

IN JUST TIMES

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**NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY**



*Changing Laws,
Changing Lives*

News and Commentary for
May 2014

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1) [Tell Us What You Think](#)
- 2) [The Law Center Wins Precedent-Setting Voter ID Case](#)
- 3) [LEAP Reception - Event Recap](#)
- 4) [LEAP Member Profile: Dechert LLP](#)
- 5) [From the Law Center's Story Bank](#)

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Dear Friends,

At the Law Center, partnerships are critical to our effectiveness. Earlier this month we celebrated our key pro bono partners--members of our [LEAP program](#)--with a reception hosted by Microsoft, a member of the program.

Days earlier, we'd scored a major victory in Wisconsin, when the federal court hearing our challenge to that State's restrictive voter identification law ruled in our favor, [striking down the law](#). We worked on the case in partnership with the ACLU and with the pro bono support of a stellar team assembled by LEAP member Dechert.

The Wisconsin voter ID law threatened to prevent some 300,000 low income residents, many of them homeless, from exercising their right to vote-- and to affect issues central to their lives. The ruling is a critical, precedent-setting victory, but the battle is not over yet; predictably, the state has filed an appeal.

Ending homelessness in America is possible--but it requires the political will to do so. By ensuring that homeless and poor Americans can exercise their right to vote, we move a step closer to building that will. And our pro bono and other partners are instrumental in getting us there.



Maria Foscarinis
Executive Director

Tell Us What You Think

We recently redesigned our website and we want your feedback! If you could take a moment to check it out and answer a quick survey, you'd be helping us a lot. Many thanks for any insights you can offer!

The Law Center Wins Precedent-Setting Voter ID Case

On Tuesday, April 29, 2014 the Law Center [prevailed in our voter ID lawsuit](#) against the State of Wisconsin, a case co-counseled with the ACLU and [LEAP member](#) firm, Dechert LLP. Federal District Judge Lynn Adelman ruled that the Wisconsin voter ID law violates both the US Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under the law and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

The Law Center joined the case to protect the rights of 300,000 low income residents of Wisconsin who do not have photo ID and thus would not have been able to vote under the law. Our victory protects the right of these 300,000 people to vote, at a time when statewide elections for governor and U.S. Senate are being decided by only 100,000 votes!



So why don't these residents of Wisconsin have ID? Because they frequently don't need it and often can't afford it. Many of them have never boarded an airplane and don't drive a car. And others, especially those who are homeless, have lost the documents necessary to obtain a drivers' license or state ID card, such as a birth certificate, and cannot afford the money (ranging from \$20 to more than \$400) needed to obtain or make corrections to them.

[Frank v. Walker](#) will have ramifications that extend far beyond Wisconsin. As the first case to strike down a voter ID law on these grounds, it sets precedent that will help prevent other states laws from enforcing similar laws. As the [New York Times put it](#), the decision "gives a potent weapon to challengers of similar laws in Texas and North Carolina."

Our victory helps ensure that homeless Americans are not disenfranchised simply because of their status-and allows them to exercise their most fundamental democratic right to affect issues that are central to their lives.

Together, we are using the power of the law to protect the rights and dignity of homeless Americans-and to end and prevent homelessness. Our win on April 29, was quite simply a huge win for civil and human rights!

LEAP Reception

One of Microsoft's beautiful event spaces which houses state of the art technology and facilities opened its doors to the Law Center's LEAP Reception on Thursday, May 1st. The open space comprised large monitors which were mounted on the walls, displaying the Law Center's work, our LEAP member firms, our recent Wisconsin win, and our newly designed website. If you were to walk by and catch a glimpse of the reception, you would see law firm partners and associates, corporate leaders, and Chief of Staffs, Presidents, CEOs, corporate staff, and many more influential figures. But within that space, there was a buzzing...a room filled with humility and a passion for pro bono work to help homeless and at-risk Americans. Potential was what lay in that room between the modern technology and the mixing and mingling of guests. We celebrated the power of pro bono work and the potential to end homelessness in America. The night was also an opportunity to honor our [LEAP member firms](#) who, in 2013, donated almost \$4 million in pro bono services!

Ed McNicholas, partner at Sidley Austin LLP and Chair of the Law Center's Board of Directors, kicked off the reception with welcoming remarks and an overview of the Law Center's work and impact. This was then followed by inspiring remarks from by Maria Foscarinis, Founder & Executive Director of the Law Center; Paul F Caron, Chief of Staff of Government Affairs at Microsoft and Steve Judge, President & CEO of Private Equity Growth Capital Council, and Law Center Board member.



Paul F. Caron (Chief of Staff; Government Affairs at Microsoft) Speaking at the LEAP Reception.

We want to thank the Microsoft team for its support of this event, and for its ongoing support of the Law Center as one of our LEAP members.

Thank you to everyone who attended the event and made it the success that it was. For more information on LEAP, [click here](#).

LEAP Member Profile: Dechert LLP

Dechert LLP has been a LEAP member since 2009. Their LEAP contributions and countless hours of donated pro bono services have assisted the Law Center's programs in many ways, most recently with litigation culminating in our [Wisconsin, voter ID win](#).

"The right to vote is one of the most fundamental rights that we have, and we're pleased that the court's ruling protects that right for all Wisconsin citizens," said Neil Steiner, a white collar partner in New York who led the Dechert team representing the plaintiff voters on a pro bono basis.

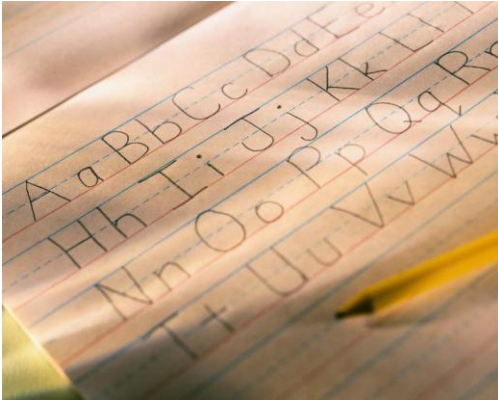
Dechert LLP

Other Dechert team members who worked on litigation included associates Craig Falls, Angela Liu, Diane Princ, Nathaniel Hopkins, Braden Tilghman and Mari Stonebraker, as well as paralegal Nicole LaDue.

Thank you Dechert! And thank you Suzanne Turner, our Pro Bono point-person at the firm and LEAP Chair.

From the Law Center's Story Bank

Ms. Green's 5-Year-Old Son



In June 2013, Ms. Green contacted the Law Center requesting help in enrolling her 5-year-old son in kindergarten. Green had been unemployed since 2010 and had since depleted her savings and 401k, and was saddled with student loan debt. Subsequently, Green and her son had to move in with her mother.

She could not afford to keep her son in a private school, which had offered the speech therapy he needed. When she tried to enroll her son at a neighborhood school, which also offered speech therapy, the school denied her request because she could not provide proof of residency. This is a direct

contravention of the McKinney-Vento Act, which states that schools must enroll students that present themselves as homeless even if students cannot provide otherwise required documents.

After receiving Green's plea for assistance, we resolved the matter by contacting the school and advocating on behalf of her son under the McKinney-Vento Act. Within a week, he was enrolled in kindergarten and his special educational needs were met. Green was very grateful for our assistance, and said that without our help, her son's academic progress may have been severely delayed.

Changing Laws. Changing Lives.

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty is the only national organization providing high-level, comprehensive legal and legislative expertise resolving national homelessness issues through advocacy, advocacy training, public education, and impact litigation

www.nlchp.org

