

# COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE ANNUAL SEMINAR ON MUNICIPAL LAW

## Protest Management, Parade Permits and First Amendment Litigation at the 2024 Republican National Convention

Presented by

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City of Thornton



COLORADO  
MUNICIPAL  
LEAGUE

# 2024 Republican National Convention, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 15-18, 2024



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# Preparing for a National Security Special Event

- Drafting Extraordinary Event Ordinances
- Mutual Aid Agreements
- Parade & Speaker's Platform Permitting
- Legal Challenges
- Police Legal Advisors during the Event



# Extraordinary Event Ordinance Regulations Milwaukee Code of Ordinances (MCO) Files 231740 & 240174

- Cessation of regular special event permitting
- Designated official parade route & speaker's platforms
- Prohibition on obstructing public right-of-way
- Security perimeter regulations
  - Credentialed Area
  - Limited vehicular access
  - Prohibition on abandonment of certain items, camping, or attaching oneself to another person, building, object, fixture that obstructs public movement.
  - Prohibited Items

# Prohibited Items Ordinance

- Lumber larger than 2 inches in width and 0.25 inch thick, including supports for signs.
- Metal, plastic, or other hard material larger than 0.75 inch thick and 0.0125 inch in wall thickness, including pipe and tubing.
- Weapons other than lawful firearms (state law preemption of firearm regulations), explosives, incendiary device, fireworks.
- Backpacks exceeding 18"x13"x7", coolers, tents, drones, laser, ladders, grappling hooks, canned goods, tennis balls, non-plastic containers, (including those containing bodily fluid or waste or flammable liquid).
- Gas masks, locks, aerosol cans, adhesive, or any rope, chain, cable, strapping, wire, string, line, tape or similar material in a length greater than 6 inches.
- MCO File 240174 (sec. 2)



# Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), C.R.S. § 24-60-2902

- Ratified by U.S. Congress (PL 104-321) and is law in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. (Wis. Stat. §323.80; check your state statutes)
- Standardized mutual aid agreement terms that have been pre-approved, in advance of actual emergencies (see [EMACweb.org](http://EMACweb.org) for more info).



# EMAC: How it Works

- Utilized for mutual aid with out-of-state agencies (does not apply to in-state mutual aid).
- Negotiated state to state, not local agency to local agency.
- Requires declaration of an emergency.
- Can be used broadly depending on the type of emergency and the services needed and even for planned "emergencies" like National Security Special Events.
- Can be used to request personnel or equipment.
- Requesting state assumes liability and costs.
- While EMAC sets standard terms, states may negotiate supplemental terms:
  - Add federal grant requirements
  - Establish work rules, standard operating procedures, command structure, etc.

# Pros of EMAC

- Fewer agreements since you only need to contract with each state, not each individual law enforcement agency.
- Terms of the agreements are already set by the EMAC law (easier to negotiate).
- Allows licenses, certifications, and permits issued in other states to be recognized in the state where assistance is needed.
- Assisting workers are treated as agents of the state requesting aid for tort liability and immunity purposes (good protection for the assisting agency and for the requesting agency seeking assistance as the liability obligation is with the state government of the requesting agency).
- EMAC requires assisting agency to provide workers comp and death benefits to their own employees rather than pushing that obligation on the requesting agency.



# Cons of EMAC

- Local government agency has to rely on state agency to enter into and negotiate the agreements with other states (some loss of control, less urgency by state agency, less knowledgeable about the needs of the requesting agency).
- Because of the federal grant terms and other RNC-specific language we needed, there was negotiation than is typically needed under EMAC which slowed the process considerably.
- The lack of direct agency to agency contact made some states unwilling to participate even though local law enforcement agencies in their states wanted to assist (ended up needing Governor to Governor communication to get some states on board).
- Because it requires an emergency declaration of the governor in order to use, some don't like the optics of declaring an emergency for a pre-planned event. **BUT, also a pro of EMAC as the Governor's Declaration was able to limit some state law mutual aid restrictions in Wisconsin.**

# Non-EMAC Mutual Aid

- Milwaukee used EMAC for the 2024 RNC but not for the 2020 DNC.
- In-state mutual aid is state law specific – not covered by EMAC.
- Mutual aid obtained without EMAC often results in assisting agencies insisting protection from the requesting agency for tort liability / indemnification, worker's compensation and death benefits.
- Without using EMAC, each mutual aid agreement can be very different – hard to keep track of which terms apply to which agency.

