

Juror tweets a new issue for U.S. courts

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Lawyers in at least two recent high-profile U.S. trials say they'll appeal the verdicts due to jurors who posted on Twitter during the trial.

The situations have legal scholars pondering the implications of social-networking by jurors who are routinely ordered not to discuss the cases they are involved in with anyone.

"Our (legal) doctrine is not made for a wired universe," Daniel Richman, who teaches at Columbia Law School, told ABC News.com.

ABC said Tuesday the Twitter postings were being used as grounds for appeal by attorneys for an Arkansas company hit with a \$12.6 million civil verdict and by former Pennsylvania State Sen. Vincent Fumo, D-Philadelphia, who was convicted Monday of obstruction of justice.

Fumo's motion to halt the deliberations last week contended that although the unnamed juror's posts didn't indicate which way the panel was leaning, his penchant for online communications could have led him to read postings from others stating opinions on Fumo's guilt or innocence.

Although the judge had ruled the juror could remain in the case, experts tell ABC that comments on Twitter, Facebook and elsewhere in cyberspace will have to be considered by judges across the country.

"There's one simple rule that I tell everyone," Anne Reed, a Milwaukee attorney and jury consultant, said to ABC. "If the person said the same thing offline, what would we do?"

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