



News from: The City of Oakland

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Oakland City Attorney files more lawsuits to hold vandals accountable for damage to public property

City Attorney Barbara Parker announces two new lawsuits seeking damages in connection with vandalism during January demonstration

Oakland, CA – The Oakland City Attorney’s Office has filed additional complaints for damages against two people arrested for spray painting public property during a wave of vandalism associated with a January 28, 2012 Occupy Oakland demonstration.

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Chloe Watlington (DOB 2/23/87) and Paul Woods (DOB 4/1/87) were arrested at about 9 p.m. on January 28 for spray painting on public property at the Scotlan Convention Center in Oakland. Officers witnessed Watlington spray paint the convention center and saw her with a can of spray paint in the pocket of her sweatshirt. Woods was arrested after spray painting the words “Oakland Commune” on a sign at Broadway and 11th Street.

Oakland’s Neighborhood Law Corps – the community law unit in the City Attorney’s Office – filed the lawsuits this month to recover \$400 from each defendant to cover the cost of cleaning up the property, plus other special and punitive damages to be determined by the court. The City Attorney previously sued one other person for smashing windows in a City building during a November 2011 Occupy protest.

“Oakland has a proud history of protest and dissent, and we champion the First Amendment rights of demonstrators,” City Attorney Barbara Parker said.

“Unfortunately, a number of peaceful protests in Oakland have been marred by individuals who use the crowd as cover to vandalize public buildings, trash local businesses and lash out in other destructive ways. Oakland taxpayers should not have to shoulder the costs of this behavior. We expect these individuals to take responsibility for their actions and make the City whole.”

The City of Oakland has retained an investigator to review video of incidents of vandalism associated with recent protests. As additional evidence becomes available to identify other vandals, the City Attorney’s Office will continue to file lawsuits to recover damages. The goals of these actions are twofold: (1) to assure that taxpayers do not have to shoulder replacement and repair costs for vandalism, and (2) to deter wanton destructive acts during future protests by holding individuals accountable for their behavior.

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