# Mutual Aid During the 2024 RNC in Milwaukee

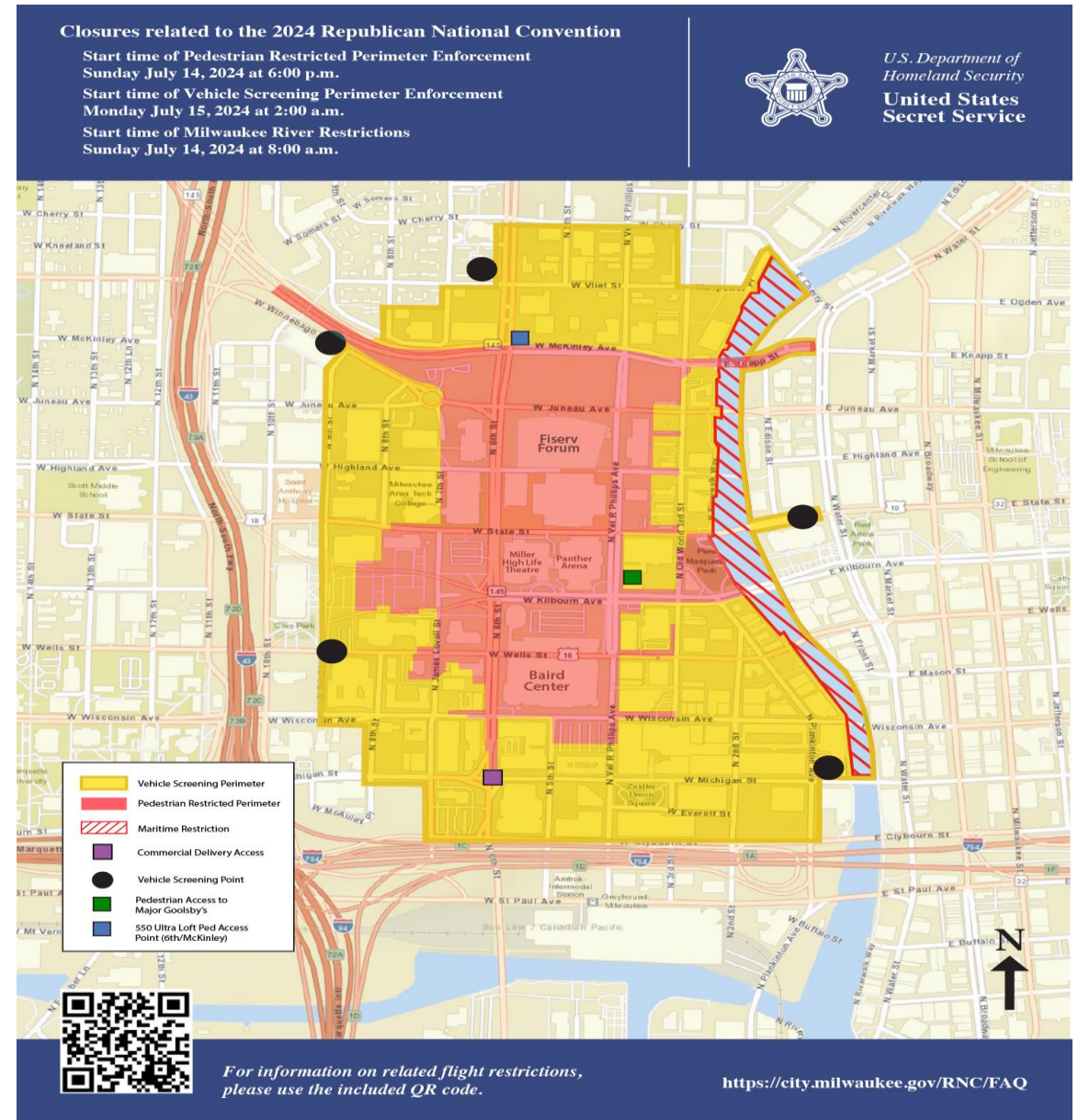
- 44 Agreements with In-State Law Enforcement Agencies
- EMAC Agreements with 24 States and the District of Columbia (63 law enforcement agencies total)
- 10 Agreements with In-State Fire Departments
- 5 In-State Tactical Emergency Medical Service agencies plus Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management





# RNC 2024 NSSE Perimeter Map

- Red area limited to credentialed guests and personnel, controlled through search checkpoints.
- Yellow area open to the public, although vehicle access is limited through search checkpoints (identified by black dots).







