

Judge: Firm can sue Facebook over 'timeline'

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A Chicago-based social media company called Timelines Inc. can sue Facebook Inc. over allegations that it violated the smaller firm's trademark on the word "timeline," a federal judge ruled.

Timelines launched a website called Timelines.com in 2009 that enables users to track [historical events](#) and their personal lives online. Two years later, Facebook Inc. launched a major new feature it called "timeline," which similarly allows users to highlight their lives online in chronological order.

The Chicago company filed its lawsuit weeks after Facebook introduced its "timeline" feature.

Facebook had asked a [federal judge](#) in Chicago to throw out Timelines' suit, arguing, among other things, that the word "timeline" is too generic to be trademarked.

But in a 23-page ruling posted this week, U.S. [District Judge](#) John Darrah disagreed, noting Facebook itself has battled hard in the courts to protect words it's trademarked, including "poke" and "like."

Timelines.com has just over 1,200 registered users, the ruling said. Facebook has said recently it has around a billion.

Darrah's ruling giving the suit the green light means a jury trial can start as scheduled on April 22.

A spokesman for Menlo Park, California-based [Facebook](#), Andrew Noyes, declined any comment on the ruling. A Timelines' attorneys, Douglas Albritton, said he was "pleased" and declined further comment.

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