

L.A. could start crackdown on Venice Beach vendors

LOS ANGELES (AP) - The Venice Beach boardwalk is known around the world for funk, freedom and free enterprise.

It's also ground zero in a long-standing feud between the city of Los Angeles and the unlicensed vendors who crowd the west side of the street with makeshift stands offering incense, trinkets and homebaked politics.

The boardwalk — sandwiched between Muscle Beach and the somewhat tonier sands of Santa Monica — is a tourist magnet.

Its east side has sidewalk cafes and booths selling T-shirts, sunglasses, jewelry and souvenirs. Merchants pay the city \$2,000 or more a month for the privilege.

But, folks a few steps across the road pay nothing, displaying their wares on creaky card tables, boards or on the ground.

Traditionally, the boardwalk's west side was the reserve of entertainers, such as jugglers working for tips, as well as artists, palm readers, and people espousing political and religious views.

With the potential to make \$1,000 on a summer day, the free-speech area has become more commercial and sought-after. Officials say that, to the annoyance of neighbors, as many as 300 or 400 people show up, some as early as 5 a.m., to claim space they cannot enter legally until 9 a.m.

"We've got people who've got six or seven spots all up and down this boardwalk and they're hiring people to run them," said Kwanzaa, a woman in paint-splattered jeans who for the past seven years has sold her own paintings.

She has a restraining order against two vendors



A proposed ordinance could restrict vendors like these at Venice Beach in California.

whom she claims injured her when they set up shop near her.

"It's sort of a free-for-all,"

said City Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski, who represents the area. "The police have to be there on overtime

in those early morning hours just to keep the peace."

After failed attempts to ban the squatters, the city is now trying to license them by amending an existing ordinance to lay out about 100 spaces and create a monthly lottery. Participants also must buy a lifetime permit for \$25.

To some old-timers, the law is an assault on their freedom.

"It doesn't make sense for me to pay \$25 to practice free speech. That's an absolute contradiction," said Cecil McGee, a Venice resident who has sold incense on the walk for about five years. As for the lottery, "it's the equivalent of creating a zoo without bars," he said.

In 1997, a federal appeals court struck down a sales ban, ruling it was unconstitutional on free-speech grounds.

The next year, the city heeded complaints from legitimate merchants and voted to ban all unlicensed vending except for performance artists and those whose wares are "inextricably intertwined" with a philosophical or religious belief.

Robert "Jingles" Newman, an animal-rights activist who sells buttons and bumper stickers, believes the latest ordinance will face a legal challenge.

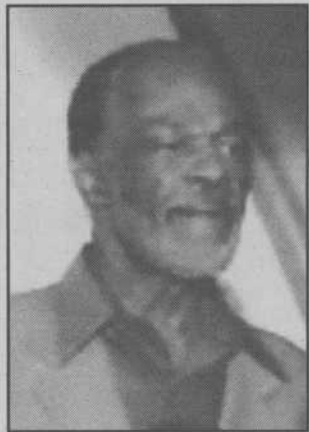
"A lottery for political people? Hello," said Newman, wearing a "Vegeterrorist" T-shirt and an American flag bandanna on his head. Because of the monthly lottery, "I might not be able to work here for four months," he said.

Voters return Barry, McKinney to office

WASHINGTON (AP) - Marion Barry, the former mayor who was videotaped by the FBI smoking crack and wound up in jail, resurrected his political career for a second time Tuesday.

Residents of one of the District of Columbia's poorest sections picked Barry to be their new councilman.

"Oh, my God!" Barry exclaimed when told of his lopsided win. The D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics reported that Barry, a Democrat, won 95 percent of the vote against a token Republican opponent.



MARION BARRY

"We're going to be the best ward in the city, we're going to turn things around,"

Barry promised.

Barry, 68, served six months in prison for a federal drug conviction, then went on to win the same Ward 8 seat in southeast Washington in 1992. That led to a fourth term as mayor, which he won in 1994. Barry did not seek re-election in 1998.

In another case of a politician returning to a formerly held seat, Cynthia McKinney, the firebrand Democrat who lost her congressional seat two years ago after accusing President Bush of ignoring warnings of 9/11, easily won her old seat back.

"I'm back!" McKinney yelled to her supporters Tuesday night as Patti LaBelle's song "A New Day" played in the background. Elected as Georgia's first Black congresswoman in 1992, McKinney takes back the seat she held for a decade. She was upset in the 2002 primary by Denise Majette, who lost her bid for retiring Democrat Sen. Zell Miller's seat.

McKinney was widely criticized for saying Bush ignored warnings of the 9/11 terror attacks, and for scolding former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani for returning a Saudi Arabian prince's donation for Sept. 11 victims.

Her political comeback was dramatic. She beat out a crowded field of six polished challengers to escape this year's primary without a runoff, something few political watchers thought she could

pull off.

She insisted she can be effective in a GOP-led House. "I will work with whoever I have to work with," she said.



Georgia Democratic incumbent, Rep. Cynthia McKinney, thanks her supporters after being reelected, Tuesday.

McDonald

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ing everybody's vote — in a district that has 9 percent more Democrats than registered Republicans. I've been there for all of the citizens, and I look forward to representing all of my constituents."

So, as the clock finally reached midnight, Boggs-McDonald was able to sigh a sigh of relief with the final tally indicating that indeed she had been victorious.

The final vote count, with all precincts reporting, was Boggs-McDonald 38,296 or 52 percent of the votes,

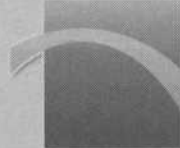
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