



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 3210		DATE: 3/11/2026	
COMMITTEE: Special Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. A.C. "HONEST ABE" DIENOFF		PHONE NUMBER: 314-440-9000	
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CITY: O'FALLON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63366
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: CAMERON DOUGLAS		PHONE NUMBER: 949-212-7965	
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Good afternoon, Madam Chair and honorable committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 3210, the Safe Neighborhoods Act, which aims to address the critical issue of homelessness in Missouri. My name is Cameron Douglas, and I am a State Government Affairs Manager at Cicero Action. Cicero Action is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization based in Austin, Texas that advocates for innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to public sector problems across the country. Our organization is committed to providing rigorous research and presenting accountable policy frameworks.

The public is broadly aligned politically on the issue of street camping. A national poll found that more than two-thirds of voters across party lines agree that homeless individuals should not be allowed to camp on public property. There is also a strong bipartisan sentiment that it is more compassionate to move homeless individuals into shelters rather than leave them to the dangers of life on the streets. States and municipalities have responded to the public's concerns by enacting laws and ordinances against unregulated homeless encampments. But despite adopting these policies, many cities are still slow to enforce them and move homeless individuals out of sprawling encampments and into shelters. One promising mechanism for achieving these outcomes is to allow property owners to apply for property tax refunds from cities or counties that fail to clear homeless encampments that impact the value and safety of their homes or businesses, as Arizona has recently done with Proposition 312, and as Missouri seeks to do with House Bill 3210. Similar legislation is currently advancing in Georgia and in Oklahoma. This approach creates a powerful financial incentive for officials to take seriously the deleterious impact of street homelessness on their constituents and communities and to respond swiftly and appropriately.

Homeless encampments have grown both in number and complexity. Over the last decade, the proportions of homeless people with serious mental illness or addiction who are living on the street have increased by 84 percent and 130 percent, respectively. In Missouri, while overall homelessness has decreased since 2013 (8,581) (2024 = 7,538, a 12% decrease), the seriously mentally ill and Chronically addicted made up 52% of the unsheltered population in 2024 compared to 40% of the unsheltered population in 2013. So, while overall homelessness has declined, the rate of the most needy population has increased significantly. Additionally, 15% of the unsheltered population in MO are registered sex offenders. Further, homeless individuals are more likely to be victims of crime, with behavioral health issues increasing their vulnerability even more, but they are also hundreds of times more likely to commit serious crimes themselves. Homeless encampments are also associated with elevated levels of contamination from disease, human waste, and garbage. Studies have found

encampments with as much as 2,700 cubic meters of trash, including bicycles, shopping carts, plastic bags, and food packaging. The pollution associated with encampments contaminates waterways and creates significant environmental harm, including mass destruction due to wildfires resulting from unregulated burning in encampments. In 2024, Kansas City and St. Louis responded to daily fires in homeless encampments, leading to estimated millions of dollars in damage and highlighting the risk. Rotting food and untreated sewage attract vermin and increase the risk of transmission of serious diseases and infections, further jeopardizing the health and safety of both homeless people and the communities adjacent to encampments. The material impact on property values is substantial.

When public officials fail to swiftly and effectively address dangerous homeless encampments in a community, residents and business owners suffer alongside the homeless people left in squalor on the street. This suffering is not just an issue of quality of life—it imposes real and substantial costs on the community in the form of decreased business activity, fire and biohazards, public health risks, and crime. Cities that fail to contain these dangers need to face accountability and should be compelled to pay for the costs their failures have imposed on residents and businesses. Arizonans passed a referendum in 2024 to create a pathway for residents and business owners to file for property tax refunds from cities and municipalities if their property was impacted by the dangers and nuisances of unregulated homeless encampments. Proposition 312 passed with more than 58 percent of voters in support. While the proposition in Arizona only focused on non-enforcement of laws against public nuisances, this type of policy has a natural extension to non-enforcement of other types of laws, such as a failure to respond to calls for service for certain types of property crimes, such as vandalism, or public order crimes like trespassing. This framework ensures that if cities and counties refuse to enforce camping bans, littering laws, and other policies that uphold public order, the public has recourse to recover some costs imposed on them by their government's abdication of responsibility. At scale, these refunds will strongly incentivize cities and counties to respond faster and more consistently to encampments and criminal activity, reducing the dangers posed to both the public and the homeless.

