

CONTACT: Gerry Weber or Debbie Seagraves ACLU of Georgia 404-523-6201
Senator Vincent Fort 770-256-1493

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACLU of Georgia Challenges Senate Gag Rule

The ACLU of Georgia filed suit on behalf of State Senator Vincent Fort and ethics watchdog George Anderson, challenging the Senate Ethics Committee's gag rule that silences those who file ethics complaints against state senators. Under the rule, any complaint alleging unethical behavior by a senator "shall remain confidential" and if the committee absolves the senator behind closed doors, the complaining citizen must remain silent forever.

"The Senate Ethics Committee rule is a perpetual gag on free speech that prevents citizens from speaking out about a failure by the legislature to pursue ethics violations," said Gerry Weber, Legal Director of the ACLU of Georgia, "We are standing up for free speech, and good, clean government."

The ACLU is seeking an order preventing enforcement of the gag rule, and has requested immediate relief.

"The people's business should not be conducted in secret," said Debbie Seagraves, Executive Director of the ACLU of Georgia. "Under this rule, a

citizen may never disclose an ethics complaint, even if the subject of the complaint is running for higher office 20 years later.”

Senator Vincent Fort (D-Atlanta), a plaintiff in the lawsuit, said, “It is important that the people of Georgia know about ethics complaints filed against their legislators. We work for the people.”

The complaint was filed today in U.S. District Court, Northern District of Georgia. A copy of the complaint may be found at www.acluga.org.

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