

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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9th Circuit Strikes Down Los Angeles Law Prohibiting People From Living in Vehicles *Inhumane Criminalization Law Found to Violate Due Process*

WASHINGTON, DC - Yesterday, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit struck down a Los Angeles law preventing people from sleeping in their cars as a form of basic emergency shelter, when the City has offered them no other housing option. The ruling sends a clear message - that cities around the country cannot end homelessness by simply making it illegal.

"The court's ruling strikes down an egregious city law that essentially makes it impossible for people who have lost their homes but still have their vehicles to survive in the City of Los Angeles," said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. Tristia Bauman, Senior Attorney at the Law Center, added "Living in a car or other vehicle is certainly not a long-term solution to homelessness, but the City has many other means at its disposal to address the problem. Ensuring sufficient affordable housing for all should be the City's top priority, not criminalizing homelessness."

In its decision the Court noted: "For many homeless persons, their automobile may be their last major possession - the means by which they can look for work and seek social services. The City of Los Angeles has many options at its disposal to alleviate the plight and suffering of its homeless citizens. Selectively preventing the homeless and the poor from using their vehicles for activities many other citizens also conduct in their cars should not be one of those options."

The 9th Circuit decision sets an important precedent in the fight to end criminalization of homelessness. Cities like Palo Alto, which passed its own "vehicle dwelling" ban last August but has delayed enforcement until this decision came out, will now have to abandon their efforts. The ruling also echoes a finding this past March by the United Nations Human Rights Committee that condemned the criminalization of homelessness in the U.S. as cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment-in violation of our country's human rights treaty

obligations.

We applaud the 9th Circuit for protecting the basic civil and human rights of homeless people.

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The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty is the only national organization providing high-level, comprehensive legal and legislative expertise resolving national homelessness issues through advocacy, advocacy training, public education, and impact litigation.