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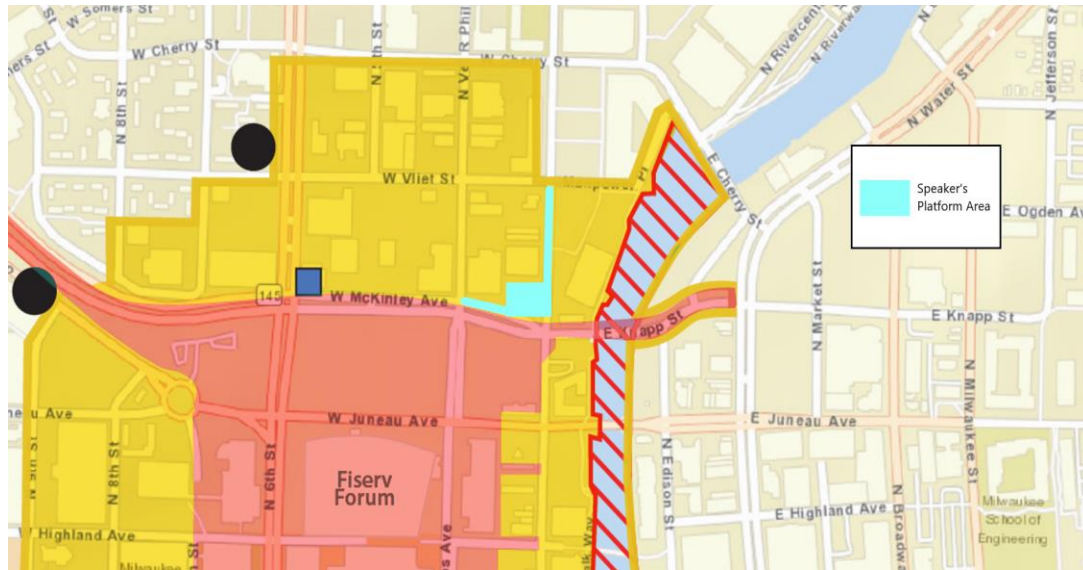
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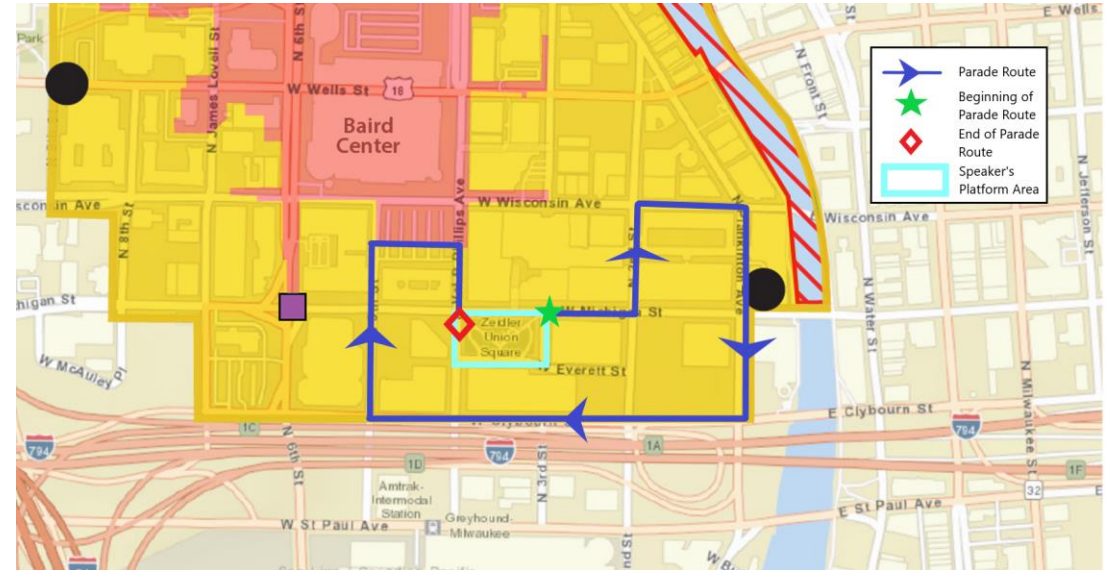
# City-Sponsored Speaker's Platforms & Parade Route

Low usage rate: 5-15%

- Haymarket Speakers Platform: 53



- Zeidler Speakers Platform: 56 Sign-ups
- Official Parade Route: 101 Sign-ups





# North Speaker's Platform



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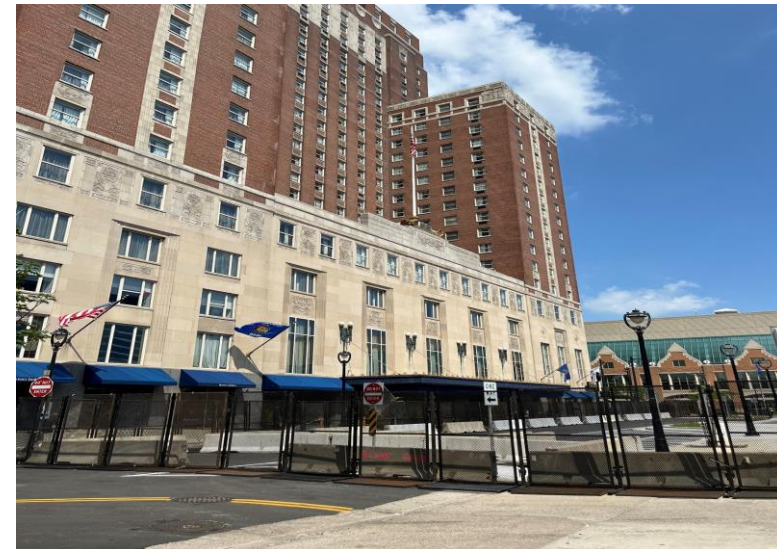
# South Speaker's Platform



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# Parade Route



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# Legal Challenges to Municipal Regulations

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

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COALITION TO MARCH ON THE RNC,  
Plaintiff,

Case No. 24-cv-0704-bhl

v.

CITY OF MILWAUKEE, CAVALIER JOHNSON, and  
JERREL KRUSCHKE,  
Defendants.

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# Three Causes of Action Under § 1983

- Failure to Grant the Coalition's Permit Applications Violates the Coalition's First and Fourteenth Amendment Rights
- The Special Event Ordinance is Unconstitutional on its Face Under the First and Fourteenth Amendments
- Imposing the Restrictions of the Special Event Ordinance Violates the Coalition's Fourteenth Amendment Due Process Rights

# Declaratory Relief Requested

- Declaration that Defendants unconstitutionally failed to grant the parade permit.
- Declaration that the Ordinance violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments on its face and as applied.



