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LDF Files Amicus Brief in Cop City Case

Yesterday, the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) filed an [amicus brief](#) in *Baker v. City of Atlanta*, challenging Atlanta Municipal Code Sec. 66-37(b)'s ban on non-Atlanta residents collecting referendum petition signatures. This provision restricted residents of neighboring DeKalb County from collecting and attesting to petitions regarding a referendum that seeks to place the construction of the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center, widely known as Cop City, on the ballot. The District Court issued a preliminary injunction, enjoining the residency restriction and permitting non-residents, including DeKalb County residents, to express their core political speech through signature collection. The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit issued a stay, pausing the injunction, while it reviews the district court's decision.

LDF's brief argues that the residents of the majority-Black DeKalb County have a vested First Amendment interest in collecting petitions from their Atlanta neighbors because the Supreme Court recognizes this activity as core political speech. The construction of Cop City raises a host of environmental, health, and public safety concerns that directly impact DeKalb County residents, and they have the right to engage their neighbors about these critical issues.

LDF's brief explains that the City of Atlanta's residency requirement for collecting petitions unconstitutionally restricts the political expression of non-resident petition circulators. The requirement also significantly burdens the signature collection process, resulting in a reduction in the number of signatures, which the Supreme Court recognizes as an important consideration.

"Cop City has devastating consequences for the environment, the lives of local residents, and the future of public safety in Atlanta and beyond." said LDF Senior Counsel Anne Oredoko. "It would be inexcusable and anti-democratic for residents of DeKalb County, who will be directly impacted by the construction of this facility, to continue to be unconstitutionally restricted from communicating with their Atlanta neighbors on the issue of Cop City. We therefore urge the Court to recognize the right of DeKalb County residents to express their political will and affirm the district court's preliminary injunction."

Read the full amicus brief [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or

LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.