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Can website companies be sued for listing false data?

That is the crux of the question in the case of *Spokeo versus Robins* when the United States Supreme Court considers this in the term beginning in October later this year.

Thomas Robins of Virginia sued website operator Spokeo for publishing incorrect information that he claims adversely affected his job search. Spokeo incorrectly listed his age, incorrectly stated he has a graduate degree, and incorrectly stated he was wealthy, married, and with children. Mr. Robins – unemployed and looking for work – claims this incorrect information harmed his job search prospects.

The case is being argued on the basis of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), which prevents credit reporting agencies from compiling incorrect or inaccurate information which could harm a person's ability to obtain a loan or pass a job employment background screening check.

Inasmuch as there is no direct proof that Mr. Robins was harmed, Mr. Robins – as the plaintiff – need only argue that his rights were violated under the FCRA for a lawsuit of this type to proceed based on input from one legal analyst.

Mr. Robins initially lost his case in district court but the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco reversed the lower court decision, ruling that Spokeo did indeed violate the FCRA.

This opens up a potential flood of billion-dollar lawsuits against search-engine and data-aggregation companies if Mr. Robins' class-action lawsuit is successful. Web sites Facebook, Google, and eBay are (naturally) on the side of Spokeo.

Not mentioned in the article, but could this open up other lawsuits as well? Could website viewers sue website operators for posting incomplete or inaccurate information that website users rely upon? What about maps and directions that don't guide us directly to the spot for the address we entered? Are we able to sue for damages for incorrect information? Will all websites need information accuracy disclaimers on them in the near future?

The article states that even if the Supreme Court does not side with Mr. Robins the case will likely spur Congress to act and institute laws to protect consumers from the effects of false financial-related information on web sites.

This legal case certainly has ramifications for website operators, some of which are yet to unfold.

For the complete article please go to:

<http://www.inforisktoday.com/holding-websites-liable-for-false-data-a-8193/op-1>

Thanks.

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