

Plus: Why is it so hard to win a defamation lawsuit when digital satire is at play?



COURTHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

Closing Arguments

The week in Courthouse News

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The European Union's tech regulations [took effect this week, forcing changes at five U.S. tech giants](#) (Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta and Microsoft) and at ByteDance, TikTok's China-based owner — all of which the EU deemed digital market "gatekeepers."

The laws are aimed at curtailing tech monopolies and leveling the playing field. For instance, Google now has to display competitors' products more prominently in search results and Apple must allow European users to download apps from outside its app store, as EU-based reporter [Cain Burdeau](#) writes.

Failure to comply can yield fines as high as 10% of a company's total worldwide annual turnover and even up to 20% for repeated infractions.

It was an eventful week for tech companies in the U.S. legal system, too. A federal judge in New York [advanced a tech firm's monopoly claims against Google](#) over its forced conversion from Adobe Flash videos to HTML5, [Josh Russell](#) reports.

The online search and ad behemoth also [fought claims in San Jose](#) that it profited from using consumer' images without their consent. [Natalie Hanson](#) has that story.

And in Washington, Congress reporter [Benjamin S. Weiss](#) covered the U.S. House's commercial affairs panel's [unanimous vote to approve a measure threatening TikTok with a national ban](#) (if it doesn't divest from ByteDance) over concerns about how Americans' user data is stored by TikTok and whether the Chinese government has access to it.

For more Courthouse News, keep reading Closing Arguments — on the app or browser of your choosing.

— [Nina Pullano](#)

Here's what else happened in court this week:



France [became the first nation in the world to make abortion a constitutional right](#), a move rich with symbolism, spurred by the rollback of abortion rights in the United States. [[Cain Burdeau](#)]

» Remember that Manhattan trial over The Eagles' reportedly stolen lyric sheets? Two weeks into trial, [prosecutors abruptly moved to drop charges](#). The presiding judge said Don Henley, the band's drummer and DA's star witness, used attorney-client privilege to hide information that weakened the case. [[Erik Uebelacker](#)]

» Jack Teixeira, a 22-year-old ex-technology support staffer for the Massachusetts Air National Guard, [pleaded guilty to espionage charges](#) after posting classified documents to a group on the social media platform Discord. [[Thomas F. Harrison](#)]

» The Supreme Court [ruled unanimously to keep Donald Trump on Colorado's ballot](#), finding the state had no authority to disqualify him from the 2024 election. [[Kelsey Reichmann](#)]

» The Eleventh Circuit ruled that part of a Florida's "Stop WOKE Act" prohibiting employers from holding mandatory trainings on issues like race and inequality [is unconstitutional](#). [[Kayla Goggin](#)]



In Honolulu, a man once accused of being a Russian spy continued to dispute who he is as [a federal judge sentenced him to 34 months in prison](#) for stealing the identity of a dead infant and living under the name for over three decades. [[Candace Cheung](#)]

[Sidebar — a podcast from Courthouse News](#)



A long-running feud between eviction lawyers Dennis Block and Danny Bramzon cumulated into a Twitter parody account and a libel lawsuit that made it all the way to a jury trial.

In the third episode this season, Sidebar takes the temperature of libel law in the 21st century when it comes to X (née Twitter).

Block isn't the only one who's been unsuccessful in the courtroom. A lawsuit that sought to take down Elon Musk over his infamous "pedo guy" tweet failed, as did efforts by "badass lawyer" Todd Levitt and former Congressman Devin Nunes over their Twitter impersonators.

Why is it so hard to win a defamation lawsuit when digital satire is at play? The courtroom becomes a crucible, with jurors and judges wrestling over the true nature of parody, leaving us pondering the potential repercussions of a legal system scrambling to catch up with the online world's rapid evolution.

Join Sidebar's [Hillel Aron](#) and [Amanda Pampuro](#) for "[Mean Tweets](#)" wherever you get your podcasts.

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The company that controls Frida Kahlo's image [filed a pair of lawsuits against online merchants](#) claiming they had sold products related to the iconic Mexican artist under unauthorized use of the company's trademarks. [[Dave Byrnes](#)]

ICYMI: New cases and rulings on our radar

» **Lifetime tobacco ban OK'd:** BOSTON — The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court [upheld the dismissal of retailers' opposition to the town of Brookline's ordinance](#) that disallows the sale of tobacco to buyers born after Jan. 1, 2000, regardless of their age. The law is not preempted by a 2018 state law that raised the minimum age for buying tobacco from 18 to 21.

» **Do No Harm suit vs Pfizer:** ALBANY, N.Y. — The Second Circuit [ruled that the conservative medical advocacy group Do No Harm does not have standing](#) to seek an injunction against a Pfizer fellowship program, which they say excludes white and Asian American applicants. Members of the group did not identify a purported injured member by name, not by pseudonym, to establish standing.

» **Crypto scam crackdown:** BOISE, Idaho — A federal court in Idaho [granted the Securities and Exchange Commission's motion for penalties against a crypto investment broker](#) who lured investors into paying millions into his company through false representations, then misappropriated the funds for his personal use. He'll disgorge over \$5.2 million in ill-gotten gains, over \$125,000 in interest, and will pay almost \$7 million in civil penalties.

» **Not a crime of passion:** EL PASO — A Texas appeals court [upheld the conviction of defendant for murder](#) over his objection that he killed a woman in a state of sudden passion after she rejected him. Courts have long held that "a rejection of a romantic proposal does not qualify as adequate cause for purposes of the sudden passion defense," not least because a person of "ordinary temper" does not murder people based on romantic rejections.

— [Daniel Conrad](#)

Top 8: This week's most-read stories

From across the Courthouse News website, including news from Capitol Hill, state legislative decisions and major research developments.

1. ['Top Gun' actor sues over use of his image in 2022 sequel](#)
2. [Elon Musk sues OpenAI over AI threat](#)
3. [Federal judge rips California for denying gun purchases to ex-felons](#)
4. [Bipartisanship master class in Senate Judiciary as lawmakers overwhelmingly approve judicial nominees](#)
5. [Newsom must turn over secretary's PG&E meeting records, California judge rules in journalist's favor](#)
6. [US threatens to pull aid to Ghana over anti-LGBTQ+ bill](#)
7. [Arizona Senate committee approves bill to ban voting centers](#)
8. [Federal judge issues sanctions and ends long-running fight against tribal casino](#)

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