

**Declaration of Kristin Pazulski,
Acting Interim Executive Director of The Denver Voice**

I, Kristin Pazulski do hereby declare:

1. I am the Development Director, Managing Editor, and Acting Interim Executive Director of The Denver Voice.
2. The Denver Voice is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to facilitate a dialogue addressing the roots of homelessness by telling stories of people whose lives are impacted by poverty and homelessness and to offer economic, educational and empowerment opportunities for the impoverished community.
3. The Denver Voice tries to create a pathway out of homelessness for those on the Front Range, by giving those individuals the opportunity to become a vendor of the Denver Voice newspaper (“The Voice”), which shares general interest stories as well as focuses on issues related to homelessness. The Voice averages over 500 vendors annually who vend papers in public parks and on public sidewalks in a variety of locations on the Front Range. The solicitation ban that just passed in Colorado Springs, as it is currently written, prohibits our vendors from vending papers in downtown Colorado Springs, thereby threatening the strength and effectiveness of The Voice Vendor Program.
4. The Voice Vendor Program provides self-sufficiency opportunities to individuals through social entrepreneurship and training. The Voice’s program caters to and intervenes for individuals who can’t gain typical employment, and allows them to develop their own stability. Potential vendors receive a one- to two-hour training on how to vend the

newspaper, as well as 10 free copies of the newspaper. Once a vendor is established with their 10 free papers, most vendors pay for each individual paper at 50 cents per copy. Each paper typically earns the vendors \$1.50 to \$2.00 – income the individuals use to meet critical needs, including housing, food, and hygiene maintenance.

5. Each vendor must sign a code of conduct that underscores the Denver Voice’s position that aggressive vending will not be tolerated. Vendors are directed to do no more than offer the paper to passersby; they are instructed not to push the paper on anyone. Many of our vendors do not even verbally offer the paper to passersby; they just say “good morning” or “good afternoon,” while standing on a street corner holding the paper. Our vendors are directed to ensure that when vending the paper, they do not block the sidewalk and they leave ample room for passersby to walk. All vendors are required to stand 15-20 feet from any doorway, and 20 feet from any patio. We rarely receive complaints about our vendors, but when we do, we address the complaint, counsel the vendors and, when appropriate, suspend or even terminate their right to vend The Voice.

6. The Voice Vendor Program not only provides a benefit to the individual vendors, we believe it also has the potential to improve the lives of many other homeless people. Often, the public only interacts with homeless people who are panhandling. Vending the Voice provides a more positive and bi-lateral interaction between the homeless community and the public. These interactions can help break some of the stereotypes about homeless community – for instance, that they are homeless because they are lazy. In contrast,

Voice vendors are usually homeless people who are working proactively to get themselves off the street. Voice vendors are entrepreneurs. They generally pay 50 cents for each newspaper and then provide a quality publication to the public for \$2.

7. We think vending the Voice provides an important opportunity to connect people experiencing homelessness (who often feel marginalized and disconnected) to the larger community. We have documented evidence demonstrating that the general public's attitude toward the homeless community has been changed by interactions with Voice vendors.

8. We make our paper available to anyone who wishes to vend it. Because most vendors rely on public transportation, they usually wish to vend close to where they live and in areas with significant foot traffic. Typically, our vendors vend in the downtown area closest to where they live. Initially, our vendors were all based out of Denver and mostly sold in downtown Denver. Over time, word about the Voice has spread, and we have received requests to vend from individuals who live well beyond the Denver metro area, as far as Boulder, where we also distribute the paper out of a partner office, and Fort Collins. We fully expect that as word of the opportunities associated with vending the Voice continues to spread, we are likely to have vendors in Colorado Springs who want to vend the paper in the downtown area.

9. When a Front Range community, like Colorado Springs, closes its public sidewalks and parks to solicitation in its most populous downtown area, the harm to our

organization is very real. Our organizational goal is to allow homeless and people in poverty from all over the Front Range to share in the opportunities that vending the Voice can create – to earn an income, invest in their future and empower themselves to work their way off the streets. The Colorado Springs solicitation ban prevents our organization from making this opportunity available to persons who wish to vend the Voice in downtown Colorado Springs. Homeless and impoverished people in Colorado Springs should not be denied the opportunity to engage in the most basic of First Amendment freedoms – distributing the news.

11/26/12
Date

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