

PRESS RELEASE
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Grandmother Challenges Ethics of Ethics Commission

ATLANTA, GA – Canton Tea Party founder Carolyn Cosby, a 67-year-old grandmother with physical health challenges, is appealing ethics complaints that she should have registered her small social interest groups as political action committees. The claim alleges she expressly advocated for or against issues or candidates while Cosby contends the advocacy was implicit. Her July 25th appeal [hearing](#) in Fulton County Superior Court presented a new challenge to the ethics of the Georgia State Ethics Commission.

The [commission](#)'s reputation was shattered in 2012 when it was forced to pay over \$3 million dollars to four former employees in wrongful termination lawsuits after they were fired or had their pay diminished while the commission investigated the 2010 campaign of Governor Nathan Deal. The commission was subsequently defunded, restructured and renamed the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission. It then cut a "Deal deal" which fined the Governor \$3,350 for questionable expenditures that were [not fully investigated](#). These included over \$300,000 in non-disclosed or potentially misdirected payments involving his daughter-in-law and private plane flights.

But in Cosby's case, the commission applied a **double standard**. An Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) fined her \$30,000 although Cosby's total expenditures for all groups were likely 1/10th of that. The commission never held a final hearing to review the ALJ decision. Cosby's attorneys Bruce Fein and Stephen Humphreys argued her disproportionate fine and selective prosecution are arbitrary and capricious as well as a retaliatory attempt to silence watchdog groups who oppose the political establishment.

Georgia law states that anyone who may affect the outcome of an election must register as a committee, however, the commission has **never** attempted to enforce the law before [\[O.C.G.A. 21-5-3\], \[O.C.G.A. 21-5-34\]](#). Fein explained the U.S. Supreme Court already ruled in the 1976 *Buckley v. Valeo* case that Cosby's **implicit advocacy is protected by the 1st Amendment**. Asst. Attorney General Christian Fuller, who represents the commission, did not refute that argument. Fein made the same argument at the ALJ hearing but Judge **Stephanie Howells stated she could only rule on Georgia law, not constitutional issues even though she is sworn to uphold the U.S. and Georgia Constitutions**.

Mrs. Cosby has established a new [web site](#) to defend free speech rights. She first came under scrutiny from a complaint filed by a former Cherokee County commissioner. Cosby incurred much wrath after exposing "*Bobo's Boondoggle*", a landfill deal that was bungled by commissioners and cost Cherokee taxpayers millions of dollars.

Judge Jane Barwick will rule on the appeal. The Ethics commission chair is Mary Paige Adams and its Executive Director is Stefan Ritter. Ritter successfully argued for the state to retain its unverifiable voting system in a 2009 Georgia Supreme Court case.