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Miscellaneous

# Metro

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## Shield law protects ex-reporter for AJC

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A former Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporter does not have to testify in a case brought by journalism professor John Soloski against the University of Georgia, a federal judge has ruled.

In a ruling last week, Senior U.S. District Judge Marvin Shoob said former AJC staff writer Kelly Simmons is protected by a reporter's privilege that shields her from having to disclose her sources.

In June 2005, Simmons, who now works for UGA's Office of Public Affairs, reported in the AJC that the university was investigating allegations of sexual harassment against Soloski.

The following year, Soloski filed suit, saying he was unfairly accused and forced to step down as journalism dean. He also claims invasion of privacy.

Previously, Shoob ordered UGA to expunge from Soloski's personnel records that he violated the school's sexual harassment policies. But last week, Shoob said Soloski's lawyers did not need to question Simmons. The lawyers did not exhaust all reasonable alternative sources to find out who leaked the story to the AJC, the judge said. Also, because a UGA

official confirmed the existence of the harassment probe, "the source of the original tip is, at best, redundant and unnecessary evidence," Shoob said.

# News crew arrested in City Hall East

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A local television news crew was arrested Friday when trying to enter a public area of Atlanta City Hall East, officials said.

The Atlanta Police Department officer who arrested the WGCL Channel 46 team believed they weren't supposed to be in the building if they weren't conducting city business, police said.

The crew was reporting on billing troubles at the city's Department of Watershed Management that have led to customers having their water shut off.

Reporter Renee Starzyk and photographer Jeff Thorn

were handcuffed for about an hour after entering an area where people go to pay water bills, said Channel 46 news and digital director Steve Schwaid.

"If the public is there, you are allowed to be there," Schwaid told his crew, who then proceeded past a security checkpoint.

"It's a place we have been before and a place that is clearly open to the public," he said.

Deputy Police Chief Carlos Banda called the incident a "misunderstanding" after learning of the situation.

The officer, E.R. Murray, was told to release the pair after the city's Legal

Department determined they were allowed in the building. Neither was charged.

Banda said the incident was under investigation.

"Allegedly, there's a source that told [private] security and the police officer that City Hall was closed except for people coming to pay water bills, and nobody else was supposed to be in City Hall," he said.

Banda met the crew and Schwaid at the scene and apologized to Thorn and Starzyk.

"I said there was a misunderstanding of the interpretation of the law and apologize if this was an inconvenience," he said.

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