

## **Community Legal Aid SoCal's Response to the Supreme Court's Decision in *City of Grants Pass***

Santa Ana, July 1, 2024 -

The Supreme Court [ruled](#) on Friday in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* that fining and jailing unhoused people for violating anti-camping ordinances, even when they have no access to shelter, does not violate the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment in the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

This case arose out of a challenge to city ordinances in Grants Pass, Oregon that imposed fines and jail time for, among other things, sleeping in public with a blanket or pillow. With Friday's ruling, the Supreme Court has reversed Ninth Circuit precedent in *Martin v. Boise*, which held that punishing unhoused people for sleeping in public when they have no access to shelter was cruel and unusual.

This ruling puts people experiencing homelessness in Orange and Los Angeles counties—including families, seniors, domestic violence survivors, LGBTQ+ individuals, people of color, veterans, and individuals with disabilities—at risk of cascading fines and jail time.

“Punishing individuals and families experiencing homelessness is neither a humane nor an effective way to address homelessness,” says Erica Ettinger, who has litigated such fines before and secured their dismissal on the basis that they were not in the interest of justice. “Fines and convictions can jeopardize people's ability to secure housing and find employment in the future. Orange County and Los Angeles must take an approach to addressing this crisis that is not punitive and does not further destabilize the most vulnerable in our communities.”

At Community Legal Aid SoCal, we tackle root causes of homelessness, including by protecting against unlawful evictions, advocating for affordable housing, and helping families and individuals secure critical assistance. We also have case managers on staff who can help stabilize clients in crisis and connect them with community resources.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision, Community Legal Aid SoCal continues to be dedicated to meeting the civil legal needs of low-income people throughout Orange and Southeast Los Angeles Counties, including those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. We can help with legal issues related to immigration, family law, access to healthcare, public benefits, consumer defense, and housing. We also have a special unit dedicated to providing legal assistance to seniors living in Orange County, and clinics that assist with expunging qualifying criminal records and filing for bankruptcy. We offer a full range of legal assistance, including information and referrals, counsel and advice, workshops, clinics, and direct legal representation in each of these areas. For legal help, call our Hotline at 800-834-5001.