

# THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**  
**September 22, 2010**

**Contact: Lenore Ostrowsky**  
**Acting Chief, Public Affairs Unit**  
**(202) 376-8591**

### **FORMER DOJ VOTING CHIEF CHRISTOPHER COATES TO TESTIFY IN NEW BLACK PANTHER PARTY VOTER INTIMIDATION HEARING BEFORE CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Washington, DC – The United States Commission on Civil Rights announces that former Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Voting Chief Christopher Coates will testify in a hearing on the New Black Panther Party voter intimidation case, to be followed by a business meeting previously announced.

**DATE AND TIME:** Friday, September 24, 2010; 9:30 a.m. EDT

**PLACE:** 624 9<sup>th</sup> St., N.W.  
Room 540  
Washington, DC 20425

Mr. Christopher Coates, former chief of the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Voting Section, was subpoenaed by the Commission to testify on the New Black Panther Party litigation in December 2009. The Department prevented him from testifying and subsequently transferred him to the U.S. Attorney's Office in South Carolina. Mr. Coates has informed the Commission that he will appear at the hearing and read a statement, after which he will be available for Commissioners' questions. It is anticipated he will provide testimony about the New Black Panther Party litigation and the equal enforcement of the nation's civil rights laws by the Department.

The case involved members of the New Black Panther Party wearing paramilitary uniforms who positioned themselves at the entrance to a Philadelphia polling place during the 2008 election, one of them brandishing a night stick. Despite the entry of a default in its favor, the Department subsequently dismissed charges against all but one of the defendants and reduced the injunctive relief the Department had originally sought.

Persons with a disability requiring special services should contact Pamela Dunston at 202-376-8105.

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*The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chair Abigail Thernstrom, Commissioners Todd Gaziano, Gail Heriot, Peter N. Kirsanow, Arlan D. Melendez, Ashley L. Taylor, Jr., and Michael Yaki. Martin Dannenfels is the Staff Director. Commission meetings are open to the general public. The Commission's website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.*

624 9th Street, N.W. Suite 700 Washington, DC 20425  
Ph: (202) 376-7700 Fx: (202) 376-7672