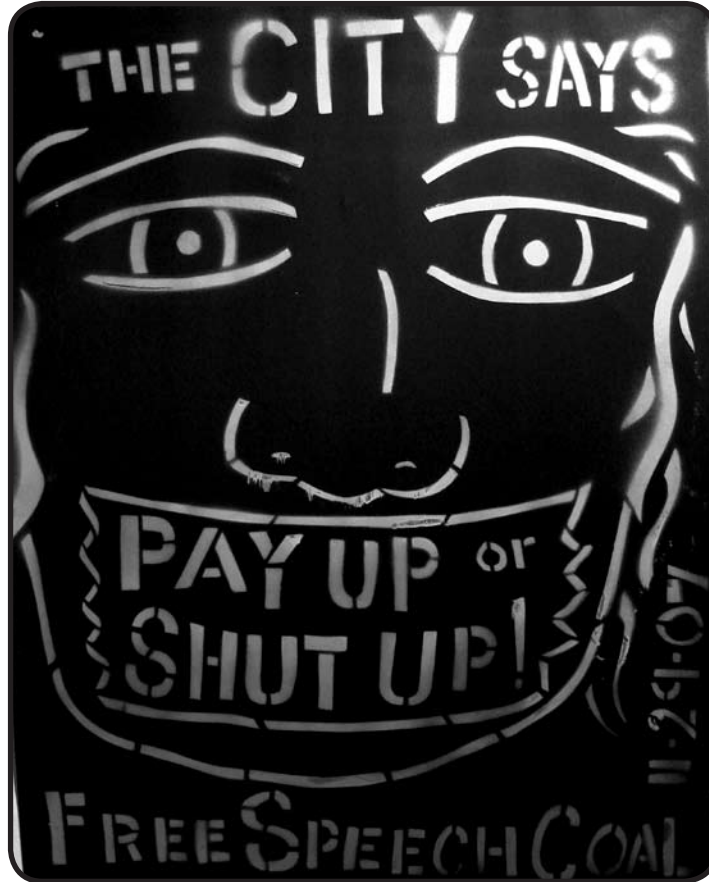


LAWSUIT FILED CHALLENGING SAN ANTONIO'S PARADE ORDINANCE

By Free Speech Coalition

On November 29, the Mayor and City Council voted to pass an ordinance that puts a price on free speech. While the original goal of this ordinance was to streamline the permit and fee process for “Parades, Runs, Walks, and Related Events,” concerns over limitations on our First Amendment rights have become a key point. Despite many citizens who spoke before the City Council on the issue, only Councilwoman Lourdes Galvan of District 5 and Councilwoman Mary Alice Cisneros of District 1 voted against the ordinance.



Court and courts in numerous top-tier cities, including cities in Georgia and Pennsylvania, have repeatedly ruled it unconstitutional for the government to impose such high fees that people are in effect precluded from using the public streets for marches and other such events. Although the ordinance passed says that the City will pay for the first \$3000 of any “First Amendment Activities” on the streets, the remaining costs could still easily prevent free speech marches from occurring.

Even if it is permissible to charge groups the actual cost of using the

streets for a march or parade, courts have clearly held that the First Amendment requires “viewpoint neutrality.” That is, if the government decides to waive costs for some marches or parades, it must do so for all, without regard to the views expressed by the event or the event organizers. Thus, it is unconstitutional for the City to subsidize some parades or marches and not others, as the ordinance passed does.

In response, members of the San Antonio Free Speech Coalition and the International Woman’s Day March and Rally Committee marched to the Federal Court House immediately following the City Council vote to file a lawsuit challenging this ordinance. To become a part of the Free Speech Coalition, you can call 210.228.0201 and ask for scheduled meeting times and updates on the lawsuit.

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