

Unshielded

By Reg P. Wydeven
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Occasionally when I write this article, I tie some legal event to a (sometimes) relevant story involving a family member or friend. Once in a while the story is embarrassing, such as tales about my Star Wars nerd-dom or my sister's obsession with Donny Osmond.

Most of the stories I cite are those I have witnessed or have first-hand knowledge of. Sometimes I use a discomfoting story that someone else shared with me that's helpful in explaining a legal topic. Obviously, for the health and well-being of the storyteller, I never reveal their identity.

Unfortunately, last month the U.S. Senate voted down a bipartisan "media shield" bill that would protect reporters from being forced to reveal their sources in court. In a 51-43 vote that ran mostly along party lines, Republicans managed to defeat a motion to end debate on the measure and allow it to be voted on by the full Senate.

The House of Representatives passed a similar version of a media shield law in October of 2007. The bill before the Senate was first approved by the Judiciary Committee at the same time. The bill wasn't introduced into the full Senate until July of 2008 in order to allow the Senators enough time to negotiate a compromise.

Supporters of the measure, which include the Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press and over 60 other media associations, news outlets and non-profit groups, blame "partisan politics" for its defeat. But not all hope is lost, as the bill could be resurrected and brought up for vote again after the Senate's August recess, which is likely.

The Bush administration has openly opposed the media shield law, which is why the Republican Senators shot it down. Needless to say, no matter what happens to the media shield law, I will never reveal my sources.

Coming up with article topics every week is tricky, so I desperately need those embarrassing stories. So, friends and relatives, please continue to spin revealing yarns for me. And have no fear – I would go to jail before ever revealing my sources.