

Access and Copyright Questions

Reporter G.E. Smith uses the FOIA to request information about recent Environmental Protection Agency activity in relation to coal extraction. The EPA denies his request based on the national security exemption. Smith appeals the department's decision, saying that the First Amendment guarantees him the right to gather information. Is he right?

Reporter Bruce Springsteen covers a local Select Board meeting, but is told a few minutes after the meeting convenes that the board will go into executive session to discuss a new hate speech resolution. Is that in line with state open meetings law? What should he do?

The same Select Board goes into Executive session during its next meeting supposedly to discuss pending litigation. Now what should Springsteen do now?

Fiona Apple is running for county sheriff, and the *Collegian* has endorsed her opponent. She demands space on the editorial page to reply.

Reporter Sheryl Crow is denied access to a nearby federal prison except during the monthly tour offered to any interested individual. Crow sues the warden, claiming she must have access because the watchdog function serves the people's right to know, and she is the people's representative.

UMass officials convince local police that they should get a search warrant for the *Collegian's* offices after a massive protest against the University's decision to teach all courses online. Police show up at the newsroom with a search warrant. What should the *Collegian* editor do?

The *Collegian* runs a column from the Boston Herald on its web site, but does not credit the Herald or link back to the column. What legal problem is presented here? What ethical problems?

WMUA airs a podcast that attempts to capture the flavor of Amherst Town Meeting by re-mixing short clips from dozens of meetings in the past year, all of which have been video taped by Amherst Community Television. If ACT sues for copyright infringement, what determines if this is a fair use of copyrighted material?

Have you ever illegally downloaded music or movies? How would you justify that ethically?