

## **Arguments “Against” Proposition 312**

Many of us are one paycheck or one hard-earned month’s rent away from needing to pitch a tent ourselves. Prop 312 tries the “out of sight, out of mind” approach to people who have fallen on hard times, which is punitive without being effective. Its implications and likely impact are inhumane and do less than nothing to address the issue of people experiencing homelessness. Instead, it criminalizes people who have nowhere to go and no reliable means to survive.

Punishing cities and counties financially when the courts are stopping them from enforcing local laws would lead to a cycle of diminished revenue, making it even harder to assist or relocate the homeless, not to mention the impact on other local services and law enforcement. Ever heard the saying, “the beatings will continue until morale improves?” Why would we try to force cities to do something they can't do, then punish them for not being able to do it?

Prop 312 was written by the hard-right anti-government Goldwater Institute without regard for its likely illegality. Arizona taxpayers will foot the bill for the inevitable parade of lawsuits, since a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling from 2018 held that cities cannot enforce anti-camping ordinances if they do not have enough shelter beds available for their homeless population. We hope the next legislature will have the vision and will to address the underlying causes that force our fellow Arizonans into the broiling streets, and will take real steps to help those experiencing homelessness to gain their bearings and find homes to call their own. Until then, we strongly urge voters to overwhelmingly reject this inhumane and counterproductive measure.

**Catherine Sigmon, Co-Founder, Civic Engagement Beyond Voting, Tempe and Melinda Iyer, Co-Founder & Policy Director, Civic Engagement Beyond Voting, Phoenix**

Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest (LSS-SW) opposes Proposition 312, a ballot proposition from the Arizona Legislature that would affect tax revenues available to address homelessness in the community.

LSS-SW is a nonprofit social service organization that stabilizes people during crisis and transition, builds a foundation where people can thrive, and preserves dignity and respect for the most vulnerable.

We provide direct services to people experiencing homelessness, and we advocate for solutions to this pressing problem, including increasing availability of affordable housing, and access to shelter and resources.

Proposition 312 would allow individual taxpayers to request property tax refunds if property owners believe the value of their property was reduced, or if they had to pay to address any public “nuisance issues” from people experiencing homelessness. It is intended to focus on “enforcement” of laws that are currently barred under court injunctions and orders.

LSS-SW believes that Proposition 312 would not benefit the community, its businesses or taxpayers. Rather, loss of tax revenue could reduce the limited resources needed to address the

issues this proposition aims to solve. Enforcement of Prop 312 would be difficult and costly. Moreover, the proposition would minimize the dignity and respect that all people deserve.

LSS-SW understands that this is a multifaceted issue. We believe that everyone deserves to feel safe, operate businesses, and live in their homes with a sense of peace and security. LSS-SW also affirms all people, regardless of their housing status, have value and are worthy of respect.

**Connie Phillips, President and CEO, Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, Phoenix and Alan Field, Chair of Advocacy Committee, Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, Phoenix**

Opportunity Arizona strongly opposes Prop. 312, and we urge all Arizonans to VOTE NO on this proposal that seeks to criminalize unhoused individuals, and hand out tax giveaways to rich and corporate property owners.

Evictions continue to hit record levels in our state, and Arizona currently has the fourth-highest percentage of people experiencing homelessness nationwide. Aside from being cruel, untested, and fiscally irresponsible, this proposal will worsen Arizona's housing and homelessness crisis, widen our ever-expanding wealth gap, and deepen the state's revenue crisis, hurting our state's economy and all of our daily lives.

A majority of Arizonans believe our lawmakers should be working to lower rents and mortgages, increase our supply of affordable housing, and make a level playing field for hardworking Arizonans to lift themselves out of housing insecurity and homelessness. Arizonans do NOT believe in handing out tax breaks to the rich that low and middle-income families won't benefit from. VOTE NO on Prop. 312 and help ensure that cities, towns, and counties across our state continue to have the resources they need to address the issues most important to Arizonans.

**Ben Scheel, Executive Director, Opportunity Arizona, Phoenix**  
*Sponsored by Opportunity Arizona*

Fuerte Arts Movement and the Rent is Too High campaign stand against Proposition 312. This proposition is fiscally irresponsible and an inhumane approach to our current housing needs for both housed and homeless Arizonans.

