



GOVERNOR DOYLE SIGNS WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION INTO LAW!



On Tuesday, May 18, Governor Doyle signed AB 333, known as the Whistleblower Protection Act, into law. Court decisions in Wisconsin have provided some protections for reporters and whistleblowers, but until now prosecutors and parties in civil cases could subpoena journalists and require them to name their sources if it would provide important information that could not be gained in any other way.

Under the new law, judges could order reporters to testify, produce information or reveal a source's identity only when it is "highly relevant" to the case or critical to at least one party's argument. Attorneys would have to show they couldn't get the information any other way and there was an overriding public interest in disclosing it.

In addition, the bill provides absolute protection for anonymous sources if a journalist has promised to keep their identities confidential (confidential sources could not be forced to testify in order to discover the identity of that person).

Your WBA, the Wisconsin Newspapers Association, and the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council collaborated on drafting the law.

Wisconsin is the 39th state to enact a shield law. Special thanks to Rep. Joe Parisi & Sen. Pat Kreitlow for their efforts in co-sponsoring the legislation.

The law takes effect in three months.