

**LOCAL NEWS**

## Gov. Gavin Newsom tours Riverside homeless shelter to highlight 'crisis'



Gov. Gavin Newsom, center, talks to the news media inside the men's dormitory at the Path of Life homeless shelter in Riverside on Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2020. Newsom is joined by, from left, Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside; Sen. Richard D. Roth, D-Riverside; and Riverside Mayor Rusty Bailey. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

Gov. [Gavin Newsom](#) toured Riverside's homeless shelter and homelessness services Tuesday, Jan. 14, as the second stop on a statewide tour focused on homeless issues.

Newsom said homelessness is the state's top priority.

"This is a crisis. This is unacceptable," he said. "Everybody has the right to be angry and concerned about the state of the state of California as it relates to homelessness."

Newsom [released a budget](#) Friday, Jan. 10, that includes more than \$1 billion in homeless response funding, including \$750 million for a new Access to Housing and Services Fund, and a major new investment to reform Medi-Cal.

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He met with homeless people and service providers as well as Riverside Mayor Rusty Bailey and with Assemblyman Jose Medina and state Sen. Richard Roth, both Riverside Democrats.

"I want him to understand the worth of a key," said Peggy Morgan, 74, who has been homeless for four months. "It's security, it's a home base, and it makes so much difference in your life."

A lifelong resident of the Inland Empire, Morgan said she has no surviving family and couldn't afford her home after being treated for throat cancer. She receives Social Security payments, but said that's not enough to cover the security deposit and rent at an apartment.

Bailey, when he heard her talk about the worth of a key, gave Morgan a key to the 8-by-8 metal shed where he had been sleeping to draw attention to the urgency of the city's homeless situation.

"I swear this wasn't planned," Bailey told Newsom, before turning to Morgan: "You can use this more than I can. But we need to take care of some rules we don't understand."

Morgan said she didn't have the words to express her gratitude as she teared up, joking that she was messing up the first makeup she'd worn in months.

Bailey was referring to the fact that the shelter in which he's slept, made by the company Pallet, is too small to meet state code.

Newsom said later that the requirement could and should be changed.

"I hate hearing things like that. ... I mean, give me a break," he said, and asked Mark Ghaly, the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services, to handle the change. Ghaly was traveling with the governor.

One reason homelessness has gotten so bad, Newsom said, is that the bureaucracy has made it unclear who is responsible.

"We need to remove the stigma, and we need to remove the silos," he said.

Cities, counties, the state and the federal government need to work together, he said.

"We believe in fiscal discipline ... and being accountable for money spent," he said. "Accountability at the local level, support at the federal level."

Preventing future homelessness is also a priority, Newsom said.

One of the state's actions in the next few days will be to install 100 trailers provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency that were previously used for the Camp fire. They will go to people in the state's largest homeless encampments.

“This is not just a government problem,” said Bailey, who [after his term ends will become CEO of Path of Life Ministries](#), which runs the homeless shelter. “This is a societal issue ... The most important thing is community, so I hope that you saw that today.”

Riverside’s access center, located on the same property as the shelter, provides access to a range of services, including homeless street outreach, housing placement, employment development and homeless prevention resources.

People using those services Tuesday said they were glad Newsom seemed to take their situation seriously.

“People are homeless for a lot of reasons. Some use drugs and alcohol, but some of us don’t,” said Michael Bryan, 62, who said he worked as a security guard and in other professions for 40 years before losing his job over accusations he said are untrue. “Some people need a lot of help. For me, the help here has been great. People here are my friends.”

From Riverside, Newsom headed to Los Angeles to [visit staff and residents at a board-and-care home](#), according to a news release.

The governor kicked off the homelessness-focused tour Monday, Jan. 13, in Grass Valley and plans to continue this week with stops in the Central Valley and Bay Area.

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## Ryan Hagen

Ryan Hagen covers the city of Riverside for the Southern California Newspaper Group. Since he began covering Inland Empire governments in 2010, he's written about a city entering bankruptcy and exiting bankruptcy; politicians being elected, recalled and arrested; crime; a terrorist attack; fires; ICE; fights to end homelessness; fights over the location of speed bumps; and people's best and worst moments. His greatest accomplishment is breaking a coffee addiction. His greatest regret is any moment without coffee.

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