

# California Governor Gavin Newsom demands cities force homeless people to move every 72 hours

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On May 12, California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, demanded that cities throughout the state adopt anti-camping ordinances that would effectively ban public homelessness by requiring unhoused individuals to relocate every 72 hours.

While presented as a humanitarian effort to reduce homelessness, the new policy victimizes California's growing unhoused population—approximately 187,000 people—by tying funding in Proposition 1 to local laws banning sleeping or camping on public land.

In his announcement, Newsom pushed local governments to adopt the draconian ordinances “without delay.”

“We want to see this model ordinance across the state of California,” Newsom said during last week's virtual news interview. While the announcement does not explicitly compel local governments to comply, Newsom hinted that those failing to adopt the ordinance could face the withholding of state funds.

The attacks are a continuation of the longstanding assault on California's vulnerable homeless population. In July 2024, Newsom ordered state officials to dismantle homeless encampments across California, directly citing the Supreme Court's June 2024 decision in *Grant's Pass v. Johnson*, which ruled that the city of Grant's Pass, Oregon, did not violate the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment by banning homeless encampments, even for those with nowhere else to go.

While Proposition 1 allocates \$3.3 billion for mental health and addiction treatment services, the infrastructure for these programs does not yet exist—yet the sweeps are already underway. At the same time, the state's proposed budget includes cuts to the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention program.

Last year, Paul Simmons, executive director of Californians Against Prop. 1, stated, “It's all in preparation of hiding the homeless instead of helping them. It will still be a bridge to nowhere, pushing people into a system that can't even handle what we have now.”

The latest attack, however, is of a qualitatively different character. While previous sweeps generally focused on displacement rather than arrests or institutionalization, there are now increasing calls at all levels of government for the outright removal of these “undesirable” elements.

One such call comes from Democrat and Silicon Valley tech

entrepreneur, San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan, whose proposal would allow for the arrest of homeless individuals who refuse to use state shelters three times within an 18-month period. Similar calls have been made for the forced institutionalization of mentally ill individuals.

In addition to the dire lack of shelters and services accessible to those in need, existing shelters often impose extremely restrictive conditions—barring pets, requiring separation from partners or family members, and in many cases being plagued by well-documented instances of abuse and violence.

With nowhere to go, no help, and the threat of state-sponsored violence and incarceration, these measures effectively criminalize poverty. They do nothing to address the root causes of the homelessness crisis—a national and global phenomenon driven by soaring living costs, the dismantling of public health and social services to fund police militarization and war, and broader attacks on democratic rights. These are the inevitable consequences of an economic system that prioritizes private profit over human need: capitalism.

Newsom's declaration of a budget shortfall and the accompanying cuts to social services are part of sweeping attacks on the lives and livelihoods of workers across the country, as the ruling class defends the extreme concentration of wealth.

As David North emphasized in his opening remarks to the 2025 May Day Rally:

In absolute terms, even when adjusted for inflation, the personal wealth of the multi-billionaire oligarchs surpasses that of the robber barons of the late 19th and early 20th century. The scale of wealth concentrated in an infinitesimal section of the population all but defies comprehension. A recently published analysis of wealth distribution in the United States reported that in 2024 alone \$1 trillion in additional wealth was generated for the 19 richest American households. This 0.00001% of the population—one in ten million—accounts for almost 2 percent of total US household wealth.

The process of social polarization is growing like a malignant tumor. In 2021 there were 1,370 billionaires. By the end of 2024, the number had risen to 1,990, an increase

of 45 percent. The richest 1 percent owns 31 percent of the wealth of the United States. Collectively, the wealthiest 10 percent owns 67 percent of the nation's wealth. By way of comparison, the bottom 50 percent owns just 3 percent.

Conversely, data from the 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) revealed that homelessness in the US has reached its highest level on record. On a single night in 2024, 771,480 people—roughly 23 out of every 10,000 residents—were experiencing homelessness, whether in emergency shelters, transitional housing or unsheltered conditions. This marked an 18.1 percent increase from the previous year. There is no doubt this number has grown in 2025, as the impact of global trade war and escalating military conflict drives the cost of living even higher.

As the report notes, the percentage of families experiencing homelessness rose by a staggering 39.4 percent. Increasing numbers of the newly homeless include the elderly, left vulnerable to the elements by ongoing cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security—programs slated for hundreds of billions more in reductions in the upcoming years.

Moreover, the number of working homeless—those who live in cars or “couch surf” while maintaining employment—is severely undercounted, as these individuals are difficult to track in official statistics. Even college professors have reported being forced to live in their vehicles, as their wages fail to keep pace with the soaring cost of living.

The attacks on the homeless are part of a broader assault on immigrants and the democratic rights of the working class as a whole. Last Wednesday, Newsom also announced plans to freeze new enrollments for immigrants aged 19 and older on California's low-income insurance program, Medi-Cal. While the program was expanded in 2024 to include 1.6 million undocumented immigrants, Newsom now claims that looming federal budget cuts necessitate a rollback in the state's healthcare coverage.

Democratic governors across the country are implementing similar attacks. In Minnesota, former Democratic vice-presidential candidate and likely 2028 presidential hopeful Tim Walz has proposed cutting immigrant adults from MinnesotaCare, the state's Medicaid program, beginning in 2026.

California also continues to facilitate ICE access to jails and prisons, leaving thousands vulnerable to transfer and deportation. As Newsom boasted earlier this year on his podcast with far-right Turning Point USA's Charlie Kirk, “We do work with ICE. ... We coordinate with ICE on the deportation, we've done that over 10,000 times since I've been governor, we're not denying access, we're not denying coordination.”

Such “coordination” with ICE and local law enforcement also extends to the violent crackdowns on student encampments. In line with the directive first implemented under the Biden administration—to brutalize and violate the First Amendment rights of students protesting the genocide in Gaza—Newsom has adopted the lie that opposition to Israel's crimes is “antisemitism.”

This assertion has become the “thought crime” for which international students are being targeted. Visa revocations,

deportations and even kidnappings are the ruling class's response to those who dare oppose its barbaric policies.

A clear example is the case of Mahmoud Kahlil, a legal permanent resident and Columbia graduate. In a memo last month, Secretary of State Marco Rubio called for his deportation based on his “past, current, or expected beliefs”—even if lawful—arguing that Kahlil's presence “would compromise a compelling US foreign policy interest.”

Demonstrating the complicity of Newsom and the Democratic Party—as well as the collaboration of the trade unions in promoting nationalist reaction in support of US imperialism's war aims—California State University (CSU) officials flatly rejected calls for divestment from Israel after 25 students began a hunger strike on May 5 demanding an end to CSU's support for the Gaza genocide.

CSU academic workers are represented by the California State University Employees Union (CSUEU), part of SEIU Local 2579 and affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The union apparatus has longstanding ties to the Democratic Party, which under Biden has been promoted as a “domestic NATO.”

While students rightly express outrage over the universities' complicity in the US-backed genocide in Gaza, appeals to reform capitalism or its auxiliary structures will continue to fall on deaf ears. The union apparatus and “progressive” politicians like Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez pay lip service to human rights while enabling ethnic cleansing and imperialist war.

The assault on broad layers of the population—the homeless, immigrants, students, and all those who oppose the barbarism produced by capitalism—can only be stopped through the international unification of the working class around a socialist perspective. This is the only political force capable of halting war, dictatorship and social reaction and reorganizing society on the basis of human need, not private profit.



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