

## Question of the Week

# *What would you do as a homeless czar?*

How can Southern California city and county governments earmark billions in taxpayer dollars for solutions to the tragic problem of homelessness and still see the numbers on the streets go up in a recent survey?

That's our Question of the Week for readers.

But more than that, and more than simply indulging the natural skepticism among the citizenry about government work — and boondoggles — what of the possibility that the issue is simply bigger than can be imagined? So many economic and social issues are at play at the same time that there likely is not one easy solution to too many without roofs over their heads.

Plus, if we — brace yourself — put ourselves in the local politicians' shoes, it's not as if they *want* the awful numbers to keep going up. A figure such as Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti saw his chances of entering national politics fall away, for now, precisely because of the intractable nature of homelessness in his city. He would have loved to be able to point to more success through the city's Measure HHH and the county's Measure H, taxes set aside by voters to cure what ails our region.

And perhaps new housing construction plans, plagued by NIMBY neighbors at every turn, have made some difference — perhaps even more people would be homeless without the new, big money.

So, if you were homeless czar, what would be your focus? Is it dealing more forthrightly with institutionalizing the mentally ill? Is it vastly increasing drug and alcohol treatment programs? Is it simply stricter enforcement of sidewalk-camping laws, rousting the homeless from the area to become other regions' problem?

Given the rash of what some in the media are calling “medieval diseases” such as typhus associated with rodent infestations in downtown Los Angeles, is this a public health emergency — as much for middle Americans just trying to go to work and school as for the indigent?

Should homeless encampments be cleared on the principal of protecting the rest of us? Or is the real answer trade education and job creation? Email your thoughts to [opinion@scng.com](mailto:opinion@scng.com). Please include your full name and community of residence. Provide a daytime phone number (it will not be published).