

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Barnes move faces a new legal challenge

February 18, 2011

By Stephan Salisbury

The move of the Barnes Foundation art collection from Lower Merion to a new museum on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway is again under legal assault.

In a suit filed Wednesday in Montgomery County Orphans' Court, opponents seek to reopen the case that led to court approval of the foundation's move in 2004. Judge Stanley Ott, who presided over the case, dismissed an earlier effort to reopen it in 2008. This time, in a petition filed by lawyer Samuel C. Stretton, opponents argue that former state Attorney General Mike Fisher and former Gov. Ed Rendell used backroom pressure to smooth the way for the move. The petition cites a 2009 movie, *The Art of the Steal*, as the source of the allegations. The petition argues that such pressure is "shocking" and was "never disclosed" to the court. Barnes officials had not seen the petition, a spokesman said Thursday, and had no immediate comment.

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