

Houston Is Still Criminalizing Sharing Food

We had an important victory in getting Houston City Council to back off, but we have not won yet, in fact the new “compromise” amendment could easily be used to impose the very same laws so many objected to in the first draft. So, please:

- 1) Call the Houston City Secretary to reserve time to speak on April 3rd for the 2 - 5 pm public session: (832) 393 - 1100
- 2) Attend the first and second Houston Keep Sharing Free! organizational meetings: Tuesday March 27, 7 - 9 pm, and Saturday March 31, 1 - 2 pm, at Ecclesia Church, 2115 Taft Street, Houston, TX 77006
- 3) Call City Council members to say no to the old draft and the new, simply demand “no new laws against charitable acts”: Helena Brown (832) 393-3010, Jerry Davis (832) 393-3009, Ellen Cohen (832) 393-3004, Wanda Adams (832) 393-3001, Mike Sullivan (832) 393-3008, Al Hoang (832) 393-3002, Oliver Pennington (832) 393-3007, Ed Gonzalez (832) 393-3003, James G. Rodriguez (832) 393-3011, Mike Laster (832) 393-3015, Larry Green (832) 393-3016, Stephen C. Costello (832) 393-3014, Andrew C. Burks, Jr. (832) 393-3013, Melissa Noriega (832) 393-3005, C.O. “Brad” Bradford (832) 393-3012, Jack Christie (832) 393-3017
- 4) Sign the petition: tinyurl.com/freetosharepetition2 AND join the facebook group: facebook.com/groups/HoustonKeepSharingFree/

The new draft of the amendment to the city ordinances (read it here: tinyurl.com/CriminalizingPublicService2) will still inhibit groups sharing food with the homeless. The draft doesn’t achieve any useful or clear policy objectives. The extra expenses that will be incurred are not necessary or useful, and have not been budgeted. The law creates additional work and bureaucracy for various city agencies and homeless food providers without any moral basis. It requires volunteer groups to obtain written permission to use public property. Anyone that simply goes to where homeless are to help them without permission would be criminalized. This would prevent the spontaneous giving of food, because obtaining permission will take time. This aspect of the law is a violation of 1st Amendment freedoms of assembly, speech, and religion. It is entirely unclear how to get this written permission and what the criteria for approval or denial of permission. The permission requirement could be used to re-impose the criteria that were taken out of the draft (ie. yes you can have permission if you agree to meet the following requirements...).

Read the rest of our serious concerns over the new draft wording here: tinyurl.com/freetosharepetition2

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