

IN JUST TIMES

a publication of the

**NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY**



*Changing Laws,
Changing Lives*

News and Commentary for
February 2014

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Dear Friends,

This year the Law Center marks its 25th anniversary, and we are proud of all we've accomplished. We've stayed true to our mission to use the law as a powerful tool for justice, leading campaigns to enact new laws to protect those at risk from becoming homeless; to give those already homeless a way out; and to give homeless children a chance for a better future. When rights are violated, we have not been afraid to go to court to vindicate them. And because knowledge is power, we have educated legions of providers, advocates and homeless people to know their rights.

Together with our many friends and supporters, we've affected the lives of millions and laid a firm legal foundation for housing justice. But we know there is much more to do to end homelessness in America, and that building the political will for solutions is a key challenge. In 2014, we will advance this agenda:

Laws that [criminalize homelessness](#) proliferate across the country, hurting homeless people, and making it harder for them to escape their plight, and hurting communities, diverting resources and attention from constructive solutions, such as housing and services. In 2014, we will continue to fight these misguided laws: in court (where already this year we've scored two important victories); in state legislatures, supporting the



Maria Foscarinis
Executive Director

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Webinar: Tent
Cities, Homelessness
& Human Rights -
March 6th

Online
Conversation: Global
Conversation on
Human Rights - Feb
17 - 21

growing movement for Homeless Bills of Rights; and at the federal level, pushing for federal funding conditions to discourage criminalization and encourage constructive solutions. And we'll engage [international human rights bodies](#) in support of these efforts.

We will continue work towards our long term goal--recognition of housing as a basic human right--so that affordable housing, which we know works to end and prevent homelessness, is truly supported and not subject to [political whim](#). We're working towards this goal step-by-step. In 2014 we're focusing on the rights of tenants living in foreclosed properties, to protect them from the risk of homelessness. We're also working to implement the [new housing rights we won last year for domestic violence survivors](#), addressing one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and their children. And we're working to implement the rights of providers to vacant federal properties, building on our [major litigation success last year](#).

Preventing future homelessness is essential-and education is a critical resource to [help children break the cycle of homelessness](#); it can also serve as a critical and immediate access point for housing and other resources. In 2014, we are continuing our work to ensure these rights are known and implemented, going to court if necessary to enforce them.

We'll advance this ambitious agenda with help from our many strategic partners. Pro bono legal support multiplies our capacity many times over. Our state and local partners identify critical issues and work with us to effect change on the ground. At the national level, the [Homeless Advocates Group](#), launched by the Law Center, is a key network for sharing information, and shaping [joint priorities and common messages](#).

Building the political will to end homelessness requires smart, strategic, long term advocacy-and a united effort.

Thank you for your support.

Congressional Briefing on Extending the PTFA

Since the beginning of the foreclosure crisis, millions of people have lost their homes. At least 40 percent of those foreclosures involved innocent tenants - people who were paying their rent on time and had no idea that the foreclosure was taking place. Incredibly, under state law, these people could be evicted with as little as 3 days of notice, less protection than that given to tenants who do not pay their rent. As a result, many were becoming homeless.



Jeremy Rosen speaking at the Briefing

In response, the Law Center and other partners worked with Congress to pass the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act (PTFA). The PTFA gives tenants the right to stay in their homes for the duration of their lease, or for a minimum of 90 days if the lease does not extend its month to month contract or has fewer than 90 days remaining. If not made permanent, the PTFA will expire on December 31.

The Law Center is working to make the law permanent and to add a private right of action to aid tenants in enforcing their legal rights. To that end, we held a Congressional briefing on Wednesday, January 29, along with the National Low Income Housing Coalition. Speakers were [Tristia Bauman](#) and [Jeremy Rosen](#) from the Law Center, [Matt Hill](#) from the Public Justice Center, and [Sham Manglik](#) from NLIHC. [Representative Keith Ellison](#), lead sponsor of, [H.R. 3543](#), (making the PTFA permanent and adding a private right of action) also spoke. [Senator Richard Blumenthal](#), lead sponsor of the Senate companion bill ([S. 1761](#)), was unable to attend due to a last minute vote.

We urge readers to contact their Members of Congress and urge them to support this important legislation. Contact information for Congress can be found at www.congress.gov.

Tent Cities, Homelessness & Human Rights - Upcoming Webinar

In March, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty will release to the public its long-awaited report, "Welcome Home: The Rise of Tent Cities in the United States," addressing the human and civil rights implications of the growth of homeless encampments across the country.

The report, co-authored with the Yale Law School Allard K. Lowenstein Human Rights Clinic, comes as the U.S. prepares for four reviews by international human rights monitors in the coming year, and follows new steps by the [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) to address homelessness as a human rights issue. It also comes on the heels of the Law Center's annual "[Human Right to Housing Report Card](#)."

The Law Center will host a webinar on Thursday, March 6, at 2pm ET/1pm CT/12pm MT/11am PT to discuss all of these reports and opportunities. Come and learn about the human and civil rights issues faced by homeless persons, the response from the federal government, as well as the process of review by the U.N. human rights monitors and how you can make human rights real in your community.

