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The Baton Rouge Secession Attempt That Could Defund the Police.

An affluent corner of East Baton Rouge Parish is trying to incorporate as a new city called St. George. But leaders of the Louisiana capital warn of budget consequences.

Ten years ago, a group of residents in the southeast corner of East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, began organizing around the idea of turning their unincorporated neighborhoods into a city. In 2019, the group succeeded in winning a ballot referendum, with 54% of the voters in those neighborhoods electing to form the City of St. George.

But less than two weeks after voters approved the measure, the mayor-president of Baton Rouge, Sharon Weston Broome, sued to stop the effort from proceeding. And on May 31, a judge rejected St. George's cityhood, saying that its formation was "unreasonable" and that it would cause fiscal harm to the parish and the city of Baton Rouge, which have one combined government. (A parish is Louisiana's equivalent to a county.)

Judge Martin Coady ruled that the revenue loss from St. George's departure would have forced the city and parish to make serious budget cuts. "This will have a significant decrease in services to citizens of Baton Rouge," reads the ruling, "including the Sheriff and the operation of the city government."

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