

2017 Key Accomplishments

In 2017, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (the Law Center) advanced an ambitious agenda to prevent and end homelessness. Through litigation, education, and advocacy, the Law Center successfully defended the civil rights of people experiencing homelessness, strengthened renters' protections for low-income families, kept thousands of homeless children in school, and advocated for the human right to housing. Thank you for your generosity and support that made these accomplishments possible!

Protecting Civil and Human Rights in the Courts

- Together with co-counsel Idaho Legal Aid Services and with pro bono support from Latham & Watkins LLP, the Law Center presented oral arguments in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Martin v. City of Boise* in July, a case challenging Boise's ordinances that prohibit sleeping in public.
- In August, the Law Center, with the ACLU of Texas and the law firm of Dechert LLP, won a temporary restraining order prohibiting the City of Houston from enforcing an anti-camping ordinance against homeless people living in an encampment when emergency shelter was unavailable.
- In November, the Law Center, with Disability Rights California and the law firm of Fish and Richardson PC, filed a class-action lawsuit challenging the City of San Diego's ban on nighttime RV parking and vehicle habitation that unfairly targets homeless people.
- With the assistance of the law firm of Latham & Watkins LLP, the Law Center filed an amicus brief in an appeal to the Fourth Circuit in a case challenging a law used to target homeless persons with alcoholism. Oral arguments are scheduled for late January 2018.
- The Law Center provided legal assistance to combat criminalization in Baltimore, Maryland, and Lacie, Washington, and provided support to Mountain State Justice to pass a new policy protecting encampments and providing storage for personal belongings in Charleston, West Virginia.

Advocating at the Federal, State, and Local Level to Strengthen Protections for Homeless Families

- The Law Center voiced strong opposition to the Trump Administration's proposed cuts to the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget early in the year, reducing it by 22 percent overall.
- In anticipation of a visit to the United States by Dr. Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty & Human Rights, the Law Center submitted a report to Dr. Alston in October on "[Violations of the Human Rights of Persons Experiencing Homelessness in the United States](#)." After his visit to the United States, he mentioned the "criminalization of poverty" for the first time and gave particular attention to the issue in his final report.
- To protect the rights of low-income renters, the Law Center advocated in Congress for a [permanent extension of the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act](#) (PTFA) with Congressman Keith Ellison and Senator Richard Blumenthal. In December, the Senate Banking Committee approved the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief and Consumer Protection Act, which would restore PTFA and make it permanent.
- Thanks to the advocacy of the Law Center, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) application retained a question on whether communities are enforcing criminalization laws (worth two points, or potentially millions of dollars in funding) for the 2017 application year.

- The Law Center team provided technical assistance on vigilantism, criminalization laws, and other related issues in Fresno, Santa Cruz, Southern Humboldt County, Solano County, and Sacramento, CA; Olympia and Seattle, WA; and Volusia County, FL.
- The Law Center provided written testimony on behalf of a proposed Homeless Bill of Rights (HBOR) in Delaware and advocated with state representatives to promote a HBOR in Pennsylvania.
- The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness included the Law Center's *No Safe Place: The Criminalization of Homelessness* report in their [February legal aid guidance](#) report.

Keeping Homeless Children & Youth in School

- After nearly a decade of advocacy by the Law Center, homeless New York students will now be able to stay in school while disputes about their eligibility, school selection, or enrollment are pending. The state [revised its dispute resolution regulations](#) after previously denying many homeless students' right to educational stability.
- The Law Center provided legal assistance to local advocate Juanita Rocha and Texas RioGrande Legal Aid to ensure public schools in Laredo, Texas, provide support to homeless students that keep them enrolled in their original school.
- The Law Center led two webinars for lawyers and advocates in areas impacted by disaster, providing legal support for students and children displaced by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in the fall.