People experiencing homelessness are our neighbors. Targeting them with police eliminates a homeless individual's paths to stability, health, gainful employment, and housing opportunities. Criminalization reduces their chances of ever escaping the cycle of homelessness. A Seattle study found that individuals with legal fund debt experienced homelessness for an additional 22 months compared to their counterparts without debt. Prison beds are not homes and this proposition would strip our already underserved homeless populations of critical support and cut funding for permanently affordable housing that lifts up our communities and keeps families off the streets.

Additionally, this tax giveaway would reward the out-of-state equity firms which created our housing crisis through hoarding homes and inflating rental prices. With 32% of homes on the rental market in Arizona, that is a large chunk of money withheld from stagnating city and state

budgets. This tax giveaway would strip cities of support for the homeless, but also our parks, roads, firefighters, and other essential city services.

Prop 312 would further reduce the availability of services that support our unhoused neighbors getting back on their feet. Criminalizing someone experiencing eviction and housing insecurity is not only cruel, but also the wrong approach to fixing the housing crisis and solving homelessness in Arizona. Evidence-based solutions include investing in increased shelter bed capacity with a Housing First model, building Permanent Supportive Housing, and removing barriers to naturally affordable housing. The cities and legislators working to get Proposition 312 passed are attempting to wash their hands of their responsibility to create evidence-based and humane solutions.

We oppose Proposition 312 and ask voters to vote no.

**Dominique Medina, Deputy Director, Chair of Advocacy and Campaigns, Fuerte Arts Movement, Phoenix**  
*Sponsored by Fuerte Arts Movement*

Prop 312 will dramatically worsen Arizona's housing crisis, which has been impacting almost every Arizonan for years. In a time where too many Arizonans are experiencing homelessness, can't afford rent, or are priced out of the housing market, this law will take funds away from our local governments to do more to make housing more affordable for us all in order to hand out irresponsible tax breaks to wealthy homeowners and criminalize unhoused individuals.

The special-interest proponents of this policy have described Prop 312 as the "first-in-the-nation", leaving us to be a testing ground for the mass policing and incarceration of unhoused Arizonans if this proposal passes. Prop 312 will create a messy and expensive law and process where property owners can apply for a property tax refund if local governments do not police and arrest unhoused individuals.

Arizona's elected officials at every level of government must be taking action to lower rent prices, make home-buying affordable, and ensure people experiencing homelessness are able to find a roof over their head. Instead, with Prop 312, elected officials have put forth to voters a cruel, untested, and ineffective response to the most important issue to so many Arizonans.

The majority of Arizonans want to see our elected officials invest in creating housing supply, eviction and foreclosure prevention, and first-time homebuyer programs. Most of all, the majority of us believe that unhoused individuals are still our fellow Arizonans. That is why I urge you to vote 'No' on Prop 312.

**Alejandra Gomez, Executive Director, Living United for Change in Arizona, Phoenix**  
*Sponsored by Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA)*

The ACLU of Arizona is a non-partisan, civil rights and liberties organization committed to protecting the rights of all Arizonans. The ACLU of Arizona urges a NO vote on Proposition 312.

Proposition 312 criminalizes homelessness, forces cities and towns to act in ways that violate the rights of unhoused people, allows corporations to avoid paying taxes, and threatens the financial well-being of our state. Furthermore, it will worsen Arizona's housing crisis by reducing resources available to fund housing assistance, infrastructure, and public health programs, all of which have proven effective in addressing housing instability.

Arizona's homelessness crisis is due to a lack of affordable housing. Punishing people for sleeping in public or asking for money will only drive them further into poverty and away from resources and services that provide assistance.

Proposition 312 forces cities, towns, and counties to enforce unconstitutional laws prohibiting panhandling or requiring the seizure of personal property. In addition, Proposition 312 reduces the tax revenue that towns, cities, and counties may collect from property owners if they claim the municipality is not properly enforcing public nuisance laws. It opens the door for municipalities to face exorbitant court fees and administrative costs – expenses that would likely result in cuts to basic services many Arizonans depend on.

Proposition 312 simultaneously incentivizes local governments to weaponize laws against unhoused people and disincentivizes property owners to pay their fair share of taxes. This dangerous combination will only exacerbate dire situations in communities across the state and drain limited financial resources that could instead be applied to solutions.

Everyone deserves a safe, dignified place to live. Unfortunately, Proposition 312 will not address, but escalate, the systemic problems that lead to increases in homelessness in Arizona. Vote NO on Proposition 312.

**Scott Greenwood, Executive Director, ACLU of Arizona, Phoenix**  
*Sponsored by ACLU of Arizona*