ABC News Headed to Trial With Billions of Dollars on the Line



Diane Sawyer
Image by David Shankbone

ABC News moved closer to a jury trial in South Dakota after a judge there moved along a lawsuit alleging that the network defamed Beef Products Inc. in its coverage of a meat product called lean, finely textured beef, which critics have dubbed "pink slime," reports ***The Hollywood Reporter***.

"BPI claims $1.9 billion in damage with the possibility the amount could be tripled if the plaintiff can prove ABC News knowingly lied about the safety of a food product," writes reporter Eriq Gardner. "The plaintiff has previously scored wins in keeping the case in a state court and then prevailing against First Amendment arguments on a motion to dismiss."

A jury "could determine that there is clear and convincing evidence that ABC Broadcasting and [reporter Jim] Avila were reckless," the judge ruled.

The judge provided ABC News, a unit of Disney, with one piece of good news: the court dismissed claims against anchor Diane Sawyer, Gardner reports.

Read the *Hollywood Reporter* article.

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