

August 30, 2019



Los Angeles City Controller Ron Galperin released his audit of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. (LAHSA) He should be commended for his work to protect taxpayer dollars.

Controller Galperin's letter to the Mayor, City Attorney and Council titled "Strategy on the Streets: Improving Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority's Outreach Program" brought to light shortcomings and failures in how the organization has used its \$300 million annual budget. He reports LAHSA failed to meet five City outreach targets. He also describes the goals themselves are ill-defined and do not align with the benchmarks established by the County.

One of LAHSA's core functions is homeless outreach. \$54 million was spent on outreach in the last two years. One problem cited by Controller Galperin was LAHSA doubled the staff of outreach workers and was only able to place 4% of the homeless contacted in the last fiscal year.

Often cited by many, including Reverend Andy Bales of Union Rescue Mission is the fact that there are not enough shelter beds to impact the 59,000 homeless population. How can LAHSA can be expected to perform outreach if they have no place to shelter those on the street... It would appear having enough shelter beds has not been fully considered.

We must recognize an urgent and critical need for thousands of low-cost, multi-bed, sprung structures. We cannot afford and wait years to build apartment complexes with unit costs of \$500,000 to \$700,000.

Sprung structures cost considerably less and take weeks to build.



What has been taking place does not pencil out. It is time for the L.A. mayor, councilmembers and the County Board of Supervisors stop and hit the reset button. They must change their focus to putting up shelters first.

They must fill those structures with all the necessary resources and human power to address the needs of people in need from medical triage, urgent care, case management, treatment and opportunities for vocational training and jobs.

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Although the City Controller's audit points out glaring failures by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, we must also hold our state elected officials accountable for failing to respond to this humanitarian crisis.



There is much the governor and legislators can do. We can't help the nation's homeless. The legislature must reform welfare entitlements to include a residency requirement, so we help California resident first. We must develop work requirement in exchange for welfare so people can stand on their own. They must place sunsets on stipends.

The governor and legislators must work to improve public safety. The homeless should not be immune from prosecution for the offenses they commit. Everyone must respect and obey the law. Legislators must fix the problems of AB 109, Proposition 47 and 57 so people are held accountable. Courts and the jail system must be fully funded so diversion to substance abuse or mental health treatment can be applied as appropriate.

Legislators can craft bills to reform mental health conservatorship laws to make it easier for those suffering from mental illness are able to get the help they need. Sacramento politicians can't hide under the radar. They must give this crisis full attention.



We, citizens have a responsibility to be vocal and contact our elected leaders and tell them about our concerns. We must urge them to act. We must vote wisely and use all the tools available to recall those that ignore us and elect

representatives who will respond to the needs for safety, health and quality of life we should all expect. It is up to us to hold elected officials responsible for the misuse of tax dollars and policy mistakes.

About the author:

Joe Gardner is a retired police sergeant of the Santa Monica Police Department. In his 27-year career, he developed expertise on the issues of homelessness and Community Oriented Policing programs and tactics. Joe also implemented and supervised a specialized unit dedicated to solving neighborhood issues caused by homelessness.

Joe has served as a volunteer for non-profit organizations and municipalities. Joe speaks on the topic to community groups business owners to help mitigate the impact of homelessness.

Joe serves as presiding Commissioner of the Los Angeles County Probation Commission.

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