

## Item 71 - Celeste Moyers

Panhandlers should not have the right to harass citizens or visitors. They should not have the right to loiter along sidewalks or in store fronts, creating unsafe conditions for themselves and others.

Such behaviors merit a public safety issue and must be dealt with immediately. There are multiple welfare resources, wrongfully funded by working taxpayers, which are already available to the poor and homeless. More handouts do nothing to truly help those who say they are in need. These individuals must earn an honest wage versus continuing to harass, panhandle, and deplete welfare program funds that should not exist in the first place.

If they can harass, they certainly have the ability to constructively use their energy to get a job and a place of their own to live. Their chosen behavior should not allow them special exclusivity to harm others and be a public nuisance.

By failure to vote to prohibit panhandling and loitering, this city council encourages continuation of this behavior.

Panhandling and loitering signal a greater problem which this city council has the opportunity to begin to resolve. As expressed by Malcom Gladwell, author of The Tipping Point, while referring to the Broken Windows theory of criminologists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, he says:

"In a city, relatively minor problems like graffiti, public disorder, and aggressive panhandling . . . are all the equivalent of broken windows, invitations to more serious crimes: Muggers and robbers, whether opportunistic or professional, believe they reduce their chances of being caught or even identified if they operate on streets where potential victims are already intimidated by prevailing conditions. If the neighborhood cannot keep a bothersome panhandler from annoying passerby, (the thief may reason), it is even less likely to call the police to identify a potential mugger or to interfere if the mugging actually takes place."

This city council is at the tipping point of a decision to either vote for the prohibition of panhandling and begin working towards a safer Austin community or to ignore problems such as panhandling and open the Austin community to a quickly deteriorating city.

Whereas this single ordinance will not resolve all problems associated with the downtown area or the city as a whole, this is a positive step in the right direction, resulting in a safer environment for all Austin citizens.