June 28, 2024

Re: Legal Services of Northern California’s Statement on the U.S. Supreme Court’s Decision in Grants Pass v. Johnson

In 2022, the City of Chico entered into a settlement agreement with eight unhoused city residents who, unable to find accessible shelter in the city and subject to sudden, forcible evictions from public places and loss of personal property, sued for the right to rest in public spaces when they had nowhere else to go. In entering into this settlement, the City of Chico balanced the needs and concerns of unhoused Chico residents with the interests of other city residents, including renters, homeowners and business owners, recognizing the need to share public spaces for the use and enjoyment of all Chico residents. While the lawsuit that spurred the settlement agreement was based in part on the holding of Martin v. Boise, the Supreme Court's holding today in City of Grants Pass v. Johnson neither negates the Chico settlement agreement, nor does it disturb the rights of unhoused people, or any people, to be lawfully present in public spaces. LSNC is confident that the City of Chico intends to honor its commitments to all Chico residents to increase access to safe shelter and to observe the rights of the unsheltered to safeguard their persons and their property when they cannot access shelter.

Legal Services of Northern California, as counsel to unhoused residents in cities throughout Northern California, including Chico, is disappointed that the Supreme Court declined the opportunity to more clearly define the rights of unhoused people in today's decision in City of Grants Pass v. Johnson. LSNC is concerned that the decision will result in some localities overreaching with anti-homeless ordinances seeking to degrade the rights of unhoused Californians and further criminalize homelessness. LSNC remains committed to monitoring the implementation of the settlement agreement reached in 2022 between its clients and the City of Chico regulating criminal enforcement against unsheltered people and increasing shelter access to homeless individuals in Chico.