

## **Local Attorney Protects Student's Privacy Rights in Landmark Ruling**

Orange County, California

An Orange County Superior Court Judge dismissed all felony and misdemeanor drug charges against a 21 year old music student after ruling Garden Grove Police had illegally searched the defendant's bedroom. Garden Grove Police, currently under investigation for unlawful beating of underage suspects, searched the home and safe of the defendant after an attempted home invasion robbery. Ryan T. Okabe, founding partner of the law firm of Okabe & Haushalter located in Redondo Beach, argued that the search violated his client's Fourth Amendment right to privacy in her home and that the police were never given consent to search a locked safe found in his client's bedroom. The Court agreed and found the search unconstitutional.

When asked about the Judge's ruling, attorney Okabe stated "I respect this Court and it's ability to make a tough decision based on the law and facts of this case. Clearly this was not an easy ruling, but the Court correctly found, based on precedent appellate court cases, that my client never gave consent to execute a proper search of her locked safe." Okabe and Haushalter is a criminal defense firm dedicated to aggressive representation of clients throughout Southern California.

The case centered around the search of a safe found in the defendant's bedroom after she had called the police subsequent to an attempted home invasion robbery. Prosecutors reasoned that consent given to search the bedroom for weapons also constituted consent to search a locked safe for drugs. After vigorous cross-examination of the officers involved in the search, attorney Okabe successfully argued that citizens are afforded a greater expectation of privacy in their homes, especially within locked containers, and that specific consent is required to search locked items. The Court agreed and suppressed the evidence seized by Garden Grove Police in the unlawful search.

Attorney Okabe's law partner, Mark J. Haushalter, a leading expert on Fourth Amendment law, commented, "The Court's ruling today buttressed a long standing precedent that one has a greater expectation of privacy in one's home and police can't just waltz in and start opening up locked items. Today, the court upheld over two hundred years of Constitutional safeguards making American citizens safe in their homes." Okabe added, "The Court today understood that our Constitutional protections are more relevant at this point in time than in any other. I applaud the courage and sound reasoning this court used in upholding our arguments."