# Injunctive Relief Requested

- Enjoin Defendants from enforcing unconstitutional parts of Ordinance
- Order Defendants to grant a parade permit allowing the Coalition to assemble and march on July 15, 2024 at a time and along a route that allows them to communicate their message to their intended audience of RNC delegates
- Permanent Injunction
- Costs & attorney's fees

# Allegations about parade permit applications

- "Coalition" had submitted four applications over the course of about a year prior to filing suit.
- It was only six weeks before the RNC and the City was unable or unwilling to say whether the proposed route was accepted.



# The parade permit applications

- 4/12/23 Application filed under Milwaukee's general events ordinance, MCO 105-55.5. Applicant told they had applied too far in advance under the Ordinance's requirements.
- 9/21/23 Second application under general ordinance. It did not provide all required information, and therefore the automated system did not process it.

# The permit applications

- 1/18/24 Third application under general ordinance. This one filed within the time frame indicated in the first denial.
- 4/17/24 Fourth application filed via online portal and pursuant to newly passed extraordinary events ordinance.



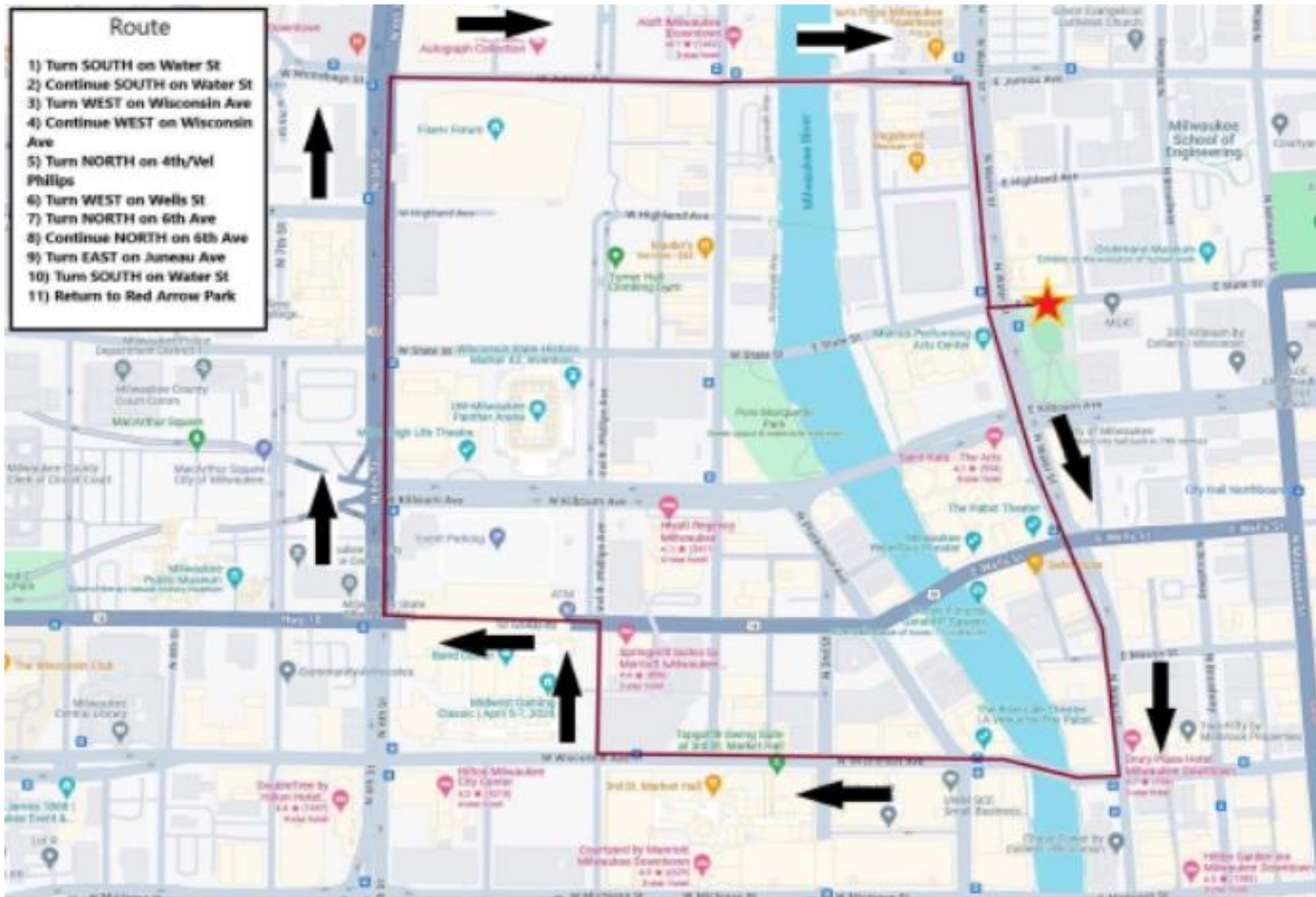
# The permit applications

- In February, after learning that the ACLU was representing the Coalition, an Assistant City Attorney began regular communications with the ACLU.
  - Advised that applications would be treated on first-come, first-served basis, and that Coalition was first in line
  - Provided a courtesy copy of the extraordinary events ordinance
  - Advised as to when the Council committee hearing was scheduled, and Coalition members in fact testified
  - Provided other updates, including the afternoon suit was filed

# What permit did plaintiff want?

"The Coalition plans to hold the protest parade at noon on Monday, July 15, 2024, the first day of the Convention, within sight and sound of the Convention venues. The Coalition plans to stop for a period along the parade route to permit speakers to deliver speeches to attendees, and to use amplified sound equipment to do so." (Compl. ¶ 17).





