

Dear Editor:

My name is Barbara Anderson. I do not live in Indianapolis, Indiana, however, I do serve on the Board of Directors to the National Coalition for the Homeless. For 32 years I have served the homeless in this state, and across this state. Indianapolis has always been a focal point as the Capitol of the State, it also has the most resources and the largest population of homeless people in the State.

When I served with the State Coalition, Indiana Coalition on Housing and Homeless Issues (ICHHI), we consistently noted the problems with no city or state funding for the homeless in Indiana. Not much has changed, there is still no line item budget for the homeless in the state nor in the City of Indianapolis yet in the last thirty years the population has exploded.

Our shelters are full across the state and Indianapolis is no exception. There is currently an effort underway to insure the safety and security of the homeless in the streets of Indianapolis and in the shelters. It is called Prop 291 or the Homeless Bill of Rights. It is stated simply and wants little. No discrimination and the development of an engagement center which by the way, already has 750,000 dollars allocated from a private donor to build it.

As I read through Prop 291 I was reminded of the last 32 years of service with the homeless and how little our state and your city has changed. As the capitol the tone for the state is often set by Indianapolis as the rest of the State tends to follow your lead. On this issue there has been little leadership for the state. We talk of ending homelessness while we really have no handle on just how expansive the problem really is: we do counts but how thorough are they. The jails are full of people who aren't released because they have no place to call home.

I am imploring the city council to work with Prop 291 to begin an honest effort to truly end homelessness by humanely dealing with the people who have to live in it daily. Our state has always prided itself on having strong, independent people, but what of those who cannot do it without help? Part of our strength must be our compassion if we are to be true leaders. Please on Jan. 27th vote to support Prop 291 and truly begin the effort to address the issue of homelessness in a real and viable way.

Sincerely,

Barbara Anderson
Haven House Services,
National Coalition for the Homeless
Board of Directors