

Sunday, December 10, 2006

First Amendment on public access television.

Public access television apparently is not only for Wayne and Garth. On December 5, fellow lawyer Mark Goldstone and I were interviewed on public access television for a segment about First Amendment free expression defense in civil and criminal cases. The program is Law School for the Public, which is presented by the Montgomery County, Maryland, Bar Association. Our interview will air December 19 at 8:00 a.m. The station is Montgomery Community Television, cable channel 21. I anticipate receiving and uploading the interview in the near future to our website. The interview covered basic First Amendment defense questions, followed by lively responses by Mark and me, speaking in the same free expression fashion that we so passionately defend. Mark has been defending political activists longer than I, and knows the constant battle for activists to exercise their First Amendment rights to free expression in the repeated face of government officials' efforts to trample on and hem in those rights. Soon after our law firm opened in 1998, I was taking up the cause of political activists from the left to the right to many points in between, libel defendants, and members of the adult entertainment industry. It is a dream come true to be earning a living defending criminal defendants and First Amendment clients while doing our share of pro bono work. I have enjoyed collaborating with Mark Goldstone while representing co-criminal defendants in two First Amendment-related cases, defending IMF/World Bank demonstrators in 2000, and brainstorming on other cases. By apparent default rather than by design, the TV studio was dominated by National Lawyers Guild members during the taping. Mark is the longtime chair of the local Guild's demonstration committee. I have remained a member ever since joining the Guild's 2000 defense of anti-globalization demonstrators, despite my vehement opposition to many of the national Guild's knee-jerk official views against Israel. The show's producer, Jim Klimaski, is a longtime Guild activist. The interviewing lawyer is from a mainstream law firm, and is not connected with the Guild. Jim's involvement with the show reassured me that the program would not be some sort of cheerleading party for the mainstream bar, which this segment certainly was not. This was my first time on public access television. I understand that governments sometimes seek the availability of public access stations as part of permitting the operation of cable television companies. This can implicate cable companies' First Amendment rights. I do not know if that is the situation with this particular station. Jay Marks and I frequently provide legal commentary to the print and broadcast news media. A rundown is here. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon Katz in the News at 01:00