Cities and counties must respond more aggressively to the humanitarian crisis unfolding on their streets. The Trump administration has taken recent action to incentivize communities to reduce homeless encampments, expand shelters and services, and stop tolerating open drug use and crime. But more can be done at the state level to ensure that local officials comply with these changes. State laws like House Bill 3210 that allow for property tax refunds to residents and property owners who are impacted by homeless encampments are a powerful mechanism to improve accountability and increase compliance with state and federal policies that regulate street camping.

Please give House Bill 3210 your Aye vote. Thank you very much for your consideration.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KORTNIE HUDDLESTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
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CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2026 11:32 PM	

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

I oppose House Bill 3210, the so-called "Safe Neighborhoods Act." This legislation is a deeply flawed and punitive measure that attacks cities, misuses taxpayer money, and undermines the principles of local governance and community safety.

At its core, this bill seeks to punish cities for making complex policy decisions about resource allocation. It forces cities to pay compensation to private property owners who claim their property values have dropped because of a city's "policy, pattern, or practice" regarding enforcement of certain laws. This is a radical and irresponsible expansion of government liability. It invites a flood of expensive litigation that will drain municipal budgets, diverting money away from essential public services like schools, infrastructure, and actual community safety programs.

The bill's premise is that cities should be forced to criminalize poverty and homelessness. It lists offenses like "illegal public camping" and "panhandling." From a progressive standpoint, we recognize that these issues are symptoms of systemic failures: a lack of affordable housing, inadequate mental health care, and economic inequality. The answer is not to punish cities that are trying to address these humanitarian crises with compassion and evidence-based strategies. This bill would force cities to choose between criminalizing their most vulnerable residents or facing financial ruin through lawsuits.

The financial mechanism is particularly insidious. It caps compensation at a property owner's prior year property tax payment, but allows claims to be rolled over year after year. This creates a permanent, compounding liability for cities that do not adopt the punitive enforcement tactics this bill demands. It holds a city's budget hostage to a political agenda.

This bill also weaponizes the judicial system against local governments. It shifts the burden of proof onto the city to prove its actions are "lawful" and forces cities to pay the legal fees of prevailing property owners, while protecting those owners from ever having to pay a city's legal costs. This one-sided structure is designed to intimidate cities into compliance, regardless of the merits of their policies.

Finally, this bill is a solution in search of a problem. It provides a monetary incentive for property owners to sue their own city government, straining the relationship between a community and its residents. It creates a dangerous precedent where any policy disagreement over enforcement priorities can be turned into a six-figure legal claim.

We should be working together to create safe, affordable, and compassionate communities. HB 3210 does none of these things. It is a politically motivated attack that would punish cities for acting humanely and fiscally penalize them for tackling complex social problems. I urge you to vote no on this bill.



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WITNESS NAME		
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WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:
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EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2026 11:30 PM

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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
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CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2026 1:12 PM	

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HB 3210 creates a new statutory cause of action allowing property owners to seek compensation from cities based on alleged policies or practices of declining to enforce certain laws or maintaining a public nuisance.

This proposal raises significant structural concerns regarding municipal governance and the separation of governmental powers.

Law enforcement decisions necessarily involve the exercise of discretion by local officials, including police departments and prosecutors.

Decisions regarding how limited public resources are allocated, which violations are prioritized, and how public-safety policies are implemented are traditionally matters of executive and municipal authority.

HB 3210 would allow private parties to challenge these discretionary policy decisions through civil litigation. The bill permits compensation claims based on allegations that a city has adopted a “policy, pattern, or practice” of declining enforcement. The statute does not define these terms with sufficient precision, creating uncertainty regarding what level of enforcement activity would trigger liability.

The bill further places the burden of proof on the city and requires the city to pay attorney’s fees to a prevailing property owner. These provisions create asymmetric litigation incentives that could encourage frequent lawsuits against municipalities based on disagreements with local enforcement priorities.

Municipal governments must balance a wide range of competing public responsibilities, including public safety, housing concerns, social services, and fiscal limitations. Subjecting routine enforcement decisions to ongoing civil liability risks transferring complex policy judgments from elected local governments to the courts.

For these reasons, the General Assembly should carefully consider whether HB 3210 would improperly expose municipalities to recurring litigation based on policy disagreements rather than clear legal violations.

Members of the General Assembly are respectfully placed on notice that this proposal may substantially expand municipal liability while intruding upon established areas of executive and local

governmental discretion.