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Court Upholds Ex-Wife's Right to Complain

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SEATTLE (AP) – A woman has the right to complain about her ex-husband - even if he finds it annoying, the state Supreme Court ruled.

The high court on Thursday overturned a judge's order that barred a woman from complaining about her ex-husband to police and other agencies.

In its opinion issued in Olympia, the court unanimously decided the order violated Shawn Suggs' constitutional right to free speech.

"This anti-harassment order is an unconstitutional prior restraint on speech," Justice Mary Fairhurst wrote for the majority.

After their divorce, Shawn Suggs said she feared her ex-husband, Andrew Hamilton, might turn violent. She sought help from police, county and city agencies and a domestic violence shelter.

Hamilton, a police officer, responded with an anti-harassment lawsuit, saying Suggs was engaging in "continual efforts to defame me," according to court records.

The order might have been constitutional if it had been more specific, Fairhurst wrote. She said the trial court could have prohibited Suggs from alleging that Hamilton molested their daughter, because Suggs had already conceded that was not true.

But, the order was too broad to be constitutional, the high court ruled.

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