

**LETTER  
OF THE  
WEEK!**

## Homelessness causes mental illness

Re: "Newsom's to-do list on mental health" (Feature, March 5):

We have it exactly backwards regarding mental health issues and homelessness. For most, the mental health problems come *after* the homelessness. Just try it yourself and see. Sleep on the streets without a phone, without much money, without a car and see what happens to your mental status.

Good sleep is nearly impossible, as police come to wake you up, forcing you to move to another spot in the middle of the night. Women worry about rape, which does happen, since tents don't lock. Nutrition is abominable; that and chronic dehydration have significant mental health effects. Worry about finding a spot to be each day and night takes a huge mental toll. So does having your things stolen when you go to work (many homeless people do work), to the library computer or to an interview. Severe stress causes normal people to become mentally ill.

ROBIN WELD  
Sacramento / via email

## Decriminalize being homeless

Re: "Newsom's to-do list on mental health" (Feature, March 5):

I truly hope Gov. Gavin Newsom follows through on what appears to be a commitment to improve the mental health and homeless crises. They are intrinsically linked to one another. HUD was the primary agency to assist the homeless during the Reagan administration, but HUD's homeless funding was slashed by 60% and our government has never restored this budgetary priority. Of course, we are fully aware of Reagan's criminal abdication of his responsibility to the mentally ill by eliminating their safety nets, by closing their treatment facilities and by defunding the programs which worked to mainstream them. He found it better to stigmatize them instead of treating them with the dignity and compassion they deserve.

I'm grateful to see Newsom not resort to that political expediency. But the urgent priority and the first thing that Newsom could do, if he's really serious, is to stop law enforcement's criminalization of the homeless.

DOROTHY ELLER  
Carmichael / via email

## Public pressure

Re: "Clean up plastic pollution" by Jeff vonKaenel (Greenlight, Feb. 27):

I'm reminded of something FDR is supposed to have said to an activist: "You have to go out and [create the political pressure to] make me do it." If we want anything other than business as usual from multinational corporations or from chambers of commerce, we will have to make them do it.

MURIEL STRAND  
Sacramento / via email

## Time to be unsettled

Re: "Snapshots of war" by Rachel Mayfield (15 Minutes, Jan. 23):

Glad to know your book is released now. I am looking forward to reading it. You said it will be unsettling. I am sure it will be, but the kind of unsettling we need to experience. Time to snap out of it and have another picture of war and what it kills.

PEGGY COVALT  
Rocklin / via email

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