

## **LA County Homeless Services sales tax measure**

**SUMMARY:** This measure would place a quarter-cent sales tax to fund homeless services and housing for homeless people. If the measure gains the two-thirds majority it requires, it would raise about \$355 million a year over a 10-year lifespan. LA County residents would see a sales tax increase from 9.25 percent to 9.5 percent.

**STATUS:** On December 6, 2016, this proposal was unanimously placed on the March 7th, 2017 Ballot by Los Angeles County supervisors.

**ANALYSIS:** According to the latest Department of Housing and Urban Development report, Los Angeles reported the largest number of chronically homeless people in the nation (13,000). The city also topped the national register this year in homeless veterans and most unaccompanied youth. Homelessness is the most pressing issue for county residents; the matter has surpassed concerns surrounding public safety, transportation, and the environment. A study conducted with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority identified a gap of \$450 million a year needed to provide programs for homeless people in the county.

The LA County Homeless Services sales tax measure is intended to provide the final piece of funding officials say is needed to address homeless encampments across the region. This tax would help insure homeless children, veterans, women and other adults get off and stay off the streets. It would also generate money for mental illness and substance abuse support. The effect on local taxpayers would be minimal, a dime on a \$40 sweater or \$1 on a \$400 TV. The measure is currently not in place to be a permanent tax increase; this way voters have a chance to reassess and judge the success of the program in 10 years.

Senator Dianne Feinstein has endorsed the measure, along with veterans groups, business organizations, nonprofit groups, and labor unions.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The measure in question appears to outline a viable “cure to homelessness.” Roughly 47,999 homeless individuals call Los Angeles County home. We are confronting a pervasive and deepening homelessness crisis that imminently endangers the health and safety of tens of thousands of residents. If passed, this measure would fund thousands of units of housing designed to provide chronically homeless people permanent shelter backed up by services.

However, we should be wary of funds not being distributed equitably. Perhaps there should be more clarification as to exactly how much money will be allocated towards housing and how much will go towards support groups. Additionally, will the funds be distributed equally among veterans, children, and older men and women? All of these details should be outlined and taken into careful consideration.

Based on the aforementioned information, I still recommend that this measure be supported.