



## Group Seeks Souter Eviction As Protest

### Group Descending on Justice Souter's N.H. Hometown in Eminent Domain Protest

By KATHY McCORMACK

The Associated Press

**CONCORD, N.H.** - Angered by a Supreme Court ruling that gave local governments more power to seize people's homes for economic development, a group of activists is trying to get one of the court's justices evicted from his own home.

The group, led by a California man, wants Justice David Souter's home seized to build an inn called the "Lost Liberty Hotel."

They submitted enough petition signatures only 25 were needed to bring the matter before voters in March. This weekend, they're descending on Souter's hometown, the central New Hampshire town of Weare, population 8,500, to rally for support.

"This is in the tradition of the Boston Tea Party and the Pine Tree Riot," Organizer Logan Darrow Clements said, referring to the riot that took place during the winter of 1771-1772, when colonists in Weare beat up officials appointed by King George III who fined them for logging white pines without approval.

"All we're trying to do is put an end to eminent domain abuse," Clements said, by having those who advocate or facilitate it "live under it, so they understand why it needs to end."

Bill Quigley, Weare deputy police chief, said if protesters show up, they're going to be told to stay across the street from a dirt road that leads to Souter's brown farmhouse, which is more than 200 years old. It isn't known whether Souter will be home.

"They're obviously not going to be allowed on Justice Souter's property," he said. "There's no reason for anybody to go down that road unless they live on that road, and we know the residents that live there. The last time (Clements) showed up, they had a total of about three or four people who showed up to listen to him."

Clements, of Los Angeles, said he's never tried to contact Souter, who voted for the decision.

"The justice doesn't have any comment about it," Kathy Arberg, a Supreme Court spokeswoman, said about the protesters' cause.

The petition asks whether the town should take Souter's land for development as an inn; whether to set up a trust fund to accept donations for legal expenses; and whether to set up a second trust fund to accept donations to compensate Souter for taking his land.

The matter goes to voters on March 14.

About 25 volunteers gathered at Weare Town Hall on Saturday before setting out in teams to go door-to-door. Organizer Logan Darrow Clements gathered nine signatures in less than an hour, with only one resident declining to sign.

He also distributed copies of the Supreme Court's decision, *Kelo vs. City of New London*, to residents.

The court said New London, Conn., could seize homeowners' property to develop a hotel, convention center, office space and condominiums next to Pfizer Inc.'s new research headquarters.

The city argued that tax revenues and new jobs from the development would benefit the public. The Pfizer complex was built, but seven homeowners challenged the rest of the development in court. The Supreme Court's ruling against them prompted many states, including New Hampshire, to examine their eminent domain laws.

Supporters of the hotel project planned a rally Sunday at the town hall. Speakers were expected to include some of the New London residents who lost the *Kelo* suit.

State Rep. Neal Kurk, a Weare resident who is sponsoring two pieces of eminent domain legislation in New Hampshire, said he expects the group's proposal to be defeated overwhelmingly.

"Most people here see this as an act of revenge and an improper attack on the judicial system," Kurk said. "You don't go after a judge personally because you disagree with his judgments."

On the Net:

Weare-based Committee for the Preservation of Natural Rights: <http://www.natural-rights.org>

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