

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR S.B. No. 915

By: Duncan

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

relating to a qualified privilege of a journalist not to testify.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 22, Civil Practice and Remedies Code, is amended by adding Subchapter C to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER C. JOURNALIST'S QUALIFIED TESTIMONIAL PRIVILEGE IN
CIVIL PROCEEDINGS

Sec. 22.021. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Communication service provider" means a person or the parent, subsidiary, division, or affiliate of a person who transmits information chosen by a customer by electronic means, including:

(A) a telecommunications carrier, as defined by Section 3, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 153);

(B) a provider of information service, as defined by Section 3, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 153);

(C) a provider of interactive computer service, as defined by Section 230, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 230); and

(D) an information content provider, as defined by Section 230, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 230).

(2) "Journalist" means a person, including a parent, subsidiary, division, or affiliate of a person, who for a substantial portion of the person's livelihood or for substantial financial gain gathers, compiles, prepares, collects, photographs,

records, writes, edits, reports, investigates, processes, or publishes news or information that is disseminated by a news medium or communication service provider and includes:

(A) a person who supervises or assists in gathering, preparing, and disseminating the news or information; or

(B) notwithstanding the foregoing, a person who is or was a journalist, scholar, or researcher employed by an institution of higher education at the time the person obtained or prepared the requested information, or a person who at the time the person obtained or prepared the requested information:

(i) is earning a significant portion of the person's livelihood by obtaining or preparing information for dissemination by a news medium or communication service provider; or

(ii) was serving as an agent, assistant, employee, or supervisor of a news medium or communication service provider.

(3) "News medium" means a newspaper, magazine or periodical, book publisher, news agency, wire service, radio or television station or network, cable, satellite, or other transmission system or carrier or channel, or a channel or programming service for a station, network, system, or carrier, or an audio or audiovisual production company or Internet company or provider, or the parent, subsidiary, division, or affiliate of that entity, that disseminates news or information to the public by any means, including:

(A) print;

(B) television;

(C) radio;

(D) photographic;

(E) mechanical;

(F) electronic; and

(G) other means, known or unknown, that are accessible to the public.

(4) "Official proceeding" means any type of administrative, executive, legislative, or judicial proceeding that may be conducted before a public servant, including a proceeding under Rule 202, Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.

(5) "Public servant" means a person elected, selected, appointed, employed, or otherwise designated as one of the following, even if the person has not yet qualified for office or assumed the person's duties:

(A) an officer, employee, or agent of government;

(B) a juror;

(C) an arbitrator, referee, or other person who is authorized by law or private written agreement to hear or determine a cause or controversy;

(D) an attorney or notary public when participating in the performance of a governmental function; or

(E) a person who is performing a governmental function under a claim of right, although the person is not legally qualified to do so.

Sec. 22.022. PURPOSE. The purpose of this subchapter is to increase the free flow of information and preserve a free and active press and, at the same time, protect the right of the public to effective law enforcement and the fair administration of justice.

Sec. 22.023. PRIVILEGE. (a) Except as otherwise provided by this subchapter, a judicial, legislative, administrative, or other body with the authority to issue a subpoena or other compulsory process may not compel a journalist to testify regarding or to produce or disclose in an official proceeding:

(1) any confidential or nonconfidential information, document, or item obtained or prepared while acting as a

journalist; or

(2) the source of any information, document, or item described by Subdivision (1).

(b) A subpoena or other compulsory process may not compel the parent, subsidiary, division, or affiliate of a communication service provider or news medium to disclose the information, documents, or items or the source of any information, documents, or items that are privileged from disclosure under Subsection (a).

Sec. 22.024. LIMITED DISCLOSURE GENERALLY. After notice and an opportunity to be heard, a court may compel a journalist, a journalist's employer, or a person with an independent contract with a journalist to testify regarding or to produce or disclose any information, document, or item or the source of any information, document, or item obtained while acting as a journalist if the person seeking the information, document, or item or the source of any information, document, or item makes a clear and specific showing that:

(1) all reasonable efforts have been exhausted to obtain the information from an alternative source;

(2) the subpoena is not overbroad, unreasonable, or oppressive and, when appropriate, will be limited to the verification of published information and the surrounding circumstances relating to the accuracy of the published information;

(3) reasonable and timely notice was given of the demand for the information, document, or item;

(4) in this instance, the interest of the party subpoenaing the information outweighs the public interest in gathering and dissemination of news, including the concerns of the journalist;

(5) the subpoena or compulsory process is not being used to obtain peripheral, nonessential, or speculative information; and

(6) the information, document, or item is relevant and material to the proper administration of the official proceeding for which the testimony, production, or disclosure is sought and is essential to the maintenance of a claim or defense of the person seeking the testimony, production, or disclosure.

