

Operation King's Dream

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For Immediate Release

Press Release

On Tuesday, July 18, the City of Detroit, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and the Detroit City Council, the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, AFSCME Locals 207 and 312 and Operation King's Dream (the ballot question committee for BAMN) filed the brief in support of their motion for a preliminary injunction to keep the deceptively named "Michigan Civil Rights Initiative" (MCRI) off the November 2006 ballot.

The plaintiffs, who include many prominent elected political leaders of the state and who speak for Michigan's black communities in this case, cite the MCRI's gross violations of the Voting Rights Act, which were made a matter of public record by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission after its six-month investigation into the MCRI's racially-targeted voter fraud.

The plaintiffs argue that the United States Supreme Court emphasized that the Act was an "all-inclusive" ban of any discriminatory practice, however "subtle" that "might effectively be employed to deny citizens their right to vote." **The Court specifically held that the Act banned discrimination in the procedures that determined the choices that were on the ballot.**

The brief points out that the MCRI is asking the Court to declare that the Act does not apply to referendums even though the Act defines "voting" to include the procedures by which ballots are cast on "...propositions for which votes are received in an election." It demonstrates that, contrary to the MCRI's assertions that they are exempt from the Voting Rights Act because they are a 'private association,' the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Act banned racial discrimination by ostensibly private associations that affected the choices that appeared on a State's ballot. The MCRI essentially asks the Court to declare that it is entitled to a place on the Michigan ballot even if it obtained its signatures by racially-targeted fraud.

The plaintiffs' attorney, George Washington said, "The MCRI and other conservative organizations are attempting to end-run the protections of minority representation guaranteed by the Voting Rights Act. Precisely because minorities now have significant representation in public bodies, the conservative right has been forced to revive the long-dormant referendum process, complete with campaigns playing on misinformation and prejudice."

"This is a case of national significance that will determine whether or not blacks, Latino/as and other minorities have full voting rights," said Shanta Driver, Director of Operation King's Dream. "The Michigan State Chapter of the NAACP is filing an amicus brief in the case, and we are seeking the active support of all civil rights organizations."

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