

VOTE TO STOP COP CITY

Vote to Stop Cop City Coalition

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ATLANTA CITY COUNCIL RECKLESSLY PUBLISHES UNREDACTED AND UNSECURE PETITION DATA AS CONTINUATION OF VOTER INTIMIDATION AND SUPPRESSION

Atlanta, GA — Last night, the Office of the Municipal Clerk ignored the explicit directive of the Atlanta City Council and dangerously published almost entirely unredacted and unprotected scans of Cop City Vote referendum petitions on the City of Atlanta website. This move is especially egregious given the sustained intimidation campaign against Stop Cop City advocates waged by the State of Georgia, City of Atlanta, and the Atlanta Police Department. We call on the Atlanta City Council and the Atlanta City Council President to direct the Municipal Clerk to immediately take down these scans until there is a plan and process to protect the privacy and security of petition signers.

On September 11, 2023, the Atlanta City Council unanimously passed a resolution to direct the Municipal Clerk— who reports directly and only to the City Council — to digitize petitions. The intention, as stated by members of Council, was to use these scans to begin the petition verification process. Immediately after the resolution was passed, City Council President Doug Shipman and Chair of the Committee on Council Liliana Bakhtiari sent a letter to the Municipal Clerk. The letter stated that “in the interest of promoting voter privacy and security,” the Atlanta City Council directs that the public-facing scans published by the Clerk— outside of any formal open records requests — should redact:

Address except for city, state and zip code

Date of birth

Phone number

Signature

The Municipal Clerk blatantly ignored City Council’s instruction, admitting to taking direction from the City’s law department, instead of the Atlanta City Council. The City law department’s

advice to the Municipal Clerk is highly inappropriate, because the City's law department is not chartered to provide legal advice to the Municipal Clerk: their legal counsel is for the Mayor's offices and City Council. The City's law department continues to do the Mayor's bidding, offering political advice ahead of accurate, complete legal counsel. On numerous occasions, the City's law department has offered misleading legal guidance and overstepped their defined role.

The Municipal Clerk consciously, and without notice, colluded with the City's law department to publish unsecure, unredacted images of petitions as PDFs on the City of Atlanta's website— in effect doxxing all signers of the Cop City referendum petition. It is well-known and documented that the City's website security suffers from a dangerous history of cyberattacks and hacking.

Furthermore, the resolution itself states, "Municipal Clerk shall redact the personally identifiable information required by Georgia Open Records Act," providing the bare minimum protection required, not limiting the opportunity to fully secure the public's information. The City Council can — and voted unanimously that they would — publish a public document with necessary redactions to protect the public safety, while still complying with any open records requests through the Municipal Clerk's office. The law department is offering intentionally inaccurate information by conflating the council's right to publish public information with redactions with a document requested through an Open Records Request (O.R.R.).

And at the end of the day, the City irresponsibly published this information without any commitment or timeline to begin the promised verification process, which was the intention of the initial resolution. This administration and City Council continue to attack democratic process with their silence and malpractice — all to protect their own political careers.

We demand that the Atlanta City Council and the Atlanta City Council President:

- (1) Immediately direct the Municipal Clerk to take down the unprotected website with the un-redacted information
- (2) Recuse the Municipal Clerk from all matters related to the referendum as a result of not following the directive of City Council leadership
- (3) Request outside legal counsel to counter the political interference by the City of Atlanta Law Department

This is, at best, an egregious error, and at worst, it is a part of a continued, intentional orchestration of voter intimidation and suppression by this administration. The Atlanta City Council must act, and any refusal to use their power and voice to correct this shall be understood as approval and complicity.

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