

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES
OF THE BENCH-BAR-PRESS
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

Preamble

The Bench, Bar and Press (comprising all media of mass communications) of Washington:

- (a) Recognize that freedom of news media is one of the fundamental liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and that this basic freedom must be zealously preserved and responsibly exercised.
- (b) Are obliged to preserve the principle of the presumption of innocence for those accused of a crime until there has been a finding of guilt in an appropriate court of justice.
- (c) Believe members of an organized society have the right to acquire and impart information about their mutual interests. The right to disseminate information should be exercised with discretion when public disclosures might jeopardize the ends of justice.
- (d) Have the responsibility to support the free flow of information, consistent with the principles of the Constitution and this Preamble.

To promote a better understanding between the Bench and Bar of Washington and the Washington News Media, particularly in their efforts to reconcile the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press and the right to a fair, impartial trial, the following statement of principles, mutually drawn and submitted for voluntary compliance, is recommended to all members of these professions in Washington.

Principles

1. The News Media have the right and responsibility to print the truth. A free and responsible news media enhances the administration of justice. Members of the Bench and Bar should, within their respective canons of Legal ethics, cooperate with the news media in the reporting of the administration of justice.
2. Parties to litigation have the right to have their causes tried fairly by an impartial tribunal. Defendants in criminal cases are guaranteed this right by the Constitutions of the United States and the various states.

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3. No trial should be influenced by the pressure of publicity from news media nor from public clamor, and lawyers and journalists share the responsibility to prevent the creation of such pressures.

4. All news media should strive for objectivity and accuracy. The public has a right to be informed. The accused has a right to be judged in an atmosphere free from undue prejudice.

5. The news media recognizes the responsibility of the judge to preserve order in the court and to seek the ends of justice by all those means available to him.

6. Decisions about handling the news rest with editors, but in the exercise of news judgments the editor should remember that:

- (a) An accused person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- (b) Readers and listeners and viewers are potential jurors.
- (c) No person's reputation should be injured needlessly.

7. The public is entitled to know how justice is being administered. However, no lawyer should exploit any medium of public information to enhance his side of a pending case. It follows that the public prosecutor should avoid taking unfair advantage of his position as an important source of news; this shall not be construed to limit his obligation to make available information to which the public is entitled.

8. Proper journalistic and legal training should include instruction in the meaning of constitutional rights to a fair trial, freedom of press, and the role of both journalist and lawyer in guarding these rights.

ADOPTED March 26, 1966, in general session, by a joint committee representing the following groups:

Washington State Supreme Court	Allied Daily Newspapers of Washington
Superior Court Judges' Association	Washington Newspaper Publishers Assn.
Washington State Magistrates' Assn.	Washington State Assn. of Broadcasters
Washington State Bar Association	The Associated Press
Washington Assn. of Sheriffs &	United Press-International
Chiefs of Police	School of Communications, University of
Washington State Prosecuting	Washington
Attorneys' Association	