

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 21, 2006

Contact:  
Maggie Garrett or  
Debbie Seagraves (404) 523-6201

## **STATESBORO FIXES PICKETING & PARADE ORDINANCE TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

The ACLU of Georgia applauds the City of Statesboro, which voted last night to repeal its picket and protest ordinance and replace it with an ordinance that will meet constitutional muster. This decision follows months of negotiations with the ACLU of Georgia relating to the city ordinance that was used in April 2004 to arrest Dr. James M. Hood for engaging in a peaceful, one-person picket without a permit.

Dr. Hood has been picketing the Sea Island Bank in Statesboro for over 16 years. Although Dr. Hood usually informs the city before he pickets as a courtesy, he does not formally obtain a permit. In April 2004, after years with no incidents, Dr. Hood was arrested for picketing the bank without a permit.

Dr. Hood said "I was really surprised that I was being arrested. It was my understanding that the permit requirement didn't apply to me because I was engaged in a one-person picket."

The ACLU of Georgia, on behalf of Dr. Hood, charged that the City of Statesboro could not constitutionally require that a single person obtain a permit for a one-person picket. The City ultimately agreed to drop the criminal charges against Dr. Hood and worked with the ACLU to craft an ordinance that meets the requirements of the First Amendment.

Maggie Garrett, Staff Counsel at the ACLU of Georgia said "We are pleased that the City was willing to work with us to adopt a parade and picketing ordinance that meets the requirements of the First Amendment. Now, Dr. Hood, and others in Statesboro, can exercise their First Amendment rights without fear of arrest."

Although the government may require permits for large groups seeking to engage in free speech activities, the government may not burden the speech of small groups with permit requirements. The City's new ordinance requires permits only for groups of 50 people or more.

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