



Legislation Summary:

(Bill of Rights for Homeless Persons) An Act establishing a bill of rights for individuals experiencing homelessness/ An Act establishing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness.

Bill numbers: H211/S142

Sponsors: Rep. William Smitty Pignatelli, Sen. Rebecca Rausch

Summary: This bill defines homeless persons as those who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. Rights and protections should include use of public spaces, privacy in their personal property in public spaces, interaction with public officials or employees and law enforcement officers without harassment, resting in public spaces and seeking protection from adverse weather, eating in public spaces where not prohibited, and occupying a legally-parked vehicle. The bill prohibits discrimination as a result of housing status and repeals laws defining and criminalizing being a vagrant, tramp or vagabond. Prohibits public accommodations from discriminating on the basis of housing status. New language this term entitles people experiencing homelessness to routine and emergency medical care. Provides for the right to vote, register to vote and receive documentation to prove identity for voting. Entitles persons to equal treatment by state and municipal agencies.

This bill of rights is needed because of persistent discrimination toward individuals experiencing homelessness. They are frequently asked to “move on” or actively denied the right to use public facilities such as parks, libraries, and parking spaces. They can be challenged because they don’t have a permanent address, especially when seeking employment. Government and law enforcement officials have often not provided equal treatment as they carry out their duties. We need to eliminate all these practices which tend to keep people from successfully exiting their homeless status.

League Position: LWVMA supports these bills based on its national positions on Social Policy and Meeting Basic Human Needs as well as Voting Rights.

From [Impact on Issues 2020-2022](#): “Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and health and safety of all Americans.” (p. 114) Also, “Privacy of participants should be protected. All administrative procedures should be conducted with respect for the rights and dignity of the individuals.” (p. 140) “The League of Women Voters of the U. S. believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.” (p. 24)