

UUSS: Stop the City's Criminalization of the Homeless !

City of Sacramento to Debate the Guerra/Jennings Ordinance

Banning "Daytime Camping"

Join Us at the Law and Legislation Committee, City Hall, January 16, 10 am.

Our advocacy partner, Sac ACT (Area Congregations Together), Has Denounced the Ordinance and Called for Action !

What is the Guerra/Jennings Ordinance?

- It would permit sweeps of all encampments of the unhoused, by City personnel (e.g. Sac PD) that are located anywhere within the City limits, wherever there is "daytime camping."
- It would not create any new shelter beds, safe ground camping spaces, mental health services, or addiction treatment options.
- On paper, the law would offer the unhoused short-term storage facilities for their belongings. It is not clear at this time how that would work.
- By prohibiting daytime camping, Guerra/Jennings would lead to the criminalization of homelessness; the police would "sweep" encampments, and non-compliant homeless persons would be subject to ticketing and fines, misdemeanor charges, and/or felony charges, depending on police/prosecutor discretion.

What can you do to help?

- Attend the City's Law and Legislation Committee Meeting, City Hall, on Tuesday, Jan. 16, 10 am. Plan to speak for 2 minutes against Guerra/Jennings.
 - ** In person, Sacramento City Hall, 915 I Street.
 - ** By zoom, go to https://sacramento.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=21, scroll down to "Upcoming Meetings", click on Law and Leg. Mtg, Jan.16, & follow the instructions.
- Submit a written comment: Follow the eComment instructions at <https://meetings.cityofsacramento.org>
- Write/email/visit your City Councilmember.
- Write a Letter to the Editor, Sacramento Bee <https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/submit-letter/>

Q and A on Guerra/Jennings, the Proposed Encampment “Sweeps” Ordinance.

Who are “Guerra/Jennings”? Eric Guerra, CM D6; Rick Jennings, CM D7 are the sponsors of this ordinance.

I want to read more about it: See Teresa Clift, “Two Sacramento Councilmembers ...”, and Ryan Lillis, “Worse Than Seattle ...” Sacramento Bee. Dec. 1 and Dec. 20, 2023.

What will happen on Jan.16? This will be the first opportunity for the public to voice its views on Guerra/Jennings. Depending on the vote, the ordinance might “die” on Jan. 16, or be considered again soon thereafter. Guerra and Jennings are asking for expedited treatment of their ordinance. The Jan. 16 vote would fund city staff to develop the ordinance.

I thought that the homeless in California were protected by the federal courts against “sweeps”? Technically, yes. However, litigation might take a long time and it is not guaranteed that advocates would be able to obtain an injunction (i.e. stop the “sweeps” in the interim period.)

Does the City of Sacramento already provide adequate shelter for the homeless? There are about 1,100 shelter beds and camping spaces, while the number of the homeless in Sacramento exceeds this figure by many thousands of persons. Typically, the shelters and City safeguard camping areas are full.

Please provide me with some talking points so I can get started. “The Guerra/Jennings ordinance so deeply offends our values that it ought to be scrapped. It provides the Sac PD and other City officials with the legal power to “sweep” the encampments of the unhoused. Many of the unhoused will resist the prohibition of daytime camping since they have no reasonable alternatives, given the City’s failure to provide adequate shelter and assistance. We anticipate that when they resist the “sweeps”, the unhoused will risk being cited and fined, and, in many cases, being charged with various misdemeanors and felonies. We reject the idea that criminalizing the homeless is an acceptable response to our City’s housing crisis. We call upon our City Council and Mayor to reverse course and recognize the urgent need for alternatives to criminalization. We at UUSS advocate for the rights of the homeless to adequate shelter, affordable housing, poverty assistance, mental health and addiction treatment services.”

Who can I talk to for more information?

Shireen Miles of ACT (shireenmiles@comcast.net). At UUSS, Rev. Lucy Bunch and Ministerial Intern, Rosemary Dodd;, and, from the UUSS Social Justice Committee: Meg Gunderson (mego369@gmail.com) and Annamarie Smith (advocacy@uuss.org).