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# Other allegations

- "Security footprint" too large to be appropriate TPM restriction
- Only allowing parades 7 hours per day
- Reading definitions to mean City threatening to fine anyone marching elsewhere
- Ordinance gives officials too much discretion, including to make decisions just days before the RNC
- Challenging vagueness of background check provision



# Case Timeline – First 9 Days

- **June 5th** – **Expedited** Motion for Preliminary Injunction, Brief, Declarations, Emergency Motion for Expedited Briefing filed
- **June 6th** – Complaint filed and Summons Issued
- **June 6th** – Court order requiring service on Defendants. Response due **7 calendar days** after service and reply 5 calendar days thereafter
  - Plaintiff request for waiver of service
- **June 7th** – Defendants served
- **June 11th** – Counsel calls Clerk to advise parties wish to mediate
- **June 12th** – Parties file stipulation requesting referral to Magistrate Judge for mediation and extension of the briefing schedule
- **June 12th** – case referred
  - Defendants' response now due 6/20
- **June 14th** – negotiated Protective Order finalized

# June 17th Mediation

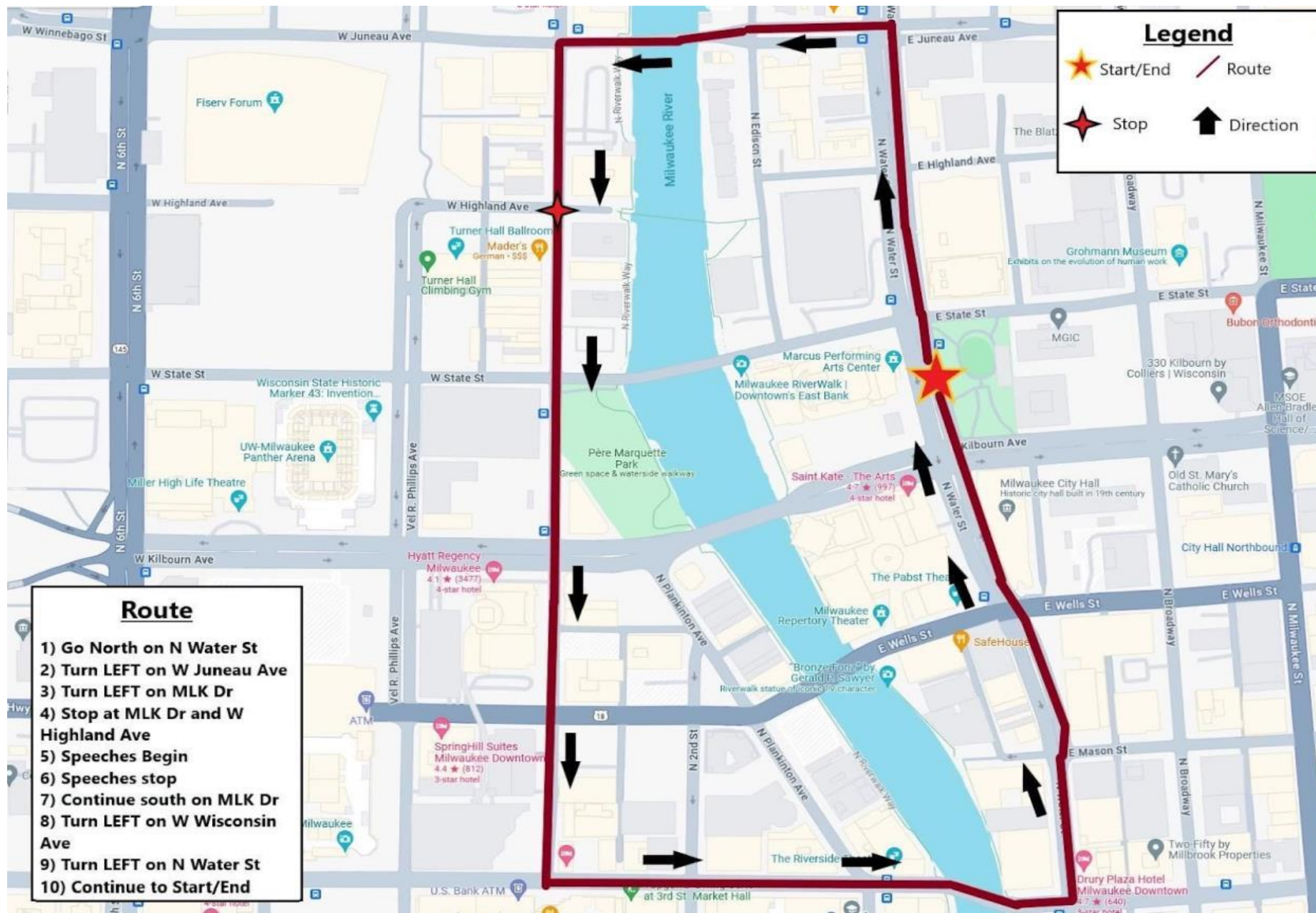
- Mayor Cavalier Johnson's Chief of Staff
- Commissioner of Public Works
- Milwaukee Police Department Captain
- United States Secret Service SAIC
- United States Attorney's Office as Counsel to USSS
- ACLU and party representatives
- City Attorney's Office

