



NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY, 25TH DISTRICT

NEW YORK STATE SENATE, 9 DISTRICT

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Governor Signs “Libel Terrorism Protection Act” Into Law

*First-in-the-Nation Legislation Will Protect American Journalists
and Authors From Overseas Defamation Lawsuits*

Albany, NY (May 1, 2008) – Governor David Paterson [announced](#) today that he signed into law the “Libel Terrorism Protection Act” ([A.9652/S.6687](#)), sponsored by Assemblyman Rory Lancman (D-Queens) and Senate Deputy Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos (R-Rockville Centre). The law, which goes into effect immediately, protects American journalists and authors in New York from enforcement of foreign lawsuits that infringe on their First Amendment rights, a phenomenon known as “libel tourism,” or “libel terrorism” when used to suppress reporting on terrorism and its enablers as occurred when Saudi billionaire Khalid Salim bin Mahfouz sued New York Dr. Ehrenfeld in Britain where 23 copies of her book identifying bin Mahfouz as a financier of terrorism were sold over the internet.

The legislation garnered widespread support in the legal, journalism and publishing communities, including from the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, the Authors Guild, the Association of American Publishers, the New York Newspaper Publishers Association, PEN, and supporting editorials and op-eds in Newsday ([Libel protection law](#)), the New York Post ([Sign Rachel's Law](#)), the Albany Times Union ([Using libel as a gag](#)) and the Wall Street Journal ([Foreign Law and the First Amendment](#)).

“Today we act to protect our journalists and authors who fearlessly expose terrorism’s enablers from phony-baloney libel charges in kangaroo courts in overseas jurisdictions which don’t share our commitment to freedom of the press, and in doing so we also protect all New Yorkers against

the scourge of terrorism” said Assemblyman Lancman. “Today we reaffirm New York’s place as the free speech capitol of the world.”

Senator Dean G. Skelos said: “The truth is a critically-important component of the War on Terror. American authors, like Dr. Ehrenfeld, who expose terrorist networks and their financiers should not be subject to intimidation and lawsuits in foreign courts designed to circumvent our First Amendment rights. This is important legislation and I thank Governor Paterson for signing it into law.”

“New Yorkers must be able to speak out on issues of public concern without living in fear that they will be sued outside the United States, under legal standards inconsistent with our First Amendment rights,” said Governor Paterson. “This legislation will help ensure the freedoms enjoyed by New York authors.”

“I applaud Assemblyman Rory Lancman and Senator Dean Skelos for taking the initiative in introducing this law,” said New York author Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld. “This legislation helps my personal case against Bin Mafouz, but more importantly also provides every New York writer and publisher freedom to expose those that threaten our national security.”

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