

Court: Bloggers have First Amendment protections

January 18 2014, by Jeff Barnard

A federal appeals court has ruled bloggers and the public have the same First Amendment protections as journalists when sued for defamation: If the issue is of public concern, plaintiffs have to prove negligence to win damages.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Friday ordered a new trial in a defamation lawsuit brought by an Oregon bankruptcy trustee against a Montana blogger who wrote online that the trustee mishandled a bankruptcy case.

The appeals court ruled that the trustee was not a public figure, but the issue was of [public concern](#), so the negligence standard applied.

Gregg Leslie of the Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press says the ruling affirms what many have long argued: Standards set by a 1974 U.S. Supreme Court ruling apply to everyone, not just journalists.

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