The only resulting agreement is that Defendants' response due 6/21



# Case Timeline

- June 21st – City's Brief in Opposition and Declarations filed
- June 24th – Court holds status conference (Standing? Mootness? Testimony?) Oral argument scheduled.
- June 27th – Plaintiff files Reply Brief and Amended Complaint naming U.S. Secret Service Director
- July 2nd – DOJ appears and files Brief in Opposition for Secret Service
- July 2nd – Parties file joint stipulations of fact; City files supplemental proposed facts
- July 3rd – 3.5 hours of oral argument
- July 8th – Order, 2024 WL 3358149
- July 8th - Preliminary Injunction
- July 11th - Judgment



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# First Amendment Standards

- "...Coalition members have the right to express these views both individually and by marching in support of their ideas with like-minded citizens. See *Shuttlesworth v. City of Birmingham*, 394 U.S. 147, 152 (1969) (recognizing that while parading is not “pure speech,” the “use of public streets and sidewalks, over which a municipality must rightfully exercise a great deal of control in the interest of traffic regulation and public safety, . . . the First and Fourteenth Amendments [] afford [some] . . . freedom to those who would communicate ideas by conduct such as patrolling, marching and picketing”). There is an “inherent expressiveness [in] marching to make a point.” *Hurley v. Irish-American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Group of Boston*, 515 U.S. 557, 568 (1995)."
- (Decision at 14).

# First Amendment Standards

- "At the same time, it is equally without question that the Coalition members' right to express themselves is not a license to do so in any way they choose, without regard to the rights of others or to legitimate public interests. See *Hefron v. Int'l Soc'y for Krishna Consciousness, Inc.*, 452 U.S. 640, 647 (1981) ("[T]he First Amendment does not guarantee the right to communicate one's views at all time and places or in any manner that may be desired."); *MacDonald v. City of Chicago*, 243 F.3d 1021, 1025 (7th Cir. 2001) ("Although [plaintiff] has the right to demonstrate and speak freely on this issue, that right does not allow him and other participants to create chaos by disrupting traffic, impeding pedestrians, endangering themselves or other people, and otherwise causing gridlock on the busy streets and sidewalks of the city.");
- (Decision at 14-15).

# First Amendment Standards

- "The First Amendment is not offended by reasonable restrictions on the time, place, and manner of an individual's exercise of his or her First Amendment rights. See *Ward v. Rock Against Racism*, 491 U.S. 781, 791, 803 (1989) (upholding New York City regulations on protests in Central Park); *Frisby v. Schultz*, 487 U.S. 474, 487–88 (1988) (upholding City of Brookfield municipal ordinance prohibiting picketing targeting particular residences). Reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions can include permitting schemes that limit expression in public places. See *Navratil v. City of Racine*, 101 F.4th 511, 519–21 (2024).
- (Decision at 15).



# Court: The Regulation is Content Neutral

- "As the Coalition conceded at oral argument, the City's Special Event Ordinance and parade regulation are content neutral on their face. Under the Special Event Ordinance, all protestors who wish to parade in protest of the convention were required to apply for a permit and reserve a spot in the procession. (ECF No. 7-6, §§ 6, 12.) Likewise, all protestors must use the same Official Parade Route, irrespective of the message they seek to convey. While the City will stagger start times approximately 20 minutes apart for all participants, beginning at 12 p.m. and continuing to 7 p.m. on the first day of the convention, the Coalition has not suggested that the City is using the content of any participant's messaging in determining their start time. These regulations apply uniformly to all would-be protestors who seek to parade, regardless of the content of their message, presumably including anyone seeking to march in support of the convention. Accordingly, nothing in the application process or the substance of the ordinance suggests any test based on the content of an applicant's message. In sum, the Coalition is not being singled out in any way based on its members' speech or expressive activity." (Decision at 16).

# Court: Regulation is Narrowly tailored

- Coalition concedes that safety and security are significant government interests, but insists that the City has offered only "blanket invocations" of these interests. (Decision at 19-20).
- Court influenced by evidentiary record showing security planners' efforts to keep everyone safe and plan for protection of candidates. "The Secret Service's efforts specifically accounted for numerous potential security threats including: terrorist attacks, lone gunmen, fire, environmental hazards, chemical or biological attacks, structural safety concerns, vehicle attacks, and suicide bombers."

# Court: Regulation is Narrowly tailored

- 50,000 people expected
- City intends to protect First Amendment rights of protesters, but also consider public safety, needs of residents and businesses, traffic flow, transportation needs, law enforcement needs unrelated to the Convention. (Decision at 20-21).
- Features of perimeters (fencing, vehicle screening, pedestrian only areas, unique geography, freeway access, etc.). *Id.* at 21.
- The "octopus" in the room. *Id.*



# Court: Regulation is Narrowly tailored

- That the City's Official Parade Route and the Coalition's preferred route are not the same does not render the official route constitutionally inadequate. See *Marcavage*, 659 F.3d at 631. (Decision at 22).
- Coalition-preferred route would:
- Travel a major north-south street just east of River where City's primary commercial buildings are located
- Threaten major traffic congestion
- Block entry and exit routes into the secure perimeter, which need to remain clear for emergency responders and evacuation plans
- (Decision at 22-23).

