



**ACLU of Alaska Raises Constitutional Concerns about
Juneau's Proposed Anti-Homelessness Law**

Assembly to Consider Proposed Ordinance 2016-44 at 7 p.m.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 23, 2017

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JUNEAU, ALASKA – The American Civil Liberties Union of Alaska wrote to the Juneau Assembly today to warn them that its proposed ban on camping downtown may be unconstitutional. The Assembly will consider the legislation, Ordinance 2016-44, at 7 p.m.

“Homelessness is tragic, especially in Alaska,” said ACLU of Alaska Executive Director Joshua A. Decker. “But with over 200 homeless people in Juneau, Ordinance 2016-44 does nothing to fix the problem. Instead of trying to outlaw sleeping downtown when people have nowhere else to go, Juneau should refocus its efforts to ensure that everyone has a safe place to sleep at night.”

“The ACLU of Alaska shared our constitutional concerns because we want to help the Juneau Assembly do the right thing,” said ACLU of Alaska Legal and Policy Director Tara A. Rich. “The proposed ordinance, if passed, would essentially criminalize being homeless everywhere in the City and Borough of Juneau. Los Angeles tried to do something similar and when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit struck it down, the court said that if a city doesn’t have enough shelter space for everyone and there’s nowhere for our homeless neighbors to go, it violates the Eighth Amendment to punish them for sleeping outside.”

“Juneau is trying to fix its homelessness problem, but this ordinance would be an avoidable—and unconstitutional—step backward,” said Decker. “When the Assembly considers the ordinance tonight, we hope that they’ll hear our constitutional concerns and do the right thing: decline to pass Ordinance 2016-44. The best way to stop people from camping downtown is to give them safe places to sleep; it’s not to pass an unconstitutional law.”

The American Civil Liberties Union is our nation’s guardian of liberty. For nearly 100 years, the ACLU has been at the forefront of virtually every major battle for civil liberties and equal justice in this country. Principled and nonpartisan, the ACLU works in the courts, legislatures, and communities to preserve and expand the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States. The ACLU of Alaska, founded in 1971, is one of the 53 state ACLU affiliates that strive to make the Bill of Rights real for everyone and to uphold the promise of the Constitution—because freedom can’t protect itself.

This release is at: acluak.org/en/news/aclu-raises-constitutional-concerns-about-juneaus-proposed-anti-homelessness-laws

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