

# Blog loses ruling to protect Motorola cellphone tipster

January 18 2012, By Steve Schmadeke

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A Cook County, Ill., judge Friday ruled that a California technology blog doesn't qualify as a reporter and ordered it to turn over information on the tipster who leaked details about a Motorola cellphone.

Gadget blog TechnoBuffalo, a 3-year-old site that says it has a million readers a month, published images in August taken from the user's guide for the Droid Bionic a few weeks before the phone went on sale.

It has so far declined to turn over any information on the tipster, arguing that it was publishing [news](#) and so is protected under journalist shield laws in Illinois and California. A spokesman for the blog, which has a staff of writers and editors, said the case is the first time in Illinois that a judge has been asked to rule whether a [blogger](#) is the same as a journalist in the law's eyes.

On Friday, Judge Michael Panter, while acknowledging that it was "a fast-evolving issue facing courts everywhere," ruled that TechnoBuffalo isn't a news medium and its bloggers aren't protected under Illinois shield laws for journalists.

Elizabeth Bradshaw, an attorney for the blog, said she plans to appeal and the decision potentially "poses a threat to all news media, including bloggers."

The blog's president, Jonathan Rettinger, issued a statement saying he was "extremely disappointed."

In September, Johns-Byrne Co., a Niles, Ill.-based printing house, filed a petition seeking the name of the tipster who leaked the images. The company allegedly wants to pursue a lawsuit against the person, thought to be an employee, who released the images.

TechnoBuffalo asked a Cook County [judge](#) to deny the request, saying it was no different from a traditional [news outlet](#) like The [Washington Post](#) that also covers the technology industry.

But attorneys for Johns-Byrne Co. said in a court filing that TechnoBuffalo was publishing nothing more than "commercial hype pertaining to a cellphone" and was trying to protect a "common thief."

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