

Covering the Courts Discussion/List

In the sensational trial of accused mass murderer Lenny Kravitz, the presiding judge, Grace Potter, issues a gag order stipulating that the media cannot write anything about the trial until it is over. You attend the first day's proceedings and publish a story. Potter cites you for contempt. What legal issues should you raise here?

The lead singer of Fountains of Wayne is attacked by a fan enraged because she couldn't get an autograph. The girl is 13 years old, and the judge closes the courtroom for her trial. You call the judge and inform her that the First Amendment and the Richmond case require open trials. Who is right?

Collegian reporter Koko Taylor is called to testify before a Hampshire County grand jury looking into local terrorist activity. Taylor refuses to reveal the names of her sources in the Amherst chapter of Revolution for the Hell of It, but she answers other questions. She is cited for contempt. Has she made any strategic errors? What will happen when she appeals the citation? What if this were a civil or criminal trial?

Amherst Town Manager Ted Nugent is charged with shoplifting women's underwear from K-Mart. The *Collegian* runs a story on the charge with the headline: "Police Nab Shoplifter." The story also includes Nugent's statement that he will never do it again and that he regrets a similar conviction 10 years ago. Which of the voluntary press guidelines have been violated here? What could the judge do to counter this pre-trial publicity?

Three of the members of a local band, Aerosmith, are standing trial on obscenity charges. The judge refuses to allow any cameras in the courtroom because he says he hates their music and can't stand to give them any more publicity. All the other participants in the trial request coverage by cameras. What is likely to happen?

Reporters covering the Aerosmith trial also ask the judge for permission to live blog and tweet during the trial. If you were the judge, what decision would you make?