

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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Contact: Andy Beres
(202) 638-2535
aberes@nlchp.org

Obama Administration Ordered to Release Information to Homeless Advocates *Federal Court Calls Administration's Conduct "Baffling"*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A federal court has ruled the Obama Administration must release hundreds of documents to homeless advocates in a case that could decide the fate of a law benefiting homeless people.

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty alleges the Administration is not complying with Title V of the McKinney-Vento Act, a law that gives homeless service providers access to unused federal properties for free. Title V, which serves 2.4 million homeless people each year, is at risk because of a new Administration push to sell unused properties at a profit.

“We’re seeing an unfortunate shift in the Administration’s policy,” said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the Law Center. “With some 3.5 million Americans homeless each year, Title V is more important than ever. But the Administration is pushing Congress to pass legislation that would cripple Title V and has provided no evidence it’s even complying with the current law.”

In June 2011, the Administration brought a motion to vacate a long-standing injunction governing how it runs Title V on the grounds that it has an “unassailable record” of complying with the law. But when the Law Center asked for the evidence to back that up, the Administration provided documents that were up to 100 percent redacted – literally blank (sample here).

In his ruling, Judge Royce C. Lamberth said it was “baffling” that the Administration thought the court would accept its claim of compliance “on nothing other than [its] own say-so.”

Law Center Policy Director Jeremy Rosen agreed. “The court saw the same thing we did: despite its broad claims of government transparency, the Obama Administration is doing everything it can to conceal records on Title V.”

Judge Lamberth added that this case has “real consequences for people who have fallen about as far down in the depths as one can in this country.”

Title V has no shortage of success stories. Westwood Transitional Village in Los Angeles provides housing and supportive services to 150 women, children, and men. When families leave the program, they are prepared to be self-sustaining. Bay Cove

Human Services of South Weymouth's award-winning substance abuse program has helped more than 10,000 homeless people recover from addiction since opening its doors in 1999.

"It can't be denied that this program works. And the court's ruling shows the law is on our side," said Foscarinis. "We hope the Administration will come back to the table and work with us – outside the courts – on a solution that protects Title V."

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The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty is a leader in the movement to end and prevent homelessness. It works to achieve this through advocacy, public education, and impact litigation.