

Federal Leadership, Local Control – A Bold New Homeless Strategy

By George Mullen



Source: Jeff Lewis/AP Images

The large response to my recent article [The Case for a Federal Government Takeover of America's Homeless Crisis](#) merits further discussion about how such an approach might unfold. Most importantly, a federal intervention must be kept limited in scope and with a specific outcome in mind. As such, I'm proposing a bold new strategy called "*Federal Leadership, Local Control*".

The reality is that homelessness has always existed, and always will. But the current homeless crisis on our streets – a humanitarian, public health and environmental disaster – has not always existed. And it is resolvable with the right leadership and strategy. Unfortunately, it is painfully clear that our state and city leaders are unwilling and / or unable to solve the problem. If they could, they surely would have done so by now. Thus, we need to look for leadership elsewhere.

Setting aside the passionate spectrum of opinions about President Trump, one thing we can agree upon is that he is unconventional and willing to take risks. Most politicians are not, and this is a big reason that America's homeless crisis continues unabated. President Trump's unique persona could prove beneficial in this arena. He has repeatedly spoken

out about California's homeless devastation, and he just appointed a new chair for the U.S. Interagency on Homelessness. He is itching for action.

With this in mind, here is the proposed plan:

1. President Trump declares a National Homeless Emergency across the homeless-hotbed states of California, Oregon, and Washington.
2. The federal government designates 12 separate sites of 200-plus acre plots of federal land on the outskirts of every homeless-epicenter city from San Diego to Seattle to be each region's [Sunbreak Ranch](#). These will be location-solution centers designed to welcome all homeless persons, who can come and go as they please. Individuals can reside in a community tent or camp on their own in a series of designated (and protected) areas for families, single mothers, elderly, veterans, those with dogs, and so on.

There will be port-o-potties and port-o-showers aplenty, as well as mess halls, medical tents, storage facilities, and onsite service providers. These will include dedicated teams of mental health professionals, drug rehabilitation specialists, and vocational trainers. There will be a free daily shuttle-bus service going to and from the nearest metropolitan downtown. Each Sunbreak will have private security as well as a permanent 24/7 police outpost in order to provide safety and security to all residents. ([Greg Gutfeld explains Sunbreak Ranch nationwide on Fox's Five](#))

Importantly, the point is not to park homeless people out of sight. Rather, the Sunbreak goal is to be the location-solution center focused on diagnosing each person's unique situation, and then assisting every able person back to work and independent living. And for those unable, the goal is to get them the services that will best help them.

Some will argue that state and local jurisdictions should just do this on their own if they want. The reality is that it would be near-impossible for them to accomplish. Local jurisdictions attempting to designate a 200-acre site for a [Sunbreak Ranch](#) will be beset by political infighting, approval processes, permitting, NIMBY opposition, environmental protests, and endless red tape. In other words, it will never happen, and the homeless *status quo* will prevail. This is why the federal option is our 'silver bullet'. The federal government can indeed designate 12 Sunbreak sites of 200-acres each on federal land without any of the aforementioned red tape or headaches. (*The U.S. Navy's new Naval Amphibious Training Base just built on the south side of Coronado on federal land is a perfect example – erected quickly without any input or red tape from the adjacent local jurisdictions.*)

The first 12 Sunbreaks are targeted for San Diego, Orange County, Riverside/San Bernardino, Los Angeles south, Los Angeles north, Santa Barbara, San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento/Stockton, Portland, and Seattle. More will likely follow.

3. Once the exact Sunbreak locations are identified, the federal government will send FEMA and the U.S. Navy Seabees / Marines / Army to construct graveled roads and tent

cities using surplus military equipment from Iraq and Afghanistan deployments. With our military's help (and unique expertise), these tent cities will rise within weeks and be able to house tens of thousands. (Congress will likely have to approve funding, but perhaps there is Executive leeway for such a humanitarian emergency. Either way, funding should be minimal for erecting tent cities with surplus military equipment.)

If President Trump decides to terminate the endless (and largely fruitless) Afghan War, he could re-deploy some of our military's tent cities in Afghanistan to the 12 Sunbreaks on our west coast. These resources would be far better used helping suffering Americans.

4. Once built, each Sunbreak will be handed over to a local consortium (with a dynamic proven leader) that includes representatives from the county, local cities, police, fire, homeless service providers, charities, churches, service clubs, et al. Homelessness at its core is a local issue. Thus, each Sunbreak will need to be managed and operated by locals who best understand that community's unique situation. The Sunbreak *modus operandi* is designed to be 'local control' without federal red tape. That being said, there will be a federal mandate for 24/7 local police outposts on every [Sunbreak Ranch](#) to maintain peace, law and order, as well as environmental protection.

Furthermore, every major city has dozens of organizations that are dedicated to providing services to help the homeless. As such, all qualified homeless service providers will be given rent-free space at [Sunbreak Ranch](#) in order to help them facilitate their outreach and services. The size of the area given will depend on each provider's capacity to serve.

5. In exchange for providing the Sunbreaks, President Trump and the federal government will require the three west coast states to return to rule of law. With a safe Sunbreak housing option now available to all homeless persons in need, public loitering, camping, littering, defecating, urinating, illicit drug use and petty theft on the streets, canyons and river basins will no longer be permitted. If a jurisdiction refuses to return to rule of law, President Trump will need to spur corrective action by using the bully pulpit and leverage over the \$562 billion of annual federal funding going to these three states. The fed-up (and desperate) west coast population centers will likely jump to demand implementation of a viable homeless solution such as Sunbreak if so offered. ([A recent L.A. Times poll found that 95% of voters say homelessness is L.A.'s biggest problem.](#))

The essential (and indispensable) component of a civil society is rule of law. Without it, we have anarchy. Many people believe our courts will no longer allow for rule of law with respect to homeless street camping – but they are misunderstanding what the court is actually saying. *The New York Times* sums up the pertinent *Martin v. City of Boise* (2018) court decision: "A three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in San Francisco, ruled for the plaintiffs and struck down the laws, saying the Constitution does not allow prosecuting people for sleeping outdoors [if there is no shelter available](#)." With 12 operational Sunbreaks, shelter will now be available. Thus, the three west coast states will have met the court's conditions and can return to enforcing the rule of law on their streets and canyons.

Most significantly, 12 operational Sunbreaks will provide nearly every homeless person on the west coast with the attention and services they need, as well as enable the clean-up of our feces-laden cities and natural environments.

San Diego is the best positioned west coast city to host Sunbreak #1 and become the national proof of concept. It has the nation's finest year-round weather and ample adjacent federal lands, making it the perfect test site. If Sunbreak proves successful in San Diego, the "*Federal Leadership, Local Control*" homeless strategy can be quickly replicated up the west coast, and then across the nation.

George Mullen is spearheading [Sunbreak Ranch](#) in the effort to end America's homeless crisis. He is known as author of "[The Coming Financial Tsunami](#)" (2005) and "[Welcome to the Bubble Economy](#)" (2006) which accurately predicted the 2007-08 global economic crash. He is a principal of [StudioRevolution.com](#) in San Diego, California.

Townhall article: <https://townhall.com/columnists/georgemullen/2020/02/13/federal-leadership-local-control--a-bold-new-homeless-strategy-n2561237>

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