

Justices uphold encampment laws

Supreme Court limits U.S. agencies' powers

Business lawyers gain a stronger hand in challenging new federal regulations.

By David G. Savage

WASHINGTON — In a major victory for business, the Supreme Court on Friday gave judges more power to block new regulations if they are not explicitly authorized by federal law.

The court's conservative majority overturned a 40-year-old rule that said judges should defer to agencies and their regulations if the law is not clear.

The vote was 6 to 3, with the liberal justices dissenting.

The decision signals a power shift in Washington away from agencies and in favor of the businesses and industries they regulate. It will give companies' lawyers a stronger hand in challenging new regulations.

At the same time, it deals a sharp setback to environmentalists, consumer advocates, unions and healthcare regulators. Along with the Biden administration, they had argued that judges should defer to agency officials who are experts in their fields and have a duty to enforce the law.

This deference rule, known as the Chevron doctrine, had taken on extraordinary importance in recent decades because Congress has been divided and unable to pass new laws on pressing matters such as climate change, online commerce, hospitals and nursing care and workplace conditions.

Instead, new administrations, and in particular Democratic ones, sought to make changes by adopting [See Chevron, A8]



Photographs by BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

INSIDE SAFE workers clear out people and their belongings from a homeless camp this week in Los Angeles.

Homeless count finds fewer people living on L.A. streets

Decline after five years of increases appears to reflect programs' effects

By Doug Smith and David Zahniser

After climbing for the last five years, overall homelessness leveled off in Los Angeles this year, with fewer people living on the streets, according to the annual count released Friday.

The 2024 count, representing a snapshot taken in January, appeared to show the effects of city and county programs to clear out encampments by moving people from tents, makeshift shelters and vehicles into hotels, motels and other forms of temporary housing.

"These shifts in both the city and the county mean that this year, across our re-



DWIGHT THOMAS, 62, gathers up his belongings in a tent encampment at 86th and Broadway in L.A. after Inside Safe employees found him a place to stay.

gion, more people are experiencing homelessness inside, where they are safer, where they have food, showers and better access to medical and other services," said Paul Rubenstein, deputy chief external relations officer of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, which conducts the count.

LAHSA estimated that there were 75,312 homeless people across the county, including in the city of L.A., down 0.3% compared with the previous year. In the city, the number was 45,252, a reduction of 2.2%, the agency said.

Neither change was enough to be considered sta- [See Count, A10]

Ruling gives Western cities more power to restrict homeless tents on public property.

By David G. Savage

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled Friday that cities in California and the West may enforce laws restricting homeless encampments on sidewalks and other public property.

In a 6-3 decision, the justices disagreed with the 9th Circuit Court in San Francisco and ruled that it is not "cruel and unusual" punishment for city officials to forbid homeless people from sleeping on the streets or in parks.

"Homelessness is complex," Justice Neil M. Gorsuch wrote for the court. "Its causes are many. So may be the public policy responses required to address it."

"At bottom, the question this case presents is whether the 8th Amendment grants federal judges primary responsibility for assessing those causes and devising those responses," he wrote. "It does not."

Gorsuch said the 8th Amendment "does not authorize federal judges to wrest those rights and responsibilities from the American people and in their place dictate this nation's homelessness policy."

He was joined by the other conservative justices, while the three liberal justices dissented.

"Sleep is a biological necessity, not a crime," Justice Sonia Sotomayor said in dissent. "For some people, sleeping outside is their only option. For people with no access to shelter, that punishes them for being homeless. That is unconscionable and unconstitutional. Punishing people for their status is 'cruel and unusual' under the 8th Amendment."

The ruling is a significant victory for city officials in the West and a setback for homeless rights advocates. Since 2018, the advocates had won rulings from the 9th Circuit that held it was unconstitutional to enforce anti-camping laws against people who had no home and nowhere to sleep.

Many city officials said [See Encampments, A10]

ANALYSIS

Democrats in panic mode while circling the wagons

By David Lauter

WASHINGTON — President Biden's decision last month to call for a June debate against former President Trump was a gamble — a calculation that the campaign needed to do something to shake up an extraordinarily stable race in which they were stuck in second place.

Thursday night, with a massive television audience watching, that gamble went spectacularly wrong.

The campaign's top priority was to quiet the concerns that millions of voters have had about the 81-year-old Biden's mental acuity.

Instead, Biden inflamed those worries. He stumbled through his answers to the debate's first few questions, including one roughly 10 [See Debate, A6]



GERALD HERBERT Associated Press

PRESIDENT Biden's struggles deflected attention from former President Trump's falsehoods in the debate.

REACTION: Columnists Doyle McManus, Lorraine Ali and Mark Z. Barabak offer analysis. **PERSPECTIVES, A2** Gov. Gavin Newsom, in Atlanta to rally support for Biden, rejects growing talk of replacing him. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Biden resists post-debate calls to exit 2024 race

By Noah Bierman and Seema Mehta

WASHINGTON — President Biden on Friday beat back calls from allies urging him to consider bowing out of his reelection bid — following his weak performance in Thursday's debate with a firmly voiced promise to defeat former President Trump.

"I give you my word as a Biden: I would not be running again if I didn't believe with all my heart and soul I can do this job," he said at a boisterous rally in North Carolina with his wife, Jill Biden, as Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down" played behind him.

The show of determination — including his ability to project his voice and crack [See Biden, A6]

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 84/63. **B8**



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