

Supreme Court rejects lawsuit accusing Google of stealing millions of song lyrics

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The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to revive a lawsuit by music website Genius Media Group Inc. accusing Alphabet Inc.'s Google of stealing millions of song lyrics.

The [justices](#) left in place a ruling that tossed out the suit, which accused Google of violating a contract with Genius by using its song lyrics in [search results](#) without attribution.

It's the latest victory at the Supreme Court for Google, which earlier this year won a battle over whether its video-streaming platform YouTube can be held liable for hosting terrorist videos.

There are deep disagreements over how copyright laws apply to online speech and aggregation. The lower court said Genius does not own any of the copyrights to its lyrics—instead, those are held by the songwriters and publishers.

Genius claimed that Google violated its contract by scraping lyrics and boosting them in Google Search results without any attribution. Genius, which claimed the saga caused millions of dollars in losses for the website, initially sued Google in 2019. In order to drum up attention and prove its case, Genius said it used a secret code spelling out the word "red-handed" to prove Google was stealing its lyrics.

"We appreciate the court's decision, agreeing with the solicitor general and multiple lower courts that Genius's claims have no merit," Google spokesman José Castañeda said Monday. "We license lyrics on Google Search from third parties, and we do not crawl or scrape websites to source lyrics."

Terms of service, which are used on most websites, are typically backed by state law. Genius and its supporters argued the decision could effectively water down the contractual protections websites enjoy when users agree to their terms.

Google argued Genius was attempting to bring a "quasi-copyright" claim under the guise of contracts law. Federal law preempts lawsuits over

issues that are similar to copyright, even if they don't explicitly center on copyright infringement claims. That distinction proved fatal to Genius's case.

Genius said the lower court's decision "threatens to hobble any of thousands of companies that offer value by aggregating user-generated information or other content."

U.S. Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar, the Biden administration's top Supreme Court lawyer, urged the justices to skip the case, arguing it is a "poor vehicle" to resolve the tension between copyright law and contractual rights.

The case is *ML Genius Holdings v. Google*, 22-121.

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