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Statement on Coordinated Efforts to End Homelessness in San Diego

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As reported by the Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH) after their annual point-in-time count on January 28, 2011, there were over 9,000 people residing in San Diego County that are homeless (either dependent on a shelter, or without shelter at all).¹

The San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA) recognizes that this issue presents not only social problems, but also negatively impacts taxpayers in a multitude of ways. SDCTA is committed to serving as advocates on this issue by encouraging the collaboration and coordination of efforts to most effectively use taxpayer dollars.

In April 2011, SDCTA hosted a Breakfast Club forum to explore the “Cost of Homelessness” on taxpayers. The conclusion of the forum was that prevention of homelessness is far more cost effective than providing care for the homeless, and that it may be far more expensive to do nothing at all about the issue.

San Diego’s homeless are dependent on public services and private charities. The indirect taxpayer costs associated with providing these services adds up to millions of dollars per year. In addition, a 2005 RTFH study estimated that direct public expenditures on homelessness added up to \$70 million per year in San Diego County alone.²

There are dozens of public and private organizations that are working to address this costly and region-wide issue. From providers of shelters and medical care to veteran services and food banks, San Diegans are hard at work each day to help care for our most vulnerable.

SDCTA recognizes the benefits of these efforts. However, as the issue of caring for the homeless has transitioned from a focus on providing goods and services to address immediate needs to plans to find permanent solutions to reduce the population of homeless, one message that is heard time and time again is there simply are not enough resources. Despite the millions upon millions that are directed to this issue through private help and public assistance, there are still not enough beds, meals or medical treatments to go around.

¹ The report can be accessed here: <http://www.rtfhsd.org/docs/RTFH-PITC-2011.pdf>.

² Regional Task Force on the Homeless (August 2005) *Distribution of Public Funds and Cash Assistance in San Diego County*

As agencies and organizations struggle with this problem, a spirit of collaboration has started to gain steam. Coordinating like services can ultimately lead to more efficient use of the resources available to address homelessness.

While SDCTA cannot claim authority on how to solve homelessness in San Diego, the associated taxpayer costs with this issue have caught our attention. Continued partnership and effective communication between both the private organizations and the wide variety of public agencies who engage in this issue on a multitude of levels will lead to getting more San Diegans off the streets and back to being productive members of society.

SDCTA applauds those who are deeply engaged in this critical and complicated issue, and further encourages continued collaboration to most effectively use taxpayer dollars to find permanent solutions. To this end, we are committed to serve as advocates for the partnership of the public and private sectors to minimize homelessness and will periodically review coordination efforts to determine whether taxpayer dollars are being used cost-effectively.

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