Sec. 22.025. NOTICE. An order to compel testimony, production, or disclosure to which a journalist has asserted a privilege under this subchapter may be issued only after timely notice to the journalist, the journalist's employer, or a person who has an independent contract with the journalist and a hearing. The order must include clear and specific findings as to the showing made by the person seeking the testimony, production, or disclosure and the clear and specific evidence on which the court relied in issuing the court's order.

Sec. 22.026. PUBLICATION OF PRIVILEGED INFORMATION. Publication or dissemination by a news medium or communication service provider of information, documents, or items privileged under this subchapter is not a waiver of the journalist's privilege.

Sec. 22.027. NEWS MEDIA RECORDINGS. Extrinsic evidence of the authenticity of evidence as a condition precedent to the admissibility of the evidence in a civil proceeding is not required with respect to a recording that purports to be a broadcast by a radio or television station that holds a license issued by the Federal Communications Commission at the time of the recording. The court may take judicial notice of the recording license as provided by Rule 201, Texas Rules of Evidence.

SECTION 2. Chapter 38, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended by adding Articles 38.11 and 38.111 to read as follows:

Art. 38.11. JOURNALIST'S QUALIFIED TESTIMONIAL PRIVILEGE IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

Sec. 1. DEFINITIONS. In this article:

(1) "Communication service provider" means a person or the parent, subsidiary, division, or affiliate of a person who transmits information chosen by a customer by electronic means, including:

(A) a telecommunications carrier, as defined by Section 3, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 153);

(B) a provider of information service, as defined by Section 3, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 153);

(C) a provider of interactive computer service, as defined by Section 230, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 230); and

(D) an information content provider, as defined by Section 230, Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. Section 230).

(2) "Journalist" means a person, including a parent, subsidiary, division, or affiliate of a person, who for a substantial portion of the person's livelihood or for substantial financial gain gathers, compiles, prepares, collects, photographs, records, writes, edits, reports, investigates, processes, or publishes news or information that is disseminated by a news medium or communication service provider and includes:

(A) a person who supervises or assists in gathering, preparing, and disseminating the news or information; or

(B) notwithstanding the foregoing, a person who is or was a journalist, scholar, or researcher employed by an institution of higher education at the time the person obtained or prepared the requested information, or a person who at the time the person obtained or prepared the requested information:

(i) is earning a significant portion of the person's livelihood by obtaining or preparing information for dissemination by a news medium or communication service provider; or

(ii) was serving as an agent, assistant,

employee, or supervisor of a news medium or communication service provider.

(3) "News medium" means a newspaper, magazine or periodical, book publisher, news agency, wire service, radio or television station or network, cable, satellite, or other transmission system or carrier or channel, or a channel or programming service for a station, network, system, or carrier, or an audio or audiovisual production company or Internet company or provider, or the parent, subsidiary, division, or affiliate of that entity, that disseminates news or information to the public by any means, including:

(A) print;

(B) television;

(C) radio;

(D) photographic;

(E) mechanical;

(F) electronic; and

(G) other means, known or unknown, that are accessible to the public.

(4) "Official proceeding" means any type of administrative, executive, legislative, or judicial proceeding that may be conducted before a public servant.

(5) "Public servant" means a person elected, selected, appointed, employed, or otherwise designated as one of the following, even if the person has not yet qualified for office or assumed the person's duties:

(A) an officer, employee, or agent of government;

(B) a juror or grand juror;

(C) an arbitrator, referee, or other person who is authorized by law or private written agreement to hear or determine a cause or controversy;

(D) an attorney or notary public when participating

in the performance of a governmental function; or

(E) a person who is performing a governmental function under a claim of right, although the person is not legally qualified to do so.

Sec. 2. PURPOSE. The purpose of this article is to increase the free flow of information and preserve a free and active press and, at the same time, protect the right of the public to effective law enforcement and the fair administration of justice.

Sec. 3. PRIVILEGE CONCERNING CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES. (a) A journalist may be compelled to testify regarding or to disclose the confidential source of any information, document, or item obtained while acting as a journalist if the person seeking the testimony, production, or disclosure makes a clear and specific showing that the source of any information, document, or item:

(1) was observed by the journalist committing a felony criminal offense and the subpoenaing party has exhausted reasonable efforts to obtain from alternative sources the confidential source of any information, document, or item obtained or prepared while acting as a journalist;

(2) is a person who confessed or admitted to the journalist the commission of a felony criminal offense and the subpoenaing party has exhausted reasonable efforts to obtain from alternative sources the confidential source of any information, document, or item obtained or prepared while acting as a journalist;

(3) is a person for whom probable cause exists that the person participated in a felony criminal offense and the subpoenaing party has exhausted reasonable efforts to obtain from alternative sources the confidential source of any information, document, or item obtained or prepared while acting as a journalist; or

(4) disclosure of the confidential source is reasonably

necessary to stop or prevent reasonably certain death or substantial bodily harm.