Training Lawyers and Advocates to Defend the Rights of Homeless People

- The Law Center held its annual [National Forum on the Human Right to Housing](#) with over 150 social justice advocates, lawyers, formerly and currently homeless people, and government officials from across the nation. The Forum's focus was on the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign with the goal of sharing strategies and advancing our collective work against the criminalization of homelessness and for affordable housing.
- Over 1,000 people participated in six informative webinars led by the Law Center, covering issues such as the criminalization of homelessness to providing legal assistance to students displaced by natural disasters.

Educating the Public on Solutions to Ending Homelessness

- [Housing Not Handcuffs Litigation Manual](#), released in March, provides an overview of legal theories used to successfully challenge criminalization policies and is a tool for attorneys seeking to bring litigation on behalf of homeless people.
- [Public Property/Public Need: A Toolkit for Using Vacant Public Property to End Homelessness](#), published in April, helps public and private nonprofit service providers obtain unused federal land and property to serve and house homeless people under Title V of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- [Homeless Education Advocacy Manual: Disaster Edition](#), updated in November after the devastating effects of Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Hurricane Irma in Florida, guides homeless students and their families displaced by a disaster on their rights to educational continuity and stability during disaster recovery.
- [Don't Count on It: How the HUD Point-in-Time Count Underestimates the Homelessness Crisis in America](#), released in early December, addresses flaws in the U.S. Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) point-in-time count of homeless Americans that result in a significant

undercount and offers recommendations on how HUD and communities can improve their methodology.

- [Tent City USA: The Growth of America's Homeless Encampments and How Communities are Responding](#), published in mid-December, documents the rapid growth of encampments (or "tent cities") in the United States, legal and policy responses to encampments, and cities that provide supportive services to people living in tents.

Media Coverage

Over 150 articles were published this year mentioning the critical work of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and reaching millions of readers. Highlights include:

- *New York Times* (Jan. 9): [Rights Battles Emerge in Cities Where Homelessness Can Be a Crime](#)
- *Washington Post* (Dec. 29): [Even During One of the Year's Coldest Weeks, Some Homeless People are Refusing to Come Inside](#)
- *The Economist* (Sep. 21): [Anti-Vagrancy Laws are Not the Best Way to Reduce Homelessness](#)
- *US News & World Report* (Jul. 9): [Official Proposes Armed Park Rangers to Deter Homelessness](#)
- *The Guardian* (Jul. 17): [Journalist Under Fire for Calling it 'Crazy' Not to Be Disgusted by Homeless People](#)
- *Wall Street Journal* (Aug. 8): [As Panhandling Laws are Overturned, Cities Change Policies](#)
- *Politico* (Jul. 25): [Advocates Argue Florida's Public Schools are Failing Homeless Students](#)
- *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 24): [Homeless People Face L.A. Crackdown on Living in Cars](#)

Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, [published five opinion editorials on the Huffington Post](#) throughout the year and an [op-ed in Talk Poverty](#) (republished in [Truthout](#) and [Street Sense](#)) in October on issues ranging from the Trump Administration's budget cuts to discrimination against homeless people in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

Special Thanks to Our Supporters

Special thanks to all who donate generously to the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, including our Board of Directors, sponsors of our 2017 McKinney-Vento Awards Reception, and individual supporters across the country.

Special thanks to our 2017 Lawyers' Executive Advisory Partners (LEAP) members, who make our work possible through pro bono and financial support:

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP; Arent Fox LLP; Debevoise & Plimpton LLP; Dechert LLP; Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.; Goodwin Procter LLP; Hogan Lovells LLP; Latham & Watkins LLP; Microsoft Corporation; Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP; Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP; Sidley Austin LLP; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; Sullivan & Cromwell LLP; and WilmerHale.

And many thanks to the following foundations whose grants provided critical support to our programs this year:

Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.; Buck Foundation; Butler Family Fund; Dimick Foundation; Impact Fund; W.K. Kellogg Foundation; Oak Foundation; Oakwood Foundation Charitable Trust; Raikes Foundation; and Ralph E. Ogden Foundation.