

HOMELESSNESS

SUMMARY

- A Quinnipiac University poll of Californians finds a record 22% of all California voters cited **homelessness as the state's Number 1 issue followed by affordable housing at 17%**
- Despite **spending nearly \$23 billion on California's homeless housing from 2016 through 2024** homelessness has increased to a record 181,000. In 2022 alone, California **put aside \$7.2 billion** to address homelessness. In that year, there were an estimated 172,000 homeless statewide, which equates to spending nearly **\$42,000 per homeless person, enough to pay monthly rent for each of them**
- Assembly Republicans offer innovative reforms and solutions in 2024 to solve this elusive problem.

ISSUE

- **Numbers:** According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development there are **181,000 homeless individuals in California -- the highest number since at least 2007, a nearly 17% uptick just since 2022.** This means the state's homeless population represents 27% of the national total even though California has 12% of the nation's population. If lumped together, homeless would comprise California's 39th-largest city.
- **Causes:** Lack of affordable housing, eviction, high cost of living, job loss, generous welfare benefits, psychiatric disabilities and deinstitutionalization, drug addictions, failing ex-cons, and youth escaping a violent environment or expelled from their homes.
- **Quality of life:** Then there are the costs to everyone else with drug overdoses, fires, petty crime, assaults, murders, rape, threats to public health with outbreaks of disease and strewn needles, tent encampments, less business traffic, and property rights lost from invasive squatters.

FAILURE OF "HOUSING FIRST" This law shifts funding from so-called transitional housing to Housing First. In the transitional model, entrants must give up drugs and other destructive behavior as conditions to enter temporary housing, where they are trained to be self-supporting and eventually move out. However, the Housing First model gives away shelter as a baseline provision while using counseling to fix other problems that cause someone to be homeless. It has become accepted wisdom in the social services industry that Housing First has been a costly failure. While it may house some homeless people, it doesn't create incentives to help them turn around their lives. All too often, they either die in shelters as addicts or return to the streets. It is the principle impediment to progress.

SOLUTIONS — A decade's unbridled Democrat control of both legislative chambers and the Governor's office have failed. Assembly Republicans offer bold and creative solutions in 2024 to solve the problem:

- **"Treatment First:"** Repeals a requirement for a state agency or department that funds, implements, or administers a state program that provides housing or housing-related services to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to adopt guidelines and regulations to include Housing First policies. Promotes equity by also allowing homeless funds to be distributed to entities that require mental health and drug treatment for homeless individuals which will reduce homelessness, crime, squalor, and pressure on local services, when \$23 billion in taxpayer money has already been squandered.
- **Resolution Overturning *Martin v. Boise*:** The ruling held that cities cannot enforce anti-camping ordinances if they do not have enough homeless shelter beds available for their homeless population. The resolution urges the Supreme Court of the United States to overturn *Martin v. Boise* and uphold California local police power to protect the public welfare.
- **Legal Assistance Fund Budget Request:** Submit a budget request letter to help local agencies with the legal battles that have stemmed from *Martin v. Boise*.
- **Preventing Youth Homeless:** Require the Dept. of Social Services to create a program to incentivize youth and young adults who are at risk of becoming homeless to enter into educational, job training, and potential treatment programs. By offering these services, we will create a hand up, rather than offering a hand out, which will potentially assist these individuals avoiding a life of poverty or homelessness.
- **Homeless Mental Health Spending Transparency:** Track homeless and mental health spending under a single publicly accessible online portal.
- **Define "Adequate Shelter":** Currently, there is no legal definition of "adequate shelter." A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S Circuit Court of Appeals recently provided that officials in San Francisco can sweep homeless sites and cite residents who are "voluntarily" homeless: those refusing the shelter offered.
- **Declare a Homeless State of Emergency:** If the Governor called one, he could suspend statutes to reduce and shorten the building process and block the frivolous use of CEQA to delay construction.

REFERENCES

SUMMARY:

For details of the Quinnipiac poll's report and related graphs and charts, please click here: <https://poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3868>.

More information on homeless spending can be found here: <https://gvwire.com/2023/07/18/california-spends-42k-per-homeless-person-heres-how-to-get-better-results/> and here: <https://www.pacificresearch.org/something-is-clearly-off-with-californias-homelessness-spending/>

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Further information on homeless statistics can be found here: <https://www.ppic.org/blog/homeless-populations-are-rising-around-california/> and here: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2023/12/federal-support-california-solve-homelessness/>

For a complete breakdown of California homeless statistics by age, gender, ethnicity and types of shelter please click here: https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_NatTerrDC_2023.pdf

HOUSING FIRST:

A detailed analysis and critique of "Housing First" can be found here: <https://www.city-journal.org/article/housing-firsts-imperial-overreach>

San Francisco's problem with "Housing First" <https://www.city-journal.org/article/san-franciscos-housing-first-nightmare>

SOLUTIONS:

For more information on Assembly Republican Caucus policy solutions, please contact William Weber at 916-319-3900 or william.weber@asm.ca.gov.
