



# San Diego City Attorney Jan I. Goldsmith

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE PROVIDES LEGAL ASSISTANCE AT STAND DOWN EVENT FOR HOMELESS VETERANS**

**San Diego, CA:** The City Attorney's Office and several agency partners will provide legal assistance at the 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Stand Down for Homeless Veterans July 17 – 19, 2009 hosted by the Veteran's Village of San Diego (VVSD).

On Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, the San Diego Superior Court will convert the upper athletic field of San Diego High School at 1405 Park Boulevard into a courtroom for the day. Prosecutors from the City Attorney's Neighborhood Prosecution Unit will work with Public Defenders to address over 900 cases (misdemeanors and infractions) and other legal obstacles for approximately 300 homeless veterans. Veterans plead guilty to some of the charges against them and are ordered to participate in social programs offered at the event. Other charges are dismissed as part of the plea agreement. Generally, the violations handled by the court are minor non-violent offenses like illegally lodging, trolley violations, and drinking in public. The Stand Down Court was created and is staffed by the City Attorney's Office, San Diego Superior Court, District Attorney's Office and Public Defender's Office.

"Legal assistance at Stand Down enables homeless veterans to see our court system as approachable and not so overwhelming," said Deputy City Attorney Paige Hazard. "It encourages veterans to address their outstanding legal matters in a supportive setting where they can also receive needed assistance; significantly assisting with their transition to re-engage into society."

"Stand Down" refers to a grassroots, community-based intervention program designed to help the nation's homeless veterans "combat" life on the streets. The hand up (not handout) philosophy of Stand Down is carried out through the work of hundreds of volunteers and organizations throughout the nation. Veterans are provided with a range of necessities including food, clothing, medical, legal and mental health assistance. Stand Down 2009 is hosted and underwritten by Veteran's Village of San Diego.

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