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[5 Minute Guide](#)  
[Court Opinion](#)  
[Amici Brief](#)



## Student Press Law Center is available to respond to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Mahanoy Area School District vs. B.L.*

**WASHINGTON** — The Student Press Law Center is pleased with today's decision in *Mahanoy School District v. B.L.* While declining to set a broad First Amendment rule characterizing what counts as "off campus" speech, the Court did provide guidance on how they would think about it in the future. The decision lays the groundwork for cases that may (and likely will) arise in the future regarding off-campus speech. The implications for school-sponsored student journalism are unclear but the focus in the concurrence on *Hazelwood* underscores the need for New Voices protections.

Executive Director Hadar Harris and Senior Legal Counsel Mike Hiestand and Staff Attorney Sommer Ingram Dean are available to discuss the case this week. SPLC submitted an [amicus brief](#) in the case which focused on the practical implications of the case for student journalists and others. Please reach out to [Andrew Benson](#) with any questions and to coordinate a time to speak with them.

**Hadar Harris:** Hadar Harris, a human rights attorney and non-profit leader with a passion for working with and on behalf of students, joined the SPLC on Sept. 6, 2017. She previously served as the executive director of the Northern California Innocence Project. For 13 years, Harris was executive director of the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law. Earlier in her career, Harris served as executive director of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, a bipartisan legislative service organization of the US House of Representatives, under the leadership of the late Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA). Following her graduation from law school, she worked in private practice at the law firm Littler Mendelson. Harris holds a BA in Political Science from Brown University and a Juris Doctor from the University of California, Los Angeles.

**Mike Hiestand:** Mike Hiestand has been integral to SPLC's success since 1989. He was an SPLC intern, its first legal fellow and then served as full-time staff attorney from 1991-2003. Over the years, he has assisted about 16,000 student journalists and advisers. He currently works from the west coast on the SPLC hotline and related projects. In 2013-14, Hiestand traveled around the country with Mary Beth Tinker, teaching and speaking out on behalf of student press rights and free expression. "Tinker

Tour USA” kicked off on Constitution Day at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The bus logged 15,595 miles across the American east coast, midwest and southeast speaking to more than 20,000 students and teachers at 58 stops, including schools, colleges, churches, a youth detention facility, courts and several national conventions. In the spring of 2014, The Tinker Tour moved on to schools and events in the American west, midwest and southwest, as well as a stop in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Vancouver, Canada. Hiestand, who grew up in Alaska, graduated from Bartlett High School in Anchorage and went on to Marquette University’s College of Journalism and Cornell Law School.

**Sommer Ingram Dean:** Sommer Ingram Dean, who joined the staff in 2018, is a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center who has long been an advocate for students’ speech and press rights. Sommer was a student journalist at the *Tiger Times* at Texas High School and The Baylor Lariat in college. After college, she was a legislative and legal reporter for The Associated Press and Dallas Morning News. She is also a former SPLC intern (2010) and legal fellow (2015-16). Sommer has worked for NPR’s legal affairs correspondent, *The Washington Post*, and served as a law clerk for a federal judge.

Additional resources including [the court’s opinion](#), our [five minute guide](#) to the case and [amici brief](#) are linked above and available at SPLC.org.

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**Student Press Law Center:** *Since 1974, the Student Press Law Center has worked to support, promote and defend the First Amendment and freedom of expression rights of student journalists at the high school and college level, and the advisers who support them. Working at the intersection of law, journalism and education, SPLC runs the nation’s only free legal hotline for student journalists. We also provide training, educational resources and support the grassroots non-partisan New Voices movement, seeking state-based legislative support for student press freedom. The SPLC is an independent, non-profit 501c(3) organization based in Washington, D.C.*