

IN JUST TIMES

a publication of the

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



Changing Laws, Changing Lives

Special Edition:
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Dear Friends,

It has been one year since I started as Deputy Director of the National Law Center in August 2015. My first week here, the U.S. Department of Justice [filed a statement of interest brief arguing that criminalization of homelessness is unconstitutional](#) in our case challenging a Boise, Idaho ordinance that prohibits camping. This was followed one week later with [important federal guidance on how cities should handle homeless encampments](#).



Janet Hostetler
Deputy Director

As we pushed this exciting news out to the press and our networks, the public response was amazing. **Despite being a longtime fan of the Law Center's work, I was awed by all the excitement. I asked around the office "is it always like this?"** And then, "if August is this busy, what is the rest of the year like?"

Well, it is August again and the pace has not slowed down! **Below we highlight two recent victories – on education and voting – that are already creating real, systemic change for people experiencing homelessness. These same victories, and many more, will be celebrated [next month at our annual McKinney Vento awards event](#).** Please consider joining us at the event or [supporting the Law Center](#) in any way you can. We can't do this work without your help!

As I reflect on the past year, I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with such a smart, energetic, and strategic team making a real difference in the world. **I am also tremendously grateful to you, our partners, for your support. As a small non-profit working on systemic change, we are only as strong as you, our network and supporters.**

Honoring John Wall and Susan Collins



John Wall of the Washington Wizards
Credit: Monumental Sports Network



U.S. Senator Susan Collins
Credit: Senator Collins Official Photo

Please join us on September 22 for the **2016 McKinney-Vento Awards** recognizing leaders who have advanced solutions to end and prevent homelessness. **We will pay tribute to outstanding national leaders, honoring John Wall, point guard of the Washington Wizards, with the *Stewart B. McKinney Award*; U.S. Senator Susan Collins with the *Bruce F. Vento Award*; Dechert LLP, with the *Pro Bono Counsel Award*; and Angela Spencer, with the *Personal Achievement Award*.**

Angela Spencer is being honored for her successful advocacy, while experiencing homelessness, to ensure her son received appropriate educational rights. **John Wall** has a long-standing commitment to helping low-income families and combat homeless. **Senator Collins** has demonstrated strong leadership on legislation that protects homeless children and youth. **Dechert LLP** has shown strong support in Wisconsin challenging barriers to voting, as well as remaining committed to our strong pro bono partnership over the years.

More information about McKinney-Vento tickets and sponsorships opportunities are available [here](#). Your support makes it possible for the Law Center to continue its vital work in ending and preventing homelessness.

Unable to attend? You can still help celebrate by making a general [donation to support the Law Center's work](#).

We look forward to seeing you there!

When & Where

- **Thursday, September 22, 2016**
- **6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

The Liaison Capitol Hill
415 New Jersey Ave NW
Washington, DC 20001

U.S. Department of Education issues important guidance to help homeless kids access school



Credit: [Department of Education](#)

The [U.S. Department of Education launched important new guidance](#) to help states school districts implement the Every Student Succeeds Act's (ESSA) mandate for ensuring homeless students have equal access to education. **The Law Center, and its Project LEARN (Lawyers' Education Resource Network), were instrumental in raising the specific needs of homeless children around the country.** Among other essential points, the guidance:

- Clarifies that while there is a dispute pending between the school and family, the child's rights under federal law must be guaranteed and services provided;
- Requires schools to ensure discipline policies do not interfere with homeless students' access to education by, e.g., punishing students for their homelessness instead of assisting them;
- Advises schools to coordinate with state and local legislatures to ensure local laws and policies, particularly status offense and other laws that serve to criminalize homelessness, are not interfering with homeless students' ability to get to school and learn; and
- Clarifies that unaccompanied homeless students hold the education rights that would otherwise be held by their parents or guardians

Wisconsin voter ID case makes voting easier



Credit: [Brandy Hardy \(BY-NC-ND-2.0\)](#)

A federal district court judge struck down several parts of Wisconsin's strict voter ID law on July 29 in a case brought by the Law Center, with pro bono partner Dechert LLP and co-counsel ACLU.

"The Wisconsin experience demonstrates that a preoccupation with mostly phantom election fraud leads to real incidents of disenfranchisement, which undermine rather than enhance confidence in elections, particularly in minority communities," U.S. District Judge James Peterson wrote. **"To put it bluntly, Wisconsin's strict version of voter ID law is a cure worse than the disease."**

It has been a good summer for voting rights, with court victories in multiple states striking down ID requirements and other restrictions on voting. People experiencing homelessness face [steep barriers to obtaining and keeping IDs](#), and voter ID laws make it even more difficult for this vulnerable and disenfranchised group to vote.

The Law Center is excited to present **Dechert LLP** with the **Pro Bono Counsel Award** [September 22 at the McKinney Vento Awards Event](#) for the firm's strong leadership on this case among others.

Changing Laws. Changing Lives.

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (the Law Center) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to end and prevent homelessness.

With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.

www.nlchp.org