



# DEMAND THE TOWN OF RIVERHEAD, SUFFOLK COUNTY, SUPPORT UNSHELTERED PEOPLE

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Join us in demanding that Riverhead Town and Suffolk County stop denying freedoms from our unhoused neighbors. Let's send a message: we need a Homeless Bill of Rights now!

July 4th is America's Independence Day, but we still do not have freedom and justice for all in our communities. On April 4th, 2023, the Town of Riverhead, New York, voted to restrict the freedoms of the people living in Riverhead if they happen to be unhoused. This legislation punishes folks for retrieving bottles from the trash, sleeping outside, and simply standing around for "too long." These measures are directly aimed at punishing those without housing and further perpetuate the brutal cycle of homelessness.

More and more people are struggling to make ends meet as we face an affordable housing crisis. The safety net that is supposed to help get them back on their feet - emergency shelter - is difficult to access, or worse, acts as more of a hindrance than a help. When residing in shelter in Suffolk County, it is virtually impossible to save any money for independent housing, as "shelter payments" reduce a household's income to poverty level. It is easy to see why Long Island has a crisis of unsheltered individuals.

We cannot celebrate ourselves as a nation of freedom, when people who fall on hard times are facing profound injustice. This Independence Day, contact your Suffolk County and Riverhead Town Legislators today to demand that this inhumane policy is removed and that they adopt a Homeless Bill of Rights in its place.

## **RIVERHEAD TOWN BOARD AND SUPERVISOR**

### **Supervisor:**

Yvette Aguiar--[aguiar@townofriverheadny.gov](mailto:aguiar@townofriverheadny.gov)

### **Board Members:**

Frank Beyrodt--[beyrodt@townofriverheadny.gov](mailto:beyrodt@townofriverheadny.gov)

Kenneth Rothwell--[rothwell@townofriverheadny.gov](mailto:rothwell@townofriverheadny.gov)

Robert Kern--[kern@townofriverheadny.gov](mailto:kern@townofriverheadny.gov)

Tim Hubbard--[hubbard@townofriverheadny.gov](mailto:hubbard@townofriverheadny.gov)

**CLICK HERE TO**  
**LOOK UP YOUR**  
**SUFFOLK**  
**COUNTY**  
**LEGISLATOR**



# HOW TO HELP: GENERAL COMMENTS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

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## SUBMIT A PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments related to laws may be provided through the submission of a three-minute phone message. You are also encouraged to email your legislator directly, as this was a town action, and the legislators often have a working relationship with the towns in their districts.

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To contact Suffolk County, call (631) 853-3685 or email: [clerk.legislature@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:clerk.legislature@suffolkcountyny.gov)

To contact Riverhead Town, email: [info@townofriverheadny.gov](mailto:info@townofriverheadny.gov)

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There is no specific format needed for email submissions, though direct language is appreciated. The example below can serve as a template.

## SAMPLE CALL/EMAIL SCRIPT

Dear Riverhead Town Supervisor/Board Member/Suffolk County Legislator

I am writing to/calling you as a constituent from your district, asking that you vote to disavow the hateful anti-homeless legislation passed on April 4th, 2023 and to pass a Homeless Bill of Rights in it's place. The false narratives and negative stigma towards unsheltered people must be met with a counter-narrative of compassion from our local leaders and solutions to the affordable housing crisis.

Resources should be used for struggling families and individuals who depend on the county for social services. No leader was remembered fondly who punished and ignored the most vulnerable among their community, which is what you are doing by allowing this legislation to stand.

I am demanding that you reject this bigotry, and ensure that the town/county meets its obligations to provide social services, and do what the government is intended to do: serve the people. On Independence Day, we must recognize that justice is for all, not a select few. Please consider introducing a Homeless Bill of Rights, a draft of which can be found here:

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## PRESS CONTACT

LONG ISLAND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF OUR UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS

[lilcsun.forunhousedneighbors@gmail.com](mailto:lilcsun.forunhousedneighbors@gmail.com)

(631) 517-0738



# THE HOMELESS BILL OF RIGHTS

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No person's rights, privileges, or access to public services may be diminished, compressed or denied simply because they are experiencing homelessness . For purposes of this section, “person experiencing homelessness” means any person who does not have a fixed or regular residence and who may live on the street or outdoors, in a homeless shelter or another temporary residence. Such a person has the same rights and privileges as any other resident of this state, and can expect these rights to be protected and respected. A person experiencing homelessness:

(1) Has the right to use and move freely in public spaces, including, but not limited to, public sidewalks, public parks, public transportation and public buildings, in the same manner as any other person, and without discrimination on the basis of their housing status and without intimidation or harassment from anyone, including law enforcement officers, in the same manner as other persons. Non-hostile approach to architectural plans and design that promotes inclusivity and accessibility for all shall be promoted to this end;

(2) Has the right to equal treatment by all state and municipal agencies as related, but not limited, access to housing, healthcare, childcare, education, and social services, without discrimination on the basis of housing status, and shall not be made to believe they cannot apply for programs based on housing status or denied reasonable accommodations that they would otherwise be eligible for;

(3) Has the right not to face discrimination while seeking or maintaining employment due to their lack of permanent mailing address, or their mailing address being that of a shelter or social service provider;

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## **PRESS CONTACT**

LONG ISLAND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF OUR UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS

[lilcsun.forunhousedneighbors@gmail.com](mailto:lilcsun.forunhousedneighbors@gmail.com)

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(4) Has the right to emergency medical care free from discrimination based on their housing status;

(5) Has the right to vote, register to vote, and receive documentation necessary to prove identity for voting without discrimination due to their housing status;

(6) Has the right to receive equal treatment by state and municipal agencies, including the right to protection from disclosure of their records and information provided to homeless shelters and service providers to state, municipal and private entities without appropriate legal authority; and the right to confidentiality of personal records and information in accordance with all limitations on disclosure established by the Federal Homeless Management Information Systems, the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and the Federal Violence Against Women Act;

(7) Has the right to a reasonable expectation of privacy in their personal property, including tents, encampments, and any other dwellings free from unwarranted surveillance or intrusion to the same extent as personal property in a permanent residence, as well as the right to protection against the seizure or destruction of personal property, especially government documents and medication;

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(7a) Has the right, by extension of item 7, to protection against encampment sweeps or forced relocation from dwelling site if alternate shelter is unavailable, or if the person experiencing homelessness is ineligible for placement in shelter as determined by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ([Martin v. City of Boise](#), 2019; [Johnson v. City of Grants Pass](#), 2022);

(8) Has the right to access housing free from discrimination based on current housing status, to report and appeal housing discrimination including decisions related to shelter access. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has clarified that discrimination against individuals with no permanent address or those whose address is that of a shelter or social service provider may constitute violations of the Fair Housing Act.

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