

Justices review homeless policies

Outcome of appeal on cities' anti-camping laws could alter how California and others in West address crisis.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday hears what could be its most important case on the homelessness crisis.

The outcome could determine whether cities in California and the West may enforce their local laws against camping on sidewalks or other public property.

Homelessness has often been cited as the most intractable problem for cities in the West, and it has grown worse in the last decade.

Since 2007, the states with the largest increases in the number of people “experiencing chronic patterns of homelessness” were California, Washington, Oregon, Nevada and Hawaii, according to last year’s “annual homelessness assessment report” by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“California accounts for nearly six in 10 of all unsheltered individuals experiencing chronic patterns of homelessness in the United States,” the report said. HUD reported that the largest decreases in homelessness during that period were in two warm-weather states: Texas and Florida.

Experts and advocates disagree on why homelessness is worse in the West. Many point to the high cost of housing.

But city and state attorneys also point to differences in state laws.

The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, whose jurisdiction covers nine states in the West, has recognized constitutional protections for those who are homeless and have no place to sleep. It [See *Justices*, A12]



ALEJANDRO DIAZ, 24, leaves his makeshift home on a thin slice of land between the 110 Freeway and the Arroyo Seco flood channel. One reporter described Diaz’s home as having “riverfront appeal.”

The homeless shelter gets elevated in Highland Park

Immigrants are using repurposed material to create a sense of home



CESAR AUGUSTO, 43, built a shelter next to Diaz’s using discarded fencing and wood paneling for walls and a tarp for a roof. It has stood for four years.

By NATHAN SOLIS

In a city of multimillion-dollar houses and celebrity estates, Cesar Augusto’s home stands apart.

The walls consist of discarded fencing and wood paneling repurposed by Augusto, a tarp serves as a roof, and the frontyard is the industrial backdrop of a city’s flood channel.

Balanced on a thin slice of land between the 110 Freeway and the Arroyo Seco flood channel, the home — not a house in the conventional sense — is framed under a stand of trees by a white lattice fence and window shutters. The rectangular shelter appears above the channel like a section of a wood-paneled suburban basement, and a sign hangs near the entrance: “Ponte” [See *Encampment*, A12]

What’s behind LAPD’s staffing woes?

The police academy is graduating about half as many recruits as needed to meet Mayor Bass’ goal.

By LIBOR JANY

The Los Angeles Police Department has graduated an average of 31 recruits in its past 10 academy classes, a Times review shows, about half the number needed to keep pace with Mayor Karen Bass’ ambitious plan to reach 9,500 officers.

The smaller-than-hoped-for classes — coupled with the number of experienced officers who are retiring or leaving for other jobs — have fueled speculation around City Hall and LAPD headquarters about whether Bass will reevaluate the department’s staffing needs in her new budget proposal, to be released Monday.

City officials have said they need to hire about 60 new officers a month to overcome the force’s attrition rate.

The mayor gave no timetable for her police hiring plan. But the statistics indicate that increasing the size of the force from its current 8,832 sworn officers to 9,500 is unlikely to happen soon.

Given the city’s steadily worsening financial picture, some leaders and progressive activists argue that it makes little sense to keep funding the department for staff it may not be able to hire.

A Times analysis of graduation class data and news releases posted to the department’s website found that 309 recruits graduated from the LAPD academy since July 1. In the same span, the department lost [See *LAPD*, A5]

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

Cure for ‘Trump amnesia’ might be his N.Y. trial

The scenes in court may remind forgetful voters of the former president’s misdeeds.

DOYLE McMANUS

Before Donald Trump’s hush-money trial in New York got underway, pundits predicted that the proceedings could be a media bonanza for the former president. During this year’s Republican primaries, they noted, Trump’s popularity rose every time he was indicted.

But so far, the trial, on charges that Trump covered up illicit payments to an adult filmmaker and actor to influence the 2016 election, hasn’t made him



look like much of a hero.

He’s appeared to fall asleep in the courtroom more than once. He’s grumbled at potential jurors. He’s been reprimanded by the judge. He looks more like a desperately unhappy defendant than a potential commander in chief.

And it’s likely to get worse. Over the next six weeks, the trial may include testimony from Stormy Daniels, the porn performer with whom Trump allegedly had a one-night stand, and Karen McDougal, a former Playboy model who accepted money to conceal another alleged affair.

The tawdry details will produce plenty of tabloid drama — but not the kind Trump reveled in when he was a young, publicity-hungry mogul. (Trump has denied having affairs with the women.)

More important, the trial might begin to cure voters of the affliction known as [See *McManus*, A5]

Astrologer’s fall from ‘healer’ to killer

What led to double murder-suicide by influencer Danielle Johnson?

By NOAH GOLDBERG

The medical examiner detailed the events slowly and with painstaking specificity.

First, she told Sharonda Cole her daughter had been killed in a predawn car crash on Pacific Coast Highway in Redondo Beach. The young woman’s car had slammed into a tree at more than 100 mph.

Cole began to cry.

But the medical examiner had more painful news: Before the crash, Cole’s granddaughters — one 9 years old, the other 8 months old — had either fallen from or been pushed out of their mother’s car on the 405 Freeway. The baby died at the



DANIELLE JOHNSON, right, killed her fiancé, Jaelen Chaney, left, before turning on her two kids.

scene, while her older sister made it to the side of the road and flagged down help.

Cole’s heart sunk even further.

“Then they told me about Jae — and that was the worst,” Cole said. “They told me she had murdered her boyfriend.”

Authorities say Cole’s daughter, Danielle Johnson, fatally stabbed Jaelen Chaney in the heart inside their Woodland Hills apartment in the early morning hours of April 8.

Hours later, police had pieced together the trail of tragedy and linked the three shocking scenes, attributing them all to Johnson.

“I lost it,” Cole said. “My heart was pouring out.” [See *Astrologer*, A8]

Relief in Ukraine after U.S. aid vote

But it may take time to determine whether Russia’s recent battlefield momentum can be reversed. **WORLD, A3**

City pay hikes spark wrangling

Council members who objected to raises for police are fine with those for civilian workers. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

LACMA’s Vegas deal a lose-lose

Art critic Christopher Knight breaks down why the museum’s satellite plan is a bad idea. **CALENDAR, E1**

Weather

Clouds, then sun. L.A. Basin: 73/58. **B5**

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