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Judge Rules Pittsburgh Must Allow Protest at G-20

By SEAN D. HAMILL

PITTSBURGH — A federal judge on Thursday ordered the City of Pittsburgh to allow a group's tent city protest during the [Group of 20](#) meeting next week, but he denied two other requests for permits for demonstrations, saying the city's goal of "protecting visiting foreign leaders is of the highest interest."

The judge, Gary L. Lancaster of Federal District Court, made his [ruling](#) just over a week before the leaders of 20 of the world's largest and emerging economies meet here in a gathering that has become a rallying point for a variety of protesters.

Six groups sued the city, state and federal governments last week after being denied permits after months of discussions.

Since their lawsuit was filed, the city granted permits to three of the groups: for an interfaith march by the [G6 Billion](#) group; for another march by the group [Bail Out the People](#); and for permits for a group of artists to use a city park.

Judge Lancaster granted one of the remaining groups, [CodePink](#), the right to use [Point State Park](#) in downtown Pittsburgh to hold a tent city demonstration Sunday night through Tuesday night. The city had tried to deny the permit, saying it would conflict with a run in the park, as well as a free-speech festival being organized by a group supported by former Vice President [Al Gore](#). Denying CodePink the right to hold its tent city "would result in the loss of CodePink's First Amendment freedoms," Judge Lancaster ruled.

Jules Lobel, a lawyer with the [Center for Constitutional Rights](#), which was representing the organizations along with the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), said the ruling for use of the park "shows that it's not just for the powerful, but for everyone."

Judge Lancaster denied a request from the [Thomas Merton Center](#) to end a march through the city on Sept. 25 with a rally on the Seventh Street Bridge, near the convention center where the meeting will be held.

He said the city's view that such a rally, with 5,000 to 7,000 people on a bridge, would be unsafe was valid. The judge also denied a request from the [3 Rivers Climate Convergence](#) to camp out overnight in a city park all of next week because it would put too much of a burden on the city to clean up after the campers, and set a precedent for other groups.

