



# 7 IMPORTANT HOMELESSNESS FINDINGS

1

California is in the midst of a housing and homelessness crisis, which has worsened in recent years because of the recession and unprecedented numbers of foreclosures and evictions. The Golden State is undersupplied by 3.4 million homes to meet its current housing needs. The national shortfall is 7.3 million homes, which means California makes up about half of that total. Not only does the state not have an insufficient supply of housing, but the housing that does exist is expensive, out-of-reach to people making median household incomes.

2

The economic and foreclosure crises have fueled a dramatic increase in families, children and youth experiencing homelessness. Despite this crisis and the overwhelming lack of affordable housing and shelter space across the state, cities and municipalities are increasingly penalizing people who are forced to live on our streets and in public spaces.

3

The LWV Position on Meeting Basic Human Rights does not address the legal harassment of homeless persons for standing aka “loitering” in public spaces. California cities lead the nation in enacting and enforcing anti-homeless laws. The criminalization of necessary, life-sustaining acts can also make the difficult process of securing housing even more difficult. Having a criminal record not only makes private rentals harder to obtain, but also can limit access to public housing



4

Criminalization DOES NOTHING to give people access to housing, to services that people want or to self-determination. In fact, criminalizing entrenches people in poverty and creates more and more obstacles for people trying to get off the streets.



5

Under the guise of public health, cities and police departments are sweeping encampments and displacing people from the place where they live and the community they live with. Their personal belongings are confiscated and discarded - all acts that are within the law.



6

The recent natural disasters California have taught us that homelessness can happen to anybody. Most of the town of Paradise, California, is now homeless. What happens now to the 27,000 citizens without homes in northern California?



7

In California, 68% of homeless people are unsheltered, compared to just 5% in New York. While LWVC Positions address the need for shelter there is a significant gap in advocating on behalf of the type of shelter that continues to be debated in the public square.