



## Target Poverty, Not The Poor

The City of Seattle's proposed "aggressive solicitation" ordinance attacks free speech rights, gives police broad new powers to harass the visible poor, and returns Seattle to the divisive Downtown Interests vs. Poor People politics of the Sidran years. The ordinance makes solicitation within 15 feet of someone engaged in a parking or ATM transaction, or immediately carrying a document related to that transaction, a civil infraction and imposes a \$50 fine for each violation. Aggressive panhandling is already illegal under current law.

According to one study, quality of life ticketing cost the City of San Francisco at least \$10 million in police and court expenses over a three-year period ([www.religiouswitnesshome.org](http://www.religiouswitnesshome.org)) and have only deepened the problems they claim to address. Of the roughly 12,000 citations issued annually, the majority disproportionately go to people of color. The Consensus Project has found that national trend toward "quality of life" enforcement and punitive drug laws have led to large increases in the incarceration of the mentally ill.

### This ordinance:

- **Distract our police and courts from the real issues demanding our attention**, such as the increase in open air drug dealing and the appalling recent rise in youth violence. This ordinance will waste scarce resources without addressing the reasons people panhandle. Fining or jailing them will not solve the problem of poverty. Seattle already has a law against 'aggressive panhandling'. We don't need another one.
- **Is expensive and targets the wrong people.** A similar ordinance in San Francisco resulted in expenditures of roughly \$10 million (in three years) without solving the underlying problems. The Seattle ordinance will impact the homeless, people of color, the mentally ill and those selling newspapers or cookies or seeking donations to political causes will be prohibited from conducting their business in many neighborhoods of Seattle.
- **Violate our constitutional right to freedom of speech by redefining ordinary street solicitation as illegal.** The proposal prohibits anyone from soliciting within 15 feet of Seattle's many parking pay stations or ATMs, and from aggressively soliciting. The definition for aggressive solicitation offers no clear guidance on what behavior is off limits—so it will end up chilling everyone's speech and behavior.
- **Will disproportionately impact people of color.** Of the 12,000 infractions given per year in San Francisco, the majority are given to people of color and yet 80% percent of these cases are dismissed for one reason or the other.
- **Is divisive** and blames panhandlers for economic troubles that come with recession.

### Take Action

- Join already 400 individuals through the online petition at [www.realchangenews.org/](http://www.realchangenews.org/)
- Sign on to the ACLU letter to the City Council at <http://www.aclu-wa.org/> and going to the **Take Action** button and follow the link **Brother, Can You Spare A Civil Liberty**
- Write or call members in the Seattle City Council and ask them Tell the City Council that poor and homeless people **need** services and support, not ineffective laws.
- Join our organizations below in opposing this measure
- Attend the April 19th hearing at city hall on this issue
- Help us with educating people by posting this on your Facebook page or organizational website

### Join Us

In opposition of the ordinance are: Seattle NAACP, Real Change News, the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness, Interfaith Taskforce on Homelessness, Seattle Displacement Coalition, El Centro de la Raza, Minority Executive Directors Coalition of King County, Lutheran Public Policy Office, Statewide Poverty Action Network, Asian Counseling and Referral Services, Church Council of Greater Seattle, ACLU of Washington, Seattle Community Council Federation, Urban Rest Stop, Rising Out of the Shadows (ROOTS), OneAmerica.

Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work, Our hands.

