



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

What are shield laws?

Some argue that the First Amendment protects journalists adequately and no other laws are needed. Yet others have urged state and federal authorities to create special shield laws to protect journalists.

Activities:

Flashlight: Ask students to review the shield law sections of the sites of the [Society of Professional Journalists](#) and the [Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press](#). Discuss: What are shield laws? How do they relate to the First Amendment? Does the federal government have a shield law? How many states have them?

Spotlight: For a discussion or a homework assignment: How do the laws define the word “journalist?” Are student journalists covered by shield laws? Why or why not? Student rights are explained by the [Student Press Law Center](#).

Searchlight: A research project: Are bloggers and freelance journalists covered by shield laws? Should they be? If so, what is a definition of journalist that would work to cover them? Can you find actual cases when they have been protected and others when they haven’t?