

# Swing Out, Sister

NEWS

## Homeless Nonprofit Resigns from Sit-Lie Group by Matt Davis

**SISTERS OF THE ROAD**, a nonprofit that works with the homeless, resigned from the mayor's Street Access for Everyone (SAFE) oversight committee last week, vowing instead to devote its time to advocating for the repeal of the city's controversial sit-lie and anti-camping laws. The sit-lie law emerged from the SAFE committee, but Sisters isn't happy with how it's been enforced.

"The SAFE resolution effectively criminalized people who are experiencing homelessness and have nowhere to rest during the day," said Sisters' Associate Director Michael Buonocore, at a press conference held on the steps of city hall on Thursday, May 8, adding that it is now "effectively illegal to be homeless in Portland."

Buonocore said Sisters was assured that the sit-lie ordinance would not target homeless individuals, but that "it has been shown to do exactly that." Seventy-nine of the 88 warnings or citations issued between August 2007 and January 2008 under the sit-lie ordinance have been given to homeless people. Meanwhile, the services promised to accompany the ordinance—like public restrooms—"have been inadequately im-

plemented," Buonocore says.

Sisters has been part of the SAFE committee since its inception in 2006. The committee is due to present back to city council in August, but it will now be more difficult for pro-sit-lie advocates to claim that the committee represents a cross-section of the community, and that the sit-lie ordinance should therefore be continued.

Sisters' civic action group, coordinated by Patrick Nolen, will now work on an advocacy campaign, encouraging people to contact their elected officials demanding the repeal of the controversial laws.

"I am really disappointed in their decision," says Mike Kuykendall of the Portland Business Alliance, the SAFE committee's co-chair. "The SAFE committee has been working with Sisters of the Road in good faith for more than two years on how to make downtown more livable for everyone. We've made so much progress during that time, including funding day shelters, public restrooms, and benches for the Central City. We will continue pushing for more of these types of services, and I wish they would have chosen to continue being a part of this effort." ■