

I recently helped distribute food at three camps for people who are unhoused. The unhoused I handed food to were more appreciative than my experience with most who are ‘housed.’ Local government does not provide many unhoused individuals with shelter, food, sanitation, or safety. They struggle for a basic existence, especially in the wet, cold winter. Forcibly removing these people from their meager existence (a sweep), and perhaps permanently separating them from their belongings is unconscionable. Yet sometime in the near future police will conduct a sweep of an unhoused camp (that has been there for three years or more) along the Willamette River to the west of the North Bank McMenamins on Country Club Road. Court rulings in Boise, Seattle, and Grants Pass, suggest the government is obligated to provide a new location for the displaced. No such locations (other than under the Jefferson Street Bride, which is full) have been identified. If the sweep proceeds, the City of Eugene will not only be violating basic tenets of human decency, it may also be violating the law. Rational, caring public policy and government actions would include providing “campers” with shelter, food, toilets, sanitation (hand washing and garbage collection), ensuring their safety, but not condoning illegal behavior. For now, it is urgent that we simply leave these poor people alone and not subject them to yet another unimaginable crisis. Oregon is better than that. STOP THE SWEEPS by passing HB 2367!