



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on April 13, 2021

California Restaurant, a “Hot Spot for Republicans,” Caged by City Officials; Owner Arrested, Slapped With Fines

Americans have said that an aggressive, unquestioning demand for obedience by government officials would never happen here, but it’s [happening](#).

[Tinhorn Flats Saloon & Grill](#), in Southern California’s wealthy San Fernando Valley, in the city of Burbank, had its power shut off on March 13 by order of L.A. County Superior Court Judge Mitchell L. Beckloff. The ruling was issued after a temporary restraining order was secured on March 8, owing to the restaurant violating COVID-19 regulations.



Photo credit: Angie Chang

On April 9, Judge Beckloff agreed to an injunction to stop the diner from reopening without a health and city conditional use permit.

Burbank resident and longtime Tinhorn Flats patron Angie Chang told *The New American* that the saloon was a “a hot spot for Republicans and Trump supporters to wind down after a rally.... They are trying to make an example of the saloon and the people who go there.”

Tinhorn Flats has been non-compliant, and they have been hit with closure orders, exorbitant fines, and served a lawsuit. But reportedly, dozens of restaurants in the Burbank area are defying the rules. So why was this business singled out?

The government officials are clear that they are making an example of the restaurant. The lawsuit filed against the restaurant owners by the Los Angeles Department of Public Health and the Burbank City Council states, in part:

Allowing [Tinhorn Flats to remain open and] to go on unchecked could embolden other restaurants and facilities to flout the same permit requirements, which would further undermine public health and safety.

Attacks against the restaurant have been happening since January 12, said Chang, and Lucas Lepejian, “the son [of restaurant owner Baret Lepejian, who reportedly lives in Thailand,] is taking care of everything.”

To get around the loss of electricity, the Lepejians bought a generator, yet only a few days after the power was cut, “the judge signed off on padlocking the doors,” said Lucas Lepejian. “So we took matters into our own hands.” He removed the door altogether, telling the local news, “If you don’t have doors, there’s nothing to padlock.”

But the city put the door back on and padlocked it again.



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Refusing to obey the L.A. County-issued health mandates, Tinhorn Flats continued to offer outdoor dining despite a ban forbidding them to do so and despite having a revoked liquor license.

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Twenty-year-old Lucas Lepejian has been arrested three times. His last arrest on April 6 was for trying to remove the sandbags placed by the city at the bar's entrance to block anyone from entering the restaurant.

Deemed a "[public nuisance](#)" by the city, the Western-themed watering hole now faces more than \$50,000 in fines, which Baret Lepejian says he will not pay, issuing this statement in response to the city's citations:

Show me one shred of evidence how I am endangering the public. This has never been about safety or the public. It's never been about that. This whole thing is about fear and control.

At dawn on April 10, Burbank city officials erected a 10-foot-high fence extending beyond the restaurant property to the city sidewalk. The fencing material was compared to that of a steel door by protesters who gathered in support of the eatery on Saturday.

Yvet Chambers, a volunteer and member of the nonprofit [BRAVE](#) (Businesses Revolutionizing American Values & Enterprises), told *The New American* that "after initial complaints came through to the health department, it was a matter of *two* weeks before the city shut off the electricity, padlocked the doors, and fenced the property. It was a straight shot bypassing all due process."

Most certainly, Tinhorn Flats is being singled out for its conservative leanings.

Chambers, who is also associated with the [Freedom to Breathe Agency](#) (FTB), a "movement of proud American citizens who are dedicated to protecting their freedom and liberty," says the organization is "trying to be a partner with Tinhorn Flats, to support them with patriots standing behind them."

"We are serving constitutional affidavits to hold our civil servants accountable," said Chambers. "The FTB has served over 700 affidavits to council members (many of whom make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year)," resulting in the city dropping some lawsuits incurred against small businesses and churches during the lockdowns.

Despite these gallant efforts, little recourse seems available for businesses targeted for trying to survive under severe COVID mandates, and many people seem in favor of the severe restrictions.

Listening to a three-hour Burbank City Council Meeting Closed Session (video below), approximately 60 callers were allowed to phone in their comments. However, the council members refused to answer questions. Around 80 percent of the callers voiced complaints against the judgement to penalize Tinhorn Flats, indicating the majority disapprove of the council's extreme actions and overreach.

If more Americans such as Chang and Chambers were willing "to get out there and speak up," perhaps this insanity would end. Every voice matters. As of April 13, the [GoFundMe page](#) set up for Tinhorn Flats has raised more than \$81,000. Americans need to stop being fearful. Get out there and be a part of it.



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