



November 9, 2012  
Seattle, WA  
Contact: Doug Honig, ACLU-WA  
206-624-2184

## **Court Upholds Free Speech Rights of Veterans For Peace to March in Auburn's Veterans Day Parade**

The U.S. District Court in Seattle today ruled in favor of a veterans group's rights to march in Auburn's Veterans Day Parade, the ACLU of Washington announced today. Represented by the ACLU-WA, Veterans for Peace (VFP) had filed a lawsuit saying that Auburn officials were violating the group's free speech rights by unfairly denying its application to march in the civic celebration. The district court is issuing a Temporary Restraining Order against the City of Auburn so that VFP may march in the parade on Saturday.

"We're pleased that the court has upheld the free speech rights of a group of veterans who have served in conflicts from World War II to the Iraq War. Many diverse groups will be participating in the parade, and city officials gave no good reason why Veterans For Peace should not be allowed to march along with other veterans," said ACLU-WA legal director Sarah Dunne. "As the judge pointed out in her ruling, freedom of speech is one of the very freedoms that our veterans have fought to defend around the world."

Veterans For Peace (VFP) is a national organization that honors our country's veterans and active military personnel, and seeks to promote peace and decrease U.S. military involvement in foreign conflicts. In its work, VFP honors soldiers by using and guarding constitutional freedoms that military personnel swore to defend in their oaths of enlistment and office.

The Greater Seattle Chapter of Veterans For Peace has participated in the Auburn Veterans Day Parade since 2006. Yet the city denied the veterans group's application to march in the 2012 parade, claiming that the city chose only those applicants which most closely meet the purpose and goals of the parade. At the same time, the city has approved applications from a motorcycle club, a Corvette club, the Optimists and Kiwanis International, the Sons of Italy, and a Daffodil Festival float.

The court agreed with the suit's assertion that the City of Auburn was discriminating against Veterans For Peace because of the group's viewpoint. In sponsoring the parade, the city is creating a space for private groups to speak on the topic of veterans on the occasion of Veterans

Day. VFP is clearly a veterans group, and the court found that its mission is not inconsistent with the purpose and goals of the parade.

Further, the court agreed with the lawsuit's contention that the City of Auburn's rules governing which groups are allowed to march in the government-sponsored parade are unconstitutionally broad and vague. The rules impermissibly allow decisions about applications to be made on the subjective beliefs of ad hoc group of officials and residents.

ACLU-WA cooperating attorney David Whedbee of MacDonald, Hoague, and Bayless, and staff attorneys Sarah Dunne and La Rond Baker handled the case.

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