# Court: Ample Alternatives Exist

- A valid time, place, and manner regulation must also leave speakers ample opportunities to express their views. *Ward*, 491 U.S. at 802. “An adequate alternative does not have to be the speaker’s first choice.” *Weinberg v. City of Chicago*, 310 F.3d 1029, 1041 (7th Cir. 2002) (citation omitted).
- Coalition could march on the City's official parade route and be within one block of the Baird Center, one of the primary convention venues and media filing center.
- Coalition could speak at one of the City's two official speaker's platforms and two public viewing areas. The northern sites are proximate to Fiserv Forum and the delegate bus loading zones.
- Coalition could stand, march, or protest through much of City *if not blocking traffic or the official parade route*.

# Court: Parade permitting scheme not an unconstitutional prior restraint

- Prior restraints are constitutionally sound TPM restrictions if content neutral, narrowly tailored, leave ample alternatives, and *do not put too much discretion in the hands of government officials*. *GEFT Outdoor, LLC v. Monroe County*, 62 F.4th 321, 327 (7th Cir. 2023).
- "While permits are required to march on the City streets in protest of the convention or to secure a spot on one of the speakers' platforms, the ordinance does not give City bureaucrats overly broad or unbridled discretion to grant or deny a permit. City officials only have authority to deny or revoke . . . (1) a false or incomplete statement made in the permit application; (2) violation of the Special Event Ordinance[.]" (Decision at 26).



# Prior Restraint Based on Criminal Convictions

- *“A determination by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works that an applicant, or persons represented by the applicant, have previously engaged in violent or destructive conduct in connection with a previous parade or other public assembly, in violation of any provisions of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances or any state or federal laws.” Extraordinary Events Ordinance §9-a-2.*
- *Commissioner: revocation or denial “shall be based upon a finding that the applicant, or persons represented by the applicant, have been convicted or adjudicated guilty of engaging in violent or destructive conduct in connection with a previous parade or other public assembly in violation of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances or any state or federal laws within the last 7 years.”*

# Prior Restraint Based on Criminal Convictions

- “[A] prior restraint exists when a regulation ‘[gives] public officials the power to deny use of a forum in advance of actual expression.’” *Stokes v. City of Madison*, 930 F.2d 1163, 1168 (7th Cir. 1991) (quoting *Se. Promotions, Ltd. v. Conrad*, 420 U.S. 546, 553 (1975)) (alteration in original).
- A narrowly drawn prior restraint may be constitutional only if it is justified by a “powerful overriding interest,” such as national security, incitements to violence, or the overthrow of orderly government. *Stokes*, 930 F.2d at 1169 (citing *Near v. Minnesota*, 283 U.S. 697, 716 (1931)).
- Even a powerful overriding interest such as curtailing incitements to violence, does not justify a sweeping prior restraint of expressive conduct on the basis of past violence. *Stokes*, 930 F.2d at 1169; *Collin v. Chicago Park District*, 460 F.2d 746 (7th Cir. 1972).

# Prior Restraint Based on Criminal Convictions

- "Subsection 9a-2 flatly violates this rule, allowing the commissioner to revoke a parade or speaker permit for an entire group if a single person merely associated with that group has been convicted of a single ordinance violation or crime relating to a parade or public assembly within the last seven years. The ability to deny a group of individuals their First Amendment right to express themselves under subsection 9a-2 goes far beyond what the Constitution permits. It also creates a significant risk of censorship exceeding that necessary to prevent "incitement to imminent lawless action," the limited circumstance in which a permit could be denied under Seventh Circuit law. While a more narrowly tailored regulation could conceivably be applied in a constitutional manner, as currently constructed, including with commissioner's latest guidance, subsection 9a-2 is an unconstitutionally overbroad prior restraint under the First Amendment." (Decision at 30).



