

Oregon Right to Rest Act Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign



Oregon Right to Rest Act (HB 2215)

Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) asks for your support of Right to Rest Act. We represent a coalition of over 175 organizations in Oregon, Colorado and California, all working together to ensure that the human and civil rights of all people are protected and respected. We want to make sure that the record number of people who are homeless, without a private place to rest, are not unfairly targeted through discriminatory laws and police enforcement.

The Right to Rest Act will protect people who are homeless from discrimination and against the enactment or enforcement of laws that prevent rest. Homelessness is steadily growing, and people living on the streets are facing a multitude of challenges. Out of 552 street outreach surveys conducted by WRAP, 88% of homeless people were harassed, cited or arrested for sleeping, 83% for sitting or lying down and 78% for loitering or “hanging out”.

Criminalizing necessary life sustaining activities like sitting, lying, resting or eating in public, when someone has nowhere else to do these things, only worsens the problem and further entrenches people in homelessness. Sleep is essential to everyone’s health, well-being, and ability to function. Criminalization does not reduce homelessness, it is instead an offensive and ineffective use of our public resources. HB 2215 will save Oregon money and provide clarity in our laws. **Join us in affirming the human rights of all unhoused people!**

Ending the discrimination against and the criminalization of homeless people is an essential component of ending homelessness in our communities. According to a report from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, titled “The Right to Adequate Housing,” local attempts to deal with homelessness by making homeless people disappear from sight are gross civil and human rights violations. The Federal government, through the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, has clearly stated that successful responses to homelessness must include an end to criminalization practices, as well as the provision of housing and supportive services. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development is requiring localities applying for federal homeless funding to explain steps taken to reduce the criminalization of homelessness in their communities as a condition of receiving funding.

Support and Endorsements: The Right to Rest Act was written by Right2Survive, Street Roots, Sisters of the Road, the Western Regional Advocacy Project along with the ACLU of Oregon and other legal and policy experts. It is led by outreach to people living on the streets in Oregon and created by people who are currently and formerly homeless. The Right to Rest Act has recently been endorsed by the Housing Alliance and Oregon Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. The Right to Rest Act is also a part of a larger campaign, the Homeless Bill of Rights, which is supported by over 175 organizations.

You can view more information about the Right to Rest Act at the following website:

[http://wraphome.org/what/homeless-bill-of-rights/oregon-r2r/.](http://wraphome.org/what/homeless-bill-of-rights/oregon-r2r/)

You can view more information about the broader Homeless Bill of Rights campaign, including the list of our supporting organizations, at the following website: <http://wraphome.org/what/homeless-bill-of-rights/>

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What does the Right 2 Rest Act (HB 2215) do?

- Prohibits discrimination in public spaces based on housing status.
- People have heightened privacy rights when they own a home, this act extends similar privacy rights to a homeless person's belongings.
- Prohibits law enforcement, security personnel, or public employees from harassing, citing, or arresting merely for engaging in the following rights:
 - To use and move freely in public spaces
 - To rest (sit, stand, and sleep)
 - To eat and share food
 - To pray
 - To occupy a legally parked vehicle
- Creates an exception for public spaces that are closed, as long as adequate alternate spaces are provided for people to rest without time limitations.
- Provides a defense to civil and criminal charges when the basis for those charges is that the person was merely engaging in the protected activities listed above.
- Allows the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) to enforce the protections of this bill in the same manner they use to enforce the protections of other nondiscrimination laws and will allow private attorneys to advocate for homeless people in addition to BOLI's enforcement.

Laws that segregate, make criminals of people based on their housing status rather than their behavior, or prohibit certain people's right to be in public spaces are not just sad relics from the past. Today, numerous laws infringe on poor people's ability to exist in public space, and homeless people in Oregon have faced growing harassment and punishment for their mere presence in public. HB 2215, the Right to Rest Act, would ensure that all Oregonians have the right to sit, lie down, sleep, pray, and share food in public space without the threat of harassment, citation or arrest.