Tent Cities, Homelessness & Human Rights

Thursday, March 6, 2014 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM EST - [Show in my Time Zone](#)

Webinar Registration

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Speakers include:
Eric Tars, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
Amy Sawyer, US Interagency Council on Homelessness

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* Email Address: ?	* Address:
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Congresswoman Speier Spends Night in a Shelter

Congresswoman Speier is the latest lawmaker in the recent trend of lawmakers working to gain a first-hand account of homelessness. In last month's IJT, we featured Senator Murphy (D-CT), who spent a day with a homeless man. Congresswoman Speier slept in the cramped Maple Street Shelter in Redwood City, California.



Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) Speaks With a Woman at a Homeless Shelter

Congresswoman Speier spent most of the evening and morning talking with some of the homeless guests and shelter staff. "One woman was working at Safeway, her spouse was working at OfficeMax, their son was working at jobs - and here they had to stay in the shelter to save up deposits to get an apartment," Speier recounts.

The homelessness crises in America is astounding. Congresswoman Speier believes all of her fellow colleagues in Congress should partake in this emerging trend. "We rattle off numbers," she said, "but it doesn't speak about the people themselves."

[Click here](#) to read the full ThinkProgress story.

The Law Center's Online Global Conversation on Human Rights

The Law Center's Director of Human Rights & Children's Rights Programs, Eric Tars, is leading an online discussion as part of the [New Tactics online community](#) for a conversation on 'Keeping the Momentum: How to maintain commitment and credibility' from February 17 to 21, 2014.



Join us Feb 17 to 21 for an online conversation on Keeping the Momentum: How to maintain commitment and credibility!

As the Law Center is well aware in its 25th anniversary year of working to end and prevent homelessness, human rights change can take many months, years and sometimes decades to materialize. It requires endurance of the human rights defenders to continue their advocacy, while maintaining a strong support base with the general public. And even when objectives seem to have been achieved, for example winning a case or passing legislation, actual implementation can still be a challenge requiring sustained commitment.

In addition to the Law Center's contributions, others from around the globe will join this online conversation to share their experiences, ideas and challenges with their peers. Join the conversation starting on February 17, and encourage others to participate in this important discussion.

What People Are Saying About the Law Center

On the Law Center's Pro Bono Work

"I just wanted to express my gratitude to you (Tristia Bauman) and the Law Center for providing pro bono support to our work in Florida. I cannot tell you how helpful it is to have these added resources to help analyze and investigate these issues. I also appreciate your time and energy on these issues."

- Kirsten Clanton, Attorney; Southern Legal Counsel, Inc.

"Being able to turn to NLCHP as co-counsel in our lawsuit to strike down a new

panhandling ban was just what we needed. The Law Center's staff is a great national resource, and helped us make a strategic impact not just here in Boise, but throughout the country as well."

- [Richard Alan Eppink, Legal Director; ACLU of Idaho](#)

On Maria Foscarinis' [USAToday Op-Ed Piece](#)

"This is a great op-ed placed in an important spot... Congratulations to NLCHP and all working to make housing a human right!!"

- [Kevin Murray, Executive Director; Program on Human Rights in the Global Economy, Northeastern University Law School](#)

On USICH's Blog Series Ft. [Maria Foscarinis](#), [GW Rolle](#), and [Eric Tars](#)

"Thank you so much for forwarding news of this wonderful work, and for all the time and effort that led to this accomplishment. The Human rights defenders who dedicated their time to this work have helped light the way forward for their and all our human rights."

- [Patricia Jones, Program Manager; Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#)

On a Talk Eric Tars Gave to Georgetown Law Students

"Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with our students this week and present your work to our associates program. After the talk, more than one student said that yours was the most interesting presentation that they have heard all year - because it challenged assumptions that they had about the ability to be an effective advocate on domestic human rights implementation...I have long felt your work was inspirational...Your talk definitely helped reinforce Andy and my message that human rights is a broad field that includes domestic work like your own."

- [Ian Kysel, Fellow; Human Rights Institute - Georgetown University Law Center](#)

Giving Library is Doing it Again - All Through February!

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OVERVIEW

\$ DONATE NOW

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BADGES EARNED

Each organization is awarded badges ranging from views to donations.



Giving Library, an online video archive that connects donors to nonprofits, is continuing its giving momentum all through February.

By sharing our Giving Library video on Facebook or Twitter, **on the Giving Library website**, Giving Library will donate \$5 to the Law Center.

And it only takes 4 simple steps:

1) Check out the Law Center's video:

<http://www.givinglibrary.org/organizations/national-law-center-on-homelessness-poverty>

2) Click the "Share Now" button

3) Create an account if you don't already have one

4) Click "Share on Facebook" and/or "Share on Twitter"

Once the video has been shared through the Giving Library website, the Law Center gets \$5!

We will receive \$5 per registered user on the Giving Library site, and **only shares done directly through Giving Library will be counted**. The campaign ends on February 28, 2014 (or until the \$20,000 prize pool is exhausted), so start sharing the video today! Make sure to tell all of your friends and family to do the same.

Changing Laws. Changing Lives.

The Law Center is the only national legal advocacy organization dedicated to ending and preventing homelessness in America. It fights in the halls of power for laws and policies that protect homeless people's rights and help them rise out of poverty.

www.nlchp.org