention of Megan's suicide at the trial, which would have been a major blow to prosecutors. He eventually relented.

After prosecutors had presented their case to jurors and Drew employee Ashley Grills testified that she both set up the account and sent the final message, Steward asked Wu to toss the case.

Wu said the issue was "close" and promised to decide over that weekend, then let Steward present his defense.

But he never made a decision, saying that he would decide later. He then

promised lawyers a ruling Jan. 8, only to delay again.

(c) 2009, St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Visit the Post-Dispatch on the World Wide Web at www.stltoday.com/

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services

Citation: Ruling delayed again by judge in cyber-bullying case (2009, May 19) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-05-cyber-bullying-case.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--