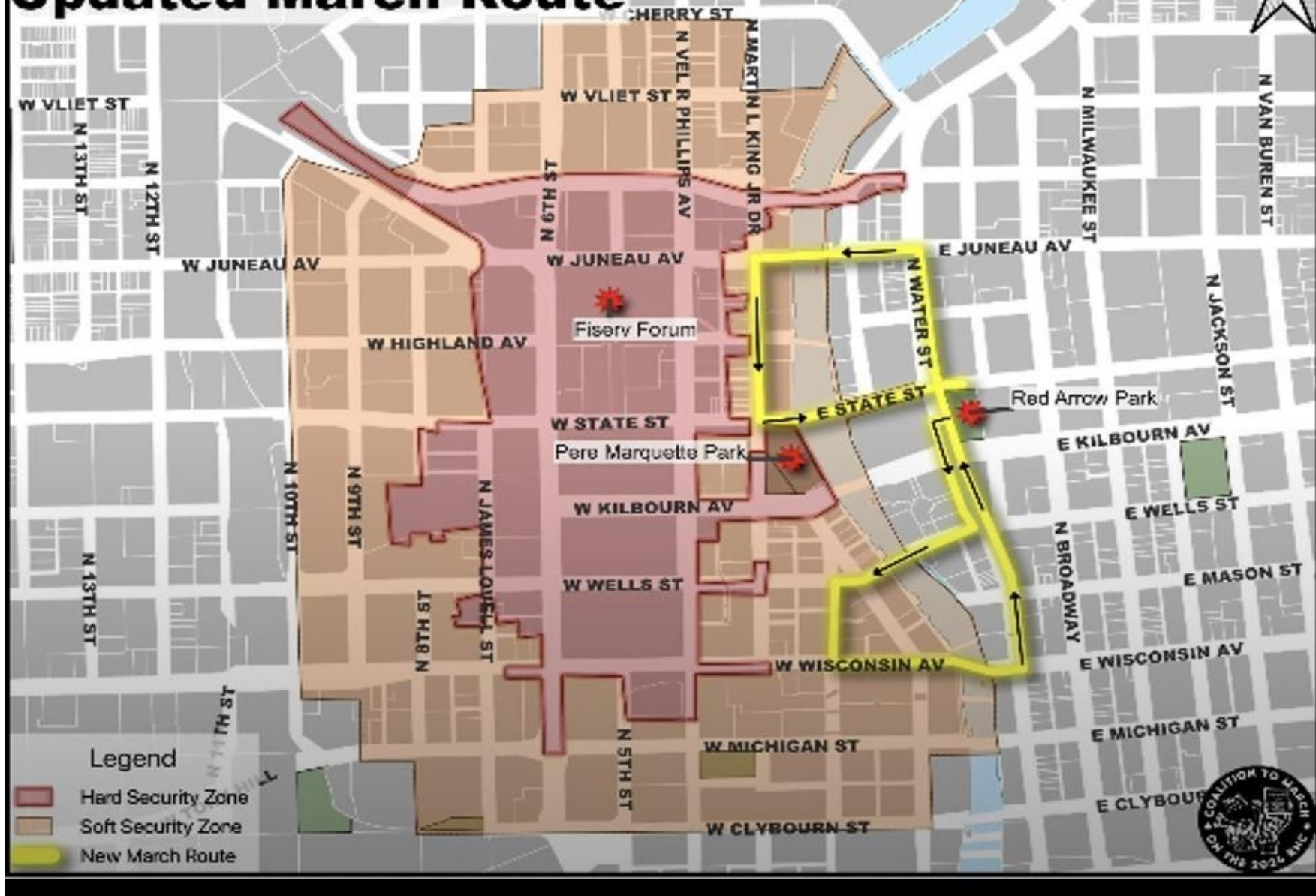
# Parade Definition not Void for Vagueness

- “Official parade route” means a route within the preliminary security footprint as close as reasonably practicable to sight and sound distance from the entrance of the convention facilities as determined by the appropriate City officials in consultation with the United States Secret Service. The appropriate City officials may select alternative routes as necessary to accommodate crowds, and to ensure public safety and free movement of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- “Parade” means any formation, march, or procession of any kind traveling in unison for a common purpose upon the streets, excluding sidewalks, within the city that interferes with the normal flow or regulation of vehicular or pedestrian traffic upon the streets within the city....

# Beware: "Sight and Sound"

- Preferred phrase of protesters in litigation as a shorthand for the maximum acceptable distance between a speaker and intended audience, but the phrase lacks meaning as a standard in Supreme Court First Amendment cases.
- "[I]t is unclear what [the] legal or practical parameters [of “sight and sound”] are ... From whose vantage point is “sight and sound” measured—the speaker or the audience? ... Is a speaker within “sight” if she is merely within the range of normal visual perception ... [or] does “being within sight” limit the range to that in which a speaker can be identified as a person, or where attributes of that person can be distinguished, or when a sign with text of a particular size held by the speaker can be read by the viewer?" *City and County of Denver*, 569 F. Supp. 2d at 1181.

# Updated March Route



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The Coalition to March on the RNC march. Photo by Jeramey Jannene.







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# Police Legal Advisor role protecting the First Amendment





# Officer-Involved Shooting near RNC

- <https://www.jsonline.com/videos/news/local/milwaukee/2024/07/18/rnc-shooting-bodycam-columbus-new-angle/74460876007/>



# Legal Issues That Arose From the Shooting

- Public outcry that out-of-state officers were on-duty outside of the convention zone (about a mile away).
- Dispute about viewing and releasing of body camera footage (supplemental terms of the EMAC agreement).
- Liability for any resulting use-of-force claim / filing insurance claim.
- Loss of our dialogue team partners from Columbus, OH during remaining protests that week.



# Protest Management Resources

*Protests & Public Safety: A Guide for Cities & Citizens*, Georgetown Law School, <https://constitutionalprotestguide.org/> (last visited 08/20/2024).

*Rethinking the Police Response to Mass Demonstrations: 9 Recommendations*, Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ResponseMassDemonstrations.pdf> (last visited 08/20/2024).

*Preparing for and Responding to Mass Demonstrations and Counter-Demonstrations in Portland, Oregon*, National Policing Institute, [https://www.policinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NPF-review-of-the-portland-police-bureaus-response-to-demonstrations\\_20210421.pdf](https://www.policinginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NPF-review-of-the-portland-police-bureaus-response-to-demonstrations_20210421.pdf) (last visited 08/20/2024).

*Police Response to 2020 George Floyd Protests in Denver*, Office of Independent Monitor, [https://www.denvergov.org/files/assets/public/v/1/independent-monitor/documents/2020gfpreport\\_oim.pdf](https://www.denvergov.org/files/assets/public/v/1/independent-monitor/documents/2020gfpreport_oim.pdf) (last visited, 08/20/2024).

# Thank You!



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