Corporations do not have a right to "personal privacy," the Supreme Court ruled unanimously, at least when it comes to the Freedom of Information Act and the release of documents held by the government.

Last year's ruling giving companies a free-speech right to spend money on campaign ads prompted liberal critics to say the court's conservatives were biased in favor of corporate rights.

While not alluding to the criticism, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. took a scalpel to a corporate-rights claim from AT&T Inc. that its "personal privacy" deserves to be protected. The ordinary meaning of "personal" does not refer to an impersonal company, he said.

"We do not usually speak of personal characteristics, personal effects, personal correspondence, personal influence or personal tragedy as referring to corporations or other artificial entities," he wrote. "In fact, we often use the word 'personal' to mean precisely the opposite of business-related: We speak of personal expenses and business expenses, personal life and work life, personal opinion and a company's view."

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