

Information on Green Party Positions on Eminent Domain - 2005

Press Release:

Supreme Theft

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Supreme Court Ruling Legalizes 'Theft by Takings'. While Democratic and Republican officials side with developers, Greens vow to remain a bulwark against the condemnation of private homes.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Green Party leaders sharply criticized the Supreme Court's June 23 decision in the *Kelo v. City of New London* case, calling it a "legalization of theft." The decision expands the power of government to condemn private property ('eminent domain'), permitting officials to transfer property from one private owner to another.

"Working class and low income homeowners will be at special risk, since they provide less tax revenue, and the Court now gives permission for city councils and statehouses to evict and replace them with commercial and residential development for the sake of a wealthier tax base," said Steve Kramer, co-chair of the Green Party of the United States. "The Court has legalized theft -- theft from the poor for the rich."

Green leaders say that the party will remain steadfast in its opposition to the use of eminent domain to remove people from their homes under the license provided by the *Kelo v. City of New London* decision.

"Republican and Democratic officials -- including many liberal and progressive Democrats -- accept huge gifts from real estate interests that want to clear out neighborhoods for new development. Greens refuse all corporate contributions," said Peggy Lewis, who is also co-chair of the national Green Party. "In the wake of the New London decision, the choice between voting for a Green and voting for a Democrat or Republican in some races might spell the difference between keeping and losing one's home."

Greens around the U.S. are fighting predatory development plans in which residents and small businesses face mass removal under strengthened powers of eminent domain: Brunswick, Georgia faces a massive redevelopment plan targeting 135 blocks of the heart of Brunswick, the population of which is 78% black, with 57% in entrenched poverty. Elaine Brown, Green candidate for Mayor of Brunswick, is defending African American residents threatened under the plan, which has slated whole neighborhoods for brutal displacement through "takings by condemnation" and eminent domain. Ms. Brown has offered an alternative plan to make Brunswick a national model and a base for black economic empowerment and progressive social and political change. More information: <http://www.elainebrown.org/Brunswick%20Factsheet.php>.

In Brooklyn, New York, Park Slope Greens are working with other local activists in the Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn Coalition to head off an attempt by billionaire developer Bruce Ratner to seize homes and businesses in Fort Greene and Prospect Heights. Mr. Ratner, with the support of the current Borough President and other Democratic elected officials, wants to build an arena and 19 high-end residential skyscrapers. Gloria Mattera, Green candidate for Brooklyn Borough President, is challenging the plan and has publicly exposed the secret sweetheart deals behind it. Ms. Mattera calls for a moratorium on big scale development of high rises and big box stores until

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developers agree to involve the community in decision-making and commit to maintaining the integrity of existing neighborhoods. More information: "Mattera Campaign Calls On Brooklyn Borough Hall for Restraint After Supreme Court Ruling"
<<http://www.electgloria.org/news/campaign/20050624.php>>.

"The decision proves that liberals may be as likely as conservatives to side with wealthy and corporate interests, and sometimes even more likely," said Greg Gerritt, secretary of the Green Party of the United States.

"We now have reason to fear judicial appointments made by Democrats as much as the hard-right appointments of President Bush. We clearly need a new spectrum to describe politics -- dedication to corporate power versus dedication to the rights of people and the health of the environment. Let there be no doubt where Greens stand."

Greens especially praised Justice O'Connor's dissenting opinion:

"Any property may now be taken for the benefit of another private property, but the fallout from this decision will not be random. The beneficiaries are likely to be those citizens with disproportionate influence and power in the political process, including large corporations and development firms. As for the victims, the government now has license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more. The Founders cannot have intended this perverse result."

MORE INFORMATION

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