



Grants Pass & Josephine County
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Grants Pass has been under the national microscope for years as it relates to homelessness. Our community was at the center of the U.S. Supreme Court case City of Grants Pass v. Johnson, which overturned the legal precedent established by Martin v. City of Boise. HB 3115 was enacted in 2021 to codify that now-overturned decision. Today, Oregon statute remains grounded in legal reasoning that the highest court in the land has rejected.

Homelessness is a local issue that requires a local response. The drivers of homelessness in Portland are not the same as those in Prineville. Rural Southern Oregon faces different economic realities, different service capacities, and different public safety challenges. Oregonians expect their local elected leaders to respond to the needs of their communities. Yet under HB 3115, local governments' hands remain tied.

The “objectively reasonable” standard created by HB 3115 has generated significant confusion and uncertainty. It is poorly defined, inconsistently interpreted, and has exposed local governments to the threat of costly litigation. In rural communities with limited tax bases, the risk of expensive lawsuits alone can paralyze thoughtful local policymaking. Local governments must have the ability to adopt clear, enforceable public camping ordinances that reflect community standards while maintaining safety, sanitation, and access to public spaces for all.

Let me be clear: repealing HB 3115 does not criminalize homelessness. SB 1514 does not create new penalties or enforcement mechanisms. It simply restores the authority of local governments to adopt public camping ordinances consistent with their communities’ values and expectations just as 49 other states currently allow.

From a business perspective, this issue directly impacts economic vitality. Grants Pass and Josephine County have worked tirelessly to reinvent our economy after the collapse of the timber industry. We rely heavily on tourism, small business growth, and community vibrancy. When public spaces become unsafe, inaccessible, or unsanitary, it affects customer traffic, workforce recruitment, visitor perceptions, and overall community confidence. Businesses want compassionate solutions but they also need safe, functional downtowns and public spaces.

The Legislature has rightly prioritized housing and homelessness in recent sessions. However, many communities are not yet seeing measurable results. Local control must be part of the solution. HB 3115 has effectively paralyzed local responses to unsanctioned public camping, even after the Supreme Court clarified that such restrictions are constitutionally permissible.

Absent legislative action, a ballot measure has already been filed for November 2026 to allow Oregonians to repeal this law through a vote of the people. It would be far better for this body to act deliberately and responsibly now, rather than forcing a statewide campaign on a complex and sensitive issue.

SB 1514 restores balance. It restores clarity. And most importantly, it restores the ability of local communities to respond to local challenges.

On behalf of the Grants Pass & Josephine County Chamber of Commerce and the businesses we represent, I respectfully urge your support of SB 1514.

Terry Hopkins
President & CEO
Grants Pass & Josephine County Chamber of Commerce