## Parade, park permit rules during DNC get initial OK

By Daniel J. Chacon Rocky Mountain News Wednesday, January 23, 2008

Denver will enact special permit procedures for parks and parades during "extraordinary events" like the Democratic National Convention in August.

The City Council gave initial approval Tuesday to changes in the permitting process during events of national or international significance.

For example, during the DNC, the city would make it illegal to sell political buttons or posters without a license.

Critics, however, say such provisions trample on free speech.

"Nothing is more classically American . . . than letting people protest, than letting people stand on a soapbox and say what they want to say, than letting people demonstrate peacefully, than letting people march and have a parade," said Daniel Recht, a civil liberties attorney.

But council members said they had to balance constitutional rights with their responsibility to maintain "civil civic space for the benefit of all our citizens."

Still, council members said they were likely to introduce amendments to the two ordinances before final consideration next week. They said they needed to act quickly, however, because the seven months left until the DNC doesn't give the city much time to plan.

"We don't want to dilly-dally too much longer on this issue," Councilman Charlie Brown said.

The permitting changes have been the subject of months long negotiations between the city and the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado and the protest group Recreate 68.

Taylor Pendergrass, a staff attorney for the ACLU, said the city made some compromises, such as deleting a provision that gave government first priority for permitting. But he said the ACLU had four unresolved issues still to address.

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