On Campus

Knight Institute Wins Lawsuit Challenging President’s Twitter Tactics

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The Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University won a free-speech lawsuit this summer after persuading a federal appeals court that President Trump’s practice of blocking critics from his Twitter account violates the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

The Knight Institute filed the lawsuit in 2017 on behalf of seven people who were blocked from the @realDonaldTrump account after they criticized the president and his policies; Trump, following a district-court ruling against him last year, unblocked the plaintiffs but also appealed the decision. The appeals court’s ruling against the president in July is expected to have broader ramifications for free speech in the digital era.

“Public officials’ social-media accounts are now among the most significant forums for discussion of government policy,” says institute director Jameel Jaffer, who argued the case before the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in March. “This decision will ensure that people aren’t excluded from these forums simply because of their viewpoints, and that public officials aren’t insulated from their constituents’ criticism.”



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