

Re the Oregon Right to Rest Act

I am a resident of Portland, so will speak primarily for Portland.

The City of Portland is already in grave trouble due to a lack of affordable housing even for the middle-class, a lack of drug treatment for addicts, as well as no laws that make it necessary for addicted and psychotic individuals to receive care. I have particular compassion for those who are homeless due to financial loss or catastrophe. I have compassion for people who are addicted to substances and people who are psychotically mentally ill and can't manage their lives without support. I have no tolerance, however, for a sizeable portion of the homeless population who create health and safety hazards and additional financial burdens for others due to repeated poor choices, rejection of services, and beliefs that they are beyond any expectations to contribute to society.

When a city's (or state's) public spaces are taken over by tents and homeless camps, the situation spells further death for the city at large. Public spaces are meant for the temporary and intermittent use of all, not for permanent camps. Although I wish it were otherwise, homeless camps bring with them a certain level of health dangers (e.g., needles), and create situations in which people (including homeless people who live in those camps, especially women and children) are exposed to violent behaviors.

One of the beautiful aspects of Portland is its parks. When public outdoor spaces no longer offer a place where Portlanders can visit without encountering homeless camps, more of the people who support the city's financial stability will leave. Additionally, if Oregon becomes known for such a policy, individuals from other states and cities will make this a destination for living rent-free. It's hard for me to imagine a greater recipe for disaster.

Enough. I support affordable housing, job training, and treatment for the addicted and the psychotic. But public space is meant for intermittent recreational and other use by the public – not for tent cities that don't go away.