(b) If the alleged criminal conduct is the act of communicating, receiving, or possessing the information, document, or item, this section does not apply and Section 4 governs the act.

(c) Notwithstanding Subsection (b), Subsection (a) applies to any information, document, or item disclosed or received in violation of a grand jury oath given to either a juror or a witness under Article 19.34 or 20.16. In this context, the court has the discretion to conduct an in camera hearing. The court may not order the production of the confidential source until a ruling has been made on the motion.

(d) An application for a subpoena of a journalist under Article 24.03, or a subpoena of a journalist issued by an attorney representing the state under Article 20.10 or 20.11, must be signed by the elected district attorney, elected criminal district attorney, or elected county attorney, as applicable. If the elected district attorney, elected criminal district attorney, or elected county attorney has been disqualified or recused or has resigned, the application for the subpoena or the subpoena must be signed by the person succeeding the elected attorney. If the elected officer is not in the jurisdiction, the highest ranking assistant to the elected officer must sign the subpoena.

Sec. 4. PRIVILEGE CONCERNING UNPUBLISHED INFORMATION, DOCUMENT, OR ITEM AND NONCONFIDENTIAL SOURCES. (a) After service of subpoena and an opportunity to be heard, a court may compel a journalist, a journalist's employer, or a person with an independent contract with a journalist to testify regarding or to produce or disclose any unpublished information, document, or item or the source of any information, document, or item obtained while acting as a journalist, other than as described by Section 3, if the person seeking the unpublished information, document, or item

or the source of any information, document, or item makes a clear and specific showing that:

(1) all reasonable efforts have been exhausted to obtain the information from alternative sources; and

(2) the unpublished information, document, or item:

(A) is relevant and material to the proper administration of the official proceeding for which the testimony, production, or disclosure is sought and is essential to the maintenance of a claim or defense of the person seeking the testimony, production, or disclosure; or

(B) is central to the investigation or prosecution of a criminal case and, based on something other than the assertion of the person requesting the subpoena, reasonable grounds exist to believe that a crime has occurred.

(b) The court, when considering an order to compel testimony regarding or to produce or disclose any unpublished information, document, or item or the source of any information, document, or item obtained while acting as a journalist, should consider the following factors, including but not limited to, whether:

(1) the subpoena is overbroad, unreasonable, or oppressive;

(2) reasonable and timely notice was given of the demand for the information, document, or item;

(3) in this instance, the interest of the party subpoenaing the information outweighs the public interest in gathering and dissemination of news, including the concerns of the journalist; and

(4) the subpoena or compulsory process is being used to obtain peripheral, nonessential, or speculative information.

(c) A court may not consider a single factor under Subsection (b) as outcome-determinative in the decision whether to compel the testimony or the production or disclosure of the unpublished

information, document, or item, or the source of any information, document, or item.

Sec. 5. NOTICE. An order to compel testimony, production, or disclosure to which a journalist has asserted a privilege under this article may be issued only after timely notice to the journalist, the journalist's employer, or a person who has an independent contract with the journalist and a hearing. The order must include clear and specific findings as to the showing made by the person seeking the testimony, production, or disclosure and the clear and specific evidence on which the court relied in issuing the court's order.

Sec. 6. PUBLICATION OF PRIVILEGED INFORMATION. Publication or dissemination by a news medium or communication service provider of information, documents, or items privileged under this article is not a waiver of the journalist's privilege regarding sources and unpublished information, documents, or items.

Sec. 7. PUBLISHED INFORMATION. This article does not apply to any information, document, or item that has at any time been published or broadcast by the journalist.

Sec. 8. REIMBURSEMENT OF COSTS. The subpoenaing party shall pay a journalist a reasonable fee for the journalist's time and costs incurred in providing the information, item, or document subpoenaed, based on the fee structure provided by Subchapter F, Chapter 552, Government Code.

Art. 38.111. NEWS MEDIA RECORDINGS. Extrinsic evidence of the authenticity of evidence as a condition precedent to the admissibility of the evidence in a criminal proceeding is not required with respect to a recording that purports to be a broadcast by a radio or television station that holds a license issued by the Federal Communications Commission at the time of the recording. The court may take judicial notice of the recording license as provided by Rule 201, Texas Rules of Evidence.

SECTION 3. This Act applies only to information, documents, or items or the source of any information, document, or item obtained or prepared for publication in a news medium or communication service provider on or after the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2009.

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