

# PITTSBURGH Tribune-Review

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## Civic alarm clocks

If there wasn't such a deep sense of tragedy behind the need for them, 10 new billboards that bowed throughout Pittsburgh proper early Tuesday would be funny. But this is no laughing matter.

The Institute for Justice is challenging Mayor Tom Murphy's proclivity for holding high over private property owners the shillelagh of eminent domain in government-sponsored, taxpayer-financed economic development. The 10 billboards, with six different messages, are a "civic wake-up call," said Dana Berliner, a senior attorney for the nonprofit public interest institute.

The messages couldn't ring more clear:

"Will Mayor Murphy take YOUR business next?"

"Dan Marino: You were a Dolphin. Don't be a stealer. Take a pass on 5th & Forbes."

"Murphy's Law: Take from Pittsburgh families. Give to a Chicago developer."

"Mayor Murphy: Pittsburgh was built on steel. Not stealing."

"Mayor Murphy: Thou Shall Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Land."

"Eminent Domain was meant for roads. Not for Tiffany's."

Ms. Berliner said that too many government officials like Mayor Murphy "have forgotten that the Constitution was designed to prevent government from infringing on the rights of its citizens." And as Chip Mellor, the institute's president, reminded: "Property rights are the foundation of all our other rights. If we are secure in our homes and places of business, we can assemble; we can speak freely; we can earn an honest living. "But when our property rights are violated, each of those precious fruits of liberty disappears," he said.

The Institute for Justice's billboards - 12-feet high by 25-foot wide civic alarm clocks - are timely reminders that government by eminent domain, or the threat thereof, will not be tolerated. And they are most appropriate as we prepare for this nation's 224th anniversary of its declaration of independence.