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Meet the candidates, week 26: “Do you support Mayor London Breed’s “very aggressive” homeless sweeps in recent weeks? Why or why not?”

San Francisco has begun aggressively clearing encampments with very little notice. This is in stark contrast to the city’s approach to other public safety measures, such as the daylighting law, which provided residents a full year to adapt before enforcement began. While it’s essential to maintain a safe and orderly society, **these abrupt encampment clearings often amount to political theater and fail to address the root causes of homelessness.**

The issue of homelessness is complex, and our responses must reflect that complexity. Ideally, the goal of any encampment sweep should be to encourage individuals to engage with services that can help them move toward stable housing and a better quality of life. However, for this to be effective, the city must ensure that **those services are truly accessible and adequate** to meet the diverse needs of our homeless population.

This includes expanding shelter capacity and providing **options that cater to the unique circumstances of families, those with pets, and individuals with disabilities or mental health challenges.** Without these provisions, the sweeps can become little more than a temporary displacement rather than a step toward a sustainable solution.

Additionally, the city must provide adequate notice and support to those affected by encampment clearings. People deserve to know their rights and have the opportunity to connect with services that can genuinely help them transition to more stable living conditions. Sweeps should not just clear the streets; they must be paired with meaningful offers of assistance and housing, including access to mental health care, addiction treatment, and job training programs.

San Francisco has an opportunity to lead by example, showing that we can uphold public safety while genuinely improving the lives of our most vulnerable residents. This means moving beyond short-term, reactive measures and focusing on long-term strategies that address the systemic issues contributing to homelessness, such as the lack of affordable housing, inadequate mental health care, and economic inequality. Effective solutions demand that we look beyond temporary fixes and invest in sustainable outcomes for our community.

