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Guylyn Cummins Fights To Protect Journalists And The Public

Sheppard Mullin Litigator pushes to open court records



Guylyn Cummins is a partner at Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton.

Guylyn Cummins had another busy year fighting for journalists' — and the public's — right to access to court records and proceedings in state and federal courts. This year, the *Los Angeles Daily Journal* recognized her skills, naming her one of the top 75 women litigators in California. In 1992 she was honored with a TWIN award.

A partner at Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton, Cummins is still fighting to unseal plea agreements and other documents in criminal prosecutions tied to the conviction of former Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham. She also is pushing for federal reporter shield laws that protect reporters from demands for their notes and sources.

"It's a really important issue nationally because the federal courts aren't as amenable as California to protecting reporters' rights," she says. "I represent a reporter whose personnel file was subpoenaed because they were trying to identify his sources."

Cummins also weighed in on a Northern California case where a Swiss bank persuaded an Internet service provider to shut down the whistleblowing WikiLeaks Website, which had posted some

unflattering bank documents. She joined in a coalition of First Amendment lawyers that swamped the court with amicus filings and persuaded the federal judge to reverse himself, convincing him his earlier ruling was an act of prior restraint.

"Then the bank said the documents were public anyway, contrary to what they'd said when they sought the first ruling," Cummins says.

When she's not working, she likes to spend time with her husband of 28 years, Scott Cummins. Their 19-year-old daughter is a freshman at Stanford University, which makes for great weekend trips, she says, but leaves her with more driving duties for her 15-year old son.

Blake Cummins is playing tennis for the La Jolla High School Vikings, which just won the Division III championships in the California Interscholastic Federation and Cummins loves to go to his games.

"As a working mom, I spend all my free time with my children and my husband," she says.

— Marty Graham

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