

# Louisiana Gov. Landry kidnaps unhoused people ahead of Super Bowl

written by Louisiana Workers Council  
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Jan. 15, New Orleans - activists held a press conference outside City Hall, drawing a crowd of around 100 against Gov. Jeff Landry's pre-Super Bowl internment of unhoused people. Photo: Louisiana Workers Council.

## **\$16 million spent to intern unhoused people could give them all apartments**

Jan. 15, New Orleans - Before daylight on January 15, Gov. Jeff Landry took the next step in taking over New Orleans. On Landry's commands, armed state police rounded up unhoused people who had been camping close to the French Quarter and the Superdome, which is hosting the profitable Super Bowl on Feb. 9. Personal items, IDs, medicine, medical and social service records were destroyed. At least 1 arrest was made.

Bypassing the city government, Landry bussed unhoused people to a "transitional" warehouse shelter that had been set up in an industrial area. The mainly Black residents of the nearby neighborhood were not informed or consulted at all. The shelter — which is surrounded by a barbed wire fence — had no heat, showers, beds, or eye-level windows. One unhoused hospitality worker called it an internment camp.

According to the NOHHARM collective, the governor gave a contract months ago to a company called Workforce Group to set up the so-called shelter. Workforce is owned by a private equity firm, Bernhard Capital Partners, a major donor to Landry's campaign funds. This cruel pre-dawn raid was done with less than 48 hours notice.

The warehouse is almost six miles from downtown and has no sidewalks. The nearest bus stop is a half-hour walk away, making it impossible for people to make their social service appointments, which sometimes take months to schedule. Meetings with agencies at the site will take place in tents. The temperature in New Orleans this week is dropping to 28 degrees Fahrenheit. Unhoused people with jobs at night

would be shut out of their beds at 9:00 p.m.

The Super Bowl is an exclusive event, bringing billions in profits to New Orleans and national corporations. The city itself undertook 400 projects and, with the state, spent millions of tax-payer dollars in preparation. Meanwhile, a ticket is going for \$5,000 each. Luxury boxes (renovated with taxpayer money) are upwards of \$50,000.

NOHHARM exposed that “not counting cost for the Louisiana State Police...the warehouse carries a price tag of \$11.4 million for two months or \$16.2 million for three months, about \$80,000 per each of the 200 beds. With \$16.2 million, 200 unhoused people could get six years of rental assistance for a studio.” So why isn’t that done? Because just like state prisons and immigrant prisons, there is a profit to be made by jailing people.

Landry wants to hide the massive cost-of-living crisis that has been forced on Louisianans by the government. The state, with almost no resistance from New Orleans officials, has refused to allow the city to vote for rent control, wages, or any meaningful measure to stop soaring rents. Year after year the Louisiana legislature has refused to raise the \$7.25 per hour minimum wage. The racist governor wants to push out working-class, predominantly Black residents in order to make New Orleans a playground for the rich.

Landry’s pre-dawn raid is part of a larger campaign to criminalize poor people and undermine working-class solidarity in order to cut food stamps, Medicaid, and other basic social services. The state has already cut thousands off of Medicaid and has reduced benefits for thousands more.

The state is creating more conditions of homelessness by giving insurance companies a free hand to raise insurance costs by three times or more, which raises rents and causes foreclosures. Every week, foreclosed properties are auctioned off

to developers in New Orleans. The governor and state legislature are using the government as a transmission belt to funnel money away from us into the pockets of the capitalists.

We New Orleans workers have had a war declared on us by the billionaires. Thousands are a paycheck or rent payment away from homelessness. A third of children are in poverty and senior hunger is higher here than anywhere in the country. Rates of incarceration are among the highest in the world. We are not taken in by the governor, who is reducing taxes for the rich while maintaining the highest sales tax in the U.S., claiming this raid and kidnapping of unhoused people makes us safer.

We need to unite and fight to impose rent controls, raise wages, cut insurance rates, and protect and expand our SNAP and Medicaid benefits.

