



Illinois News Broadcasters Association

30 November 2009

Anita Alvarez
Cook County State's Attorney
500 Richard J. Daley Center
50 W. Washington St.
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear State's Attorney Alvarez:

The Illinois News Broadcasters Association (INBA) strongly protests the issuance of subpoenas by your office to the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism students involved in the Medill Innocence Project.

The students are working as investigative journalists in the case of Anthony McKinney, who was convicted of killing a security guard in 1978. Their work of Medill students is published and broadcast, clearly showing that they are, in fact, reporters. The subpoenas demand that these students turn over their notes, off-the-record interviews, grades, even e-mails, related to their work with the project. The Illinois Reporter's Privilege Act (735 ILCS 5/8-901 to -909) offers a broad definition of reporters, news mediums, and sources for a reason: journalism is too important to our society to be invaded and inspected by law enforcement and prosecutors. So the act should apply to these students.

Further, the insinuation that these students bribed witnesses is off the mark. That money, \$60, was paid to a cab driver who transported a witness, and that money should in no way be considered a bribe.

Society benefits from a robust fourth estate which is free from law enforcement and prosecutorial interference. If law enforcement and the legal system are allowed to confiscate journalists' notes and other materials, journalism will suffer, as will society as it is denied access to information. When it comes to searching for the truth, which is the premise of journalism, issuing subpoenas for the background work of journalism is a step in the wrong direction.

The INBA sincerely hopes you will rescind the subpoenas, and stop any action that would hamper investigative reporting and silence the truth.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Hahn
INBA President