



12/22/2007

Our View: Tougher legal penalties for attacking homeless should become Ohio law

The Christmas season is a time when people's natural generosity and concern for the less-fortunate kicks into high gear. Most often, we think of donations to charities and collections of toys for needy children. But one Ohio lawmaker is proposing legislation that appeals to our concern for the weak and deserves consideration.

State Rep. Mike Foley, D-Cleveland, used yesterday, which was National Homeless Memorial Day, to unveil a "homeless hate crimes" bill that would toughen the criminal penalty for offenses based on the victim being homeless. In Ohio, an estimated 150,000 people are homeless, according to the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio.

Foley noted in a written statement, "There has been a steady number of violent attacks against homeless people in Ohio over the last few years. They include beatings, setting people on fire, and in the Toledo area, a string of attacks carried out by a serial killer who specifically targeted homeless people."

He added, and quite correctly, "Those who take advantage of some of our society's most vulnerable people strictly for the 'fun' or 'sport' of it should face harsher consequences for their actions."

Homelessness is typically a result of other severe life problems that often include mental illness. The homeless are indeed some of society's weakest and most vulnerable people.

Those who prey on the weak because they are weak, should be dealt a stronger penalty.

Foley's bill, if it becomes law, as it should, might help quell the wave of violence against the homeless. But even if it does not prevent such an attack, it certainly will make sure the offender is dealt with severely when brought to justice.

Foley is to be commended for introducing this measure for protecting the homeless, and we encourage our local state legislators to help enact it into law.

CenturyTel Triple Savings Bundle

> Start saving now

As low as
\$89.95
a month

©The Morning Journal 2007