



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of Pomona Agrees to Temporarily Halt Unlawful Practices of Seizing and Destroying Essential Property of Homeless Residents

In response to legal action taken on Mar. 18 by homeless residents, Pomona's city council votes to cease offending conduct

LOS ANGELES — Faced with [recent legal action](#) taken by Public Counsel with pro bono support from Munger, Tolles & Olson, LLP, on behalf of homeless residents in Pomona, the Pomona City Council unanimously voted to temporarily halt the City's unconstitutional and unlawful practice of seizing and destroying the personal possessions—including medicines, vital documents and irreplaceable keepsakes—of its homeless residents.

"We are encouraged by the City's swift action in abating this reprehensible practice that has devastated our clients and the homeless residents of Pomona," said **Christina Giorgio**, staff attorney of Public Counsel's Community Development Project. "Homeless community members now have an enforceable agreement protecting their constitutional rights in their personal property. We are hopeful that the City's prompt response reflects a sincere desire to reach a permanent resolution that keeps our clients secure in their property and helps move them from homelessness to housing."

In a closed session Monday night, the City Council agreed to a stipulation which provides that:

- The City will not take any attended property or property left in the custody of another, unless it's contraband or presents a risk to public health;
- If property is unattended, the City will leave a notice, announcing that if the City returns within 48 hours (or within 29 hours in Lincoln & Washington parks) and the property is still unattended, the City may collect it and store it for 90 days; and
- When the City does collect and store unattended property, it will leave instructions on how the residents may reclaim it.

"For now, I'm relieved beyond words that I don't have to live in fear that all that I have could be taken from me at any time," said plaintiff and homeless resident **Kelley Wilcox**. "I'm so grateful that we found our way to Public Counsel and that they are helping us protect our rights."

“We appreciate the City’s collaborative approach to addressing these issues, and we look forward to working with the City to develop long-term solutions to the serious problem of homelessness in Pomona,” said **John B. Major** of Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP.

While the constitutional case moves forward, Public Counsel continues its complementary efforts to ensure the City of Pomona complies with state laws that require it to plan for the housing and shelter needs of its homeless population.

The stipulation was signed and filed with the court today. [View a video on the case here](#). For more information on the case and to view the legal documents, visit www.publiccounsel.org.

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About Public Counsel

Public Counsel is the nation's largest pro bono law firm. Founded in 1970, Public Counsel strives to achieve three main goals: protect the legal rights of disadvantaged children; represent immigrants who have been the victims of torture, persecution, domestic violence, trafficking, and other crimes; and foster economic justice by providing individuals and institutions in underserved communities with access to quality legal representation. Through a pro bono model that leverages the talents and dedication of thousands of attorney and law student volunteers, along with an in-house staff of more than 75 attorneys and social workers, Public Counsel annually assists more than 30,000 families, children, immigrants, veterans, and nonprofit organizations and addresses systemic poverty and civil rights issues through impact litigation and policy advocacy. For more information, visit www.publiccounsel.org.

About Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP

Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP is a Los Angeles and San Francisco-based law firm that is a frequent pro bono partner with Public Counsel. MTO was recently named a Pro Bono Firm of the Year by Law360.