



high court copyright ruling expands government edicts doctrine

Written by Eleanor M. Lackman and Craig C. Bradley
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On April 27, the U.S. Supreme Court for the first time in 130 years addressed the government edicts doctrine, a court-made rule holding that state government edicts having the force of law are not eligible for copyright protection.

The doctrine provides that state and local government officials acting in their governmental capacity are not considered "authors" as that term is understood in copyright law. Without authorship, no copyright protection is available for the work. This principle has made judicial opinions and statutes freely available to publish and review free from claims of copyright infringement.

The decision in *Georgia v. Public.Resource.Org Inc.* raised a new issue: not whether the law itself was copyrightable, but whether annotations and other analytical materials accompanying the law were also barred from copyright protection under the government edicts doctrine.

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Eleanor M. Lackman

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