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WSJ: Liberal Cities, Conservative Towns Seek Supreme Court's Help on Homelessness

Local leaders claim power to keep parks and sidewalks clear, but a lower court said punishing people who have nowhere else to go is unconstitutional

A Supreme Court case on the [limits of vagrancy laws](#) is making allies of rural towns and big cities at their wits' end over [homelessness](#).

The court on Monday will hear arguments on how far municipalities can go in prohibiting camping on public property, laws that police employ to clear homeless people from parks and streets. A federal appeals court in San Francisco has found such measures [unconstitutional](#) when enforced against those with nowhere to go, prompting an appeal backed by many of the cities facing housing crises, including Los Angeles; Portland, Ore.; and San Francisco.

Monday's case originated far from the urban centers typically associated with homelessness. It comes instead from Grants Pass, Ore., where in March 2013, officials convened a community roundtable over "vagrancy problems" afflicting the small city along the Rogue River. "The point," said one city councilor, "is to make it uncomfortable enough for them in our city so they will want to move on down the road."

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