

✓ Advocates for homeless work for state initiative

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An estimated 200,000 Californians are homeless. More than one-third of them are families. Bureaucrats, politicians, religious leaders and educators seem in constant search of an elusive answer to the problem.

Sam Karp and other supporters of the Hunger and Homeless Initiative think they've found that answer, or at least part of it.

Karp, the administrator of Santa Cruz county's Food and Nutrition Services, is on the board of directors of Californians Working Together, the organization behind the initiative. And he makes it clear that this is an initiative with a lot of planning behind it.

"Before drawing up the initiative,

we set about doing some research on the perceptions and attitudes of Californians: How did they perceive the problems of homelessness and hunger and what are they willing to do about them?" Karp says.

"The results showed that homelessness was the number two concern among people in California, and Californians said they were willing to do something about it," Karp says. "The majority said they were willing to pay higher taxes."

But the initiative doesn't depend on increased taxes to finance funds for its programs. Instead it demands increased enforcement of existing health, safety and building code laws.

According to Karp, 122,000 citations for such violations were issued in Los Angeles County but only 1,200

were prosecuted. The initiative would call for tickets to be issued to violators which would hopefully raise in the neighborhood of \$90 million annually, 10 percent of which would be given to local government to pay for the increased enforcement.

The initiative also calls for funds to be raised by issuing California savings bonds of \$25, \$50, and \$100. "They'd be patterned much like national savings bonds were once used to fund war efforts," Karp says. "This is a new war effort, the war on hunger and homelessness."

The battle plan outlined in the initiative would integrate a number of approaches to the problems.

The initiative is backed by a broad-based coalition whose members range from the San Diego Board

of Realtors to industrialist Armand Hammer to Ted Danson, Morgan Fairchild, The Beach Boys and a plethora of celebrity sponsors.

"We need to collect 372,000 valid signatures within 150 days to qualify for the Nov. 1988 ballot," Karp says. "We're shooting to collect 600,000 signatures in the next 90 days."

"California is a billboard state.

The initiative process in California gets national recognition, especially during a presidential election year," Karp says.

"We hope that it will be the beginning of a movement nationwide to speak to the issue of poverty," Karp says. "Because that's really what the issue is and it has no place in the wealthiest nation in the world."