

## Protesters Seek Access At Summit

By KRIS MAHER

PITTSBURGH—Six protest groups seeking greater access to the site of the group of 20 summit next week filed suit in U.S. District Court against city, state, and federal officials, claiming their constitutional rights of free expression and equal protection are being violated.

The city has so far approved only one permit for protesters to hold a demonstration for other causes, and is sorting out several more as the court heard arguments Wednesday.

The case reflects the growing anxiety in this city over how to balance rights of citizens to protest with concerns about security and keeping order during the two-day event. The city has been gridlock for protests since its selection as summit host was announced in May. It has thus far designated two zones for protests, one a few hundred feet from the convention center where the summit will take place and a second across a river from the site.

"I want to make sure Pittsburgh is viewed as a city of inclusion, which we are," said Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl.

On Wednesday, the city council passed a temporary ordinance that allows police to cite people for possessing items like

PVC pipe, handcuffs and chains or noxious substances like rotten eggs or gasoline. People can be cited if they seem likely to try to use such items to block roads or otherwise impede police or crowd-control efforts. The ordinance expires Sept. 30.

This week officials said Pittsburgh's downtown business district will be closed to most traffic during the summit "to ensure that residents, employees, businesses and visitors are kept safe."

"In my opinion, the city is severely overreacting," said Jutes Lobel, vice president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which is representing the six groups that filed suit, along with the American Civil Liberties Union. "These groups have tried to be reasonable and work with the city, and the city has let us down."

One defendant in the case, the Mass Defiant Center, a Pittsburgh nonprofit group, is organizing an antiwar march Sept. 25 and wants to end up "within sight and sound" of the convention center. The city has said it would allow the march to end about three-quarters of a mile away.

"We think we have the right to be seen and heard," said Peter Shell, co-chair of the center's antiwar committee.

Other groups want to erect tent cities in parks to illustrate the plight of refugees around the world, as well as house protesters overnight. The city has yet to issue permits for those activities and has indicated that it won't, according to the complaint filed by the protest groups.

