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**NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY**



**Lawyers Working to
End Homelessness**

News and Commentary for

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Dear Friends:

Happy 2013! As we start the new year at the Law Center, we reflect first on last year. We saw gains in our work on the human right to housing, including the rights of tenants in foreclosure; on fighting the criminalization of homelessness and poverty; securing the voting rights of homeless and poor people; and upholding the right of homeless children to go to school.

We mobilized the pro bono resources of dozens of law firms, and worked with allies across the country, including on the first-ever Homeless Bill of Rights. A fuller overview of our work in 2012 is in the article below, and online.



But even as we review these successes, we know that our homeless brothers and sisters are suffering, and that much more remains to be done.

[Click here to read more.](#)

"Fiscal Cliff" Deal Delays Cuts, But Safety-Net Still in Danger

At the close of 2012, Congress and the Administration faced critical fiscal issues: whether to

renew the Bush-era tax cuts; sequestration (spending cuts of up to 8 percent in nearly all social and defense programs); and whether to raise the debt limit. In a deal approved on New Year's Day, Congress resolved some of these issues, but mostly kicked the can down the road a few months.

The December agreement, which does not address the debt limit, accomplishes the following:

- Returns taxes to Clinton-era rates for individuals making over \$400,000 and families making over \$450,000;
- Raises capital gains and inheritance taxes for people at the same income levels;
- Extends federal unemployment insurance for the long-term unemployed;
- Extends the Farm Bill through September, preventing SNAP (food stamp) cuts during that time;
- Allows the 2010 payroll tax reduction to expire, but extends other tax credit provisions that benefit low-income Americans; and
- Postpones sequestration until March.



On the surface, this deal looks good for low-income Americans, as there were very few spending cuts to social or entitlement programs like Medicaid, SSI, and SNAP. However, the deal does nothing to prevent future cuts to these programs. In fact, it has made those cuts more likely down the road.

[Click here to read more.](#)

Looking Back: A Milestone Year for Homeless Advocacy

The year 2012 was an important milestone for the Law Center, as we [marked the 25th anniversary](#) of the McKinney-Vento Act—the first federal legislation to address homelessness -- for which our founder and executive director was a primary advocate.



But while great progress has been made since McKinney-Vento's passage, there is still much to be done. That's why we used the occasion to renew our commitment to finish what we started and end homelessness in America.

The year began with exciting achievements in our civil rights and human rights programs. In February, after observing Sacramento denying sanitation and safe drinking water to homeless residents during a visit organized by the Law Center, the UN Special Rapporteur on Water and Sanitation [wrote an unprecedented letter](#) to Mayor Kevin Johnson, calling the City's actions a blatant violation of human rights. This sent a powerful message that the U.S. is accountable to its international treaty obligations and generated strong media coverage, which reinforced the human rights implications, helping to change the political playing field and empowering marginalized homeless advocates.

In April, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and Department of Justice released a report that condemns the criminalization of homelessness, drawing heavily on publications from

the Law Center.

[Click here to read more.](#)

About the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

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