

**NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD  
LOS ANGELES CHAPTER**

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**PRESS STATEMENT – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD REPRESENTS ADVOCATES FOR HOMELESS  
IN SUIT CHALLENGING SANTA MONICA'S NEW ANTI-HOMELESS ORDINANCE**

(The following statement was issued today by JAMES LAFFERTY, Executive Director of the National Lawyers Guild in Los Angeles.)

“Today, the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, on behalf of a number of charitable/religious/political providers of free food to the homeless and hungry in Santa Monica, filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging the legality of a new Santa Monica ordinance; an ordinance which would, in effect, make it a crime for these groups to continue, as they have for three decades, to provide free food in public to the poor of Santa Monica.”

“The plaintiffs know what the homeless and hungry of Santa Monica know: that the wealthy City of Santa Monica falls woefully short of meeting the needs of its thousands of hungry and homeless residents. Indeed, as the Santa Monica's outdoor meal programs note in their mission statement, ‘We believe that the City Council is not committed to meeting the food needs of Santa Monica’s existing homeless population and is using the argument that food should be tied to social services as a pretext for driving homeless people out of the community. We challenge the City of Santa Monica to prove us wrong by establishing a multi-purpose location of sufficient size and accessibility where all of us can provide food to the hungry at any time of any day and where social services can be delivered to those who need such services.’ To date, the City of Santa Monica has

failed to respond to this reasonable, creative, and humane request.”

“The Lawyers Guild would hope that everyone who hears of this lawsuit will be shocked to learn that the age-old practice of providing food to the hungry--a practice that is central to virtually all of the world’s religions and humanitarian organizations--has now been criminalized by the City Council of Santa Monica. Santa Monica, to its everlasting shame, has made an immoral bargain with the devil. It has decided that its more important--and profitable--to shield its tourists and shoppers from having to gaze upon long lines of hungry residents queuing up for food, than it is to provide enough food to shield its hungry residents from starvation.”

“Obviously, no one with an ounce of compassion likes to see hundreds of poor people lined up to receive free food in a public park in their city. But one would hope that any civilized city’s response to such a sight would be to immediately take action to redress the problem and, in the meanwhile, to thank those who have stepped into the breach to provide the food that the city, itself, is not yet providing. Certainly, no just and humane city would, instead, criminalize those good Samaritans who are caring for their less fortunate neighbors.”

“We are confident that Santa Monica’s new anti-homeless ordinance will be struck down in court. In the meanwhile, the National Lawyers Guild will be proud to defend any of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, or others, who choose to defy the ordinance and continue providing food to the hungry while the court case is pending. And, should any other city in our area, such as the City of Los Angeles (which is exploring adopting a similar ordinance), decide to follow Santa Monica’s example and pass such an ordinance, we will challenge that ordinance in court, as well.”

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