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## Videos of clothed girls are ruled pornographic

By LAURIE ASSEO  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court let stand a child-pornography conviction in a case that attracted national attention after the Clinton administration twice changed the government's definition of hardcore pornography.

The court's action, taken without comment yesterday, left intact a Pennsylvania man's conviction for buying videos that focused on the clothed genital areas of girls ages 10 to 17. Stephen Knox had contended he could not be convicted of possessing child pornography because the girls were clothed.

The case had been to the Supreme Court before. The justices agreed to review Knox's appeal last year, but sent it back to a lower court after the government changed its definition of child pornography.

Initially, Justice Department lawyers urged the high court to reject Knox's 1993 appeal. They said a federal appeals court correctly decided the law applies even though the children were clothed.

But after the court agreed to hear Knox's appeal, and after Drew Days took over as solicitor general, the government changed its position. Days and other government lawyers said the appeals court used an "impermissibly broad standard" for defining child pornography.

That enraged conservative groups and lawmakers, who accused the Clinton administration of being soft on pornography. The high court, citing the government's changed view,

sent the case back to the 3rd U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals. There, Knox's conviction was upheld.

Meanwhile, President Clinton asked Attorney General Janet Reno to draft legislation to tighten the child pornography law.

Instead, Reno again switched the government's view of the existing law. Responding to Knox's new Supreme Court appeal, Reno — not Days — filed a brief saying Knox could be convicted for possessing videos that showed girls posing in a sexual manner while clothed.

The tapes showed girls dressed in bathing suits, leotards and underwear. Court documents said the camera would zoom in on the children's pubic areas, which were covered by clothing.

Knox, a Pennsylvania State University graduate student in State College, Pa., was sentenced to five years in prison on his 1991 conviction for possessing child pornography. He has been free during the appeal and lives in Philadelphia.

In other action, the court:

■ Heard arguments in a California case over states' power to pay lower welfare benefits to newcomers from other states.

■ Turned down a New Jersey man's bid to require Germany to pay him \$17 million for his suffering in Nazi concentration camps.

■ Let stand a ruling in a Virginia case that said prison guards who use unnecessary force against inmates are not guilty of imposing cruel and unusual punishment if they cause only minimal injury.

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