

IN JUST TIMES

a publication of the

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



*Changing Laws,
Changing Lives*

News and Commentary for
October 2013

The number of homeless public school students has topped one million.

This fall, help us **make sure** all our children have a chance for a better future.

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Dear Friends,

It's been a surreal few weeks in Washington, DC, with Congress gridlocked as millions of Americans face potentially disastrous consequences as a result of the government shut down. But our legal advocacy work continues, and we have some positive news to report.

In Flagstaff, Arizona, a federal judge struck down as unconstitutional an Arizona state law that made it a crime to beg in public places. The ruling follows a recent trend, reported in the May issue of IJT, of federal rulings striking down laws banning begging.

In a [powerful editorial](#) citing the Law Center's most recent report on the criminalization of homelessness, *Criminalizing Crisis*, the [LA Times](#) applauded the ruling, and exhorted public officials to adopt more constructive approaches: "Rather than trying to remove unsightly panhandlers from public view, officials should redouble their efforts to move individuals out of poverty and off the streets."

The ruling comes at a time when increased need has pushed more



**Maria
Foscarinis Executive
Director**

our 2012 Annual
Report, now
available

and more people out on the streets. In a misguided response, many communities have adopted ill-conceived laws and policies to criminalize conduct such as sleeping, eating and begging in public places. According to the Law Center's Criminalizing Crisis report, over 120 cities of 234 surveyed had bans on begging, and such bans had increased 7% over the previous two years.

The lead plaintiff, a 77 year old Hopi woman, had been arrested after asking an undercover police officer for \$1 in bus fare.

Government Shutdown Impacts Low Income People, Human Rights Advocates



AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis

The ongoing shutdown of the federal government, which began on October 1, has had a significant impact on low income people and organizations who advocate on their behalf. While we are encouraged that a plan to end the shutdown seems likely to garner support in the Senate and from the Administration, as this newsletter went to publication the House majority had not yet signaled a willingness to accept it. Also, the plan would do nothing more than maintain the status quo of devastatingly low spending on programs impacting the lowest

income Americans. Those spending levels were locked in through sequestration, which took effect after Congress was unable to meet a previous deadline to reach agreement on spending cuts.

Here are some of the key impacts of the shutdown:

- While homeless assistance grants, public housing funding, and Section 8 payments to existing tenants are all continuing to be funded, housing authorities have been instructed by HUD not to issue any new housing vouchers. In addition, HUD is running at a lower capacity than any other federal agency, with 96 percent of employees furloughed.
- WIC funds that provide supplemental nutrition to pregnant women and new mothers cannot be provided to states; consequently, some WIC recipients are not receiving October checks. SNAP and TANF recipients are receiving payments this month, but that funding will be in jeopardy should the shutdown continue into November.
- The US Government was forced to request a postponement of its scheduled human rights review in Geneva, under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The review has been rescheduled to March, with the date to be determined.

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

Changing Laws, Changing Lives

The National Law Center on Homelessness
& Poverty requests your presence at the:

MCKINNEY-VENTO AWARDS

Wednesday, October 30, 2013 Renaissance Downtown Hotel
Reception 6:00 p.m. Renaissance Ballroom
Program 7:00 p.m. 999 9th Street NW
Buffet Reception Washington DC 20001

EMCEE

Rebecca Cooper
Reporter, ABC7/WJLA-TV News

2013 AWARD HONOREES

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The Honorable Al Franken (D-Minnesota)

BRUCE F. VENTO AWARD
The Honorable Gwen Moore (D-Wisconsin)

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Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

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For sponsorship opportunities, tickets or with other inquiries about the event, please contact us at events@nlchp.org.
Online ticket purchase at <http://nlchp.org/mvtickets.cfm>

Homelessness Protected Category in NYC's Anti-Profilng Law

In a tense, [down-to-the-wire vote](#), the New York City Council voted in late August to override Mayor Bloomberg's veto of the [Community Safety Act](#). The law now bans New York City police from stopping people based solely on a number of protected categories, such as race, gender, and national origin, and for the first time in such a law, also includes housing status.



Michael Appleton for The New York Times

The Law Center provided legal advice to our local partners at [Picture the Homeless](#) who played a central role in including housing status in the legislation and working with [an incredible coalition](#) of allies to pass the bill. As their victory announcement said:

What does [this bill] mean? It means the police can't stop, question, frisk, and ticket someone solely because they "look homeless." And that's huge, because for years the NYPD has treated homeless people like fish in a barrel, easy marks when a cop is looking to fill their quota. As a result of these profiling-based encounters, homeless people often get ticketed for things that aren't against the law. These tickets add up, and turn into warrants, and often lead to homeless men and women getting locked up for things they shouldn't have been stopped for in the first place.

Implementation of the law remains an open question, but the Law Center and its partners will be watching closely, and the campaign leading to legislative victory holds lessons for advocates working across issues.

The power of legal advocacy: Funders Together to End Homelessness blog post



Center Executive Director Maria Foscariis wrote an article for the Funders Together to End Homelessness blog, posted October explaining how law can serve as a

10, powerful tool to end and prevent homelessness. Drawing on the Law Center's own work, and collaborations with funders and local partners, Foscariis notes that legal advocacy can serve as a high impact strategy to reform systems. Examples include reforms to education systems to ensure that homeless children have access to schools and school services; policy advocacy to open access to housing and services for homeless youth, and litigation to help service providers secure vacant federal properties for housing and services for homeless people. Thank you, FTEH for hosting her article!

2012 Annual Report: "Looking Back and Moving Forward: 25 Years After the McKinney-Vento Act, The Work Continues"

The Law Center's 2012 annual report is now available! Many thanks to our friends at Covington & Burling for printing assistance. Below, an excerpt from the Civil Rights section.

“Nobody wants to have to go to the bathroom outdoors. Imagine your mother in this situation. Wouldn't you want her to access water and sanitation?”

– Tim Buckley, homeless camper, advocate, “sanitation engineer”

Albuquerque's letter generated strong media coverage and boosted state level advocacy for California's Human Right to Water Bill. The bill was signed into law in September, 2012, making California the first state in the nation to recognize the human right to safe water and to ensure universal access to it.



Advocate John Joyce of the Rhode Island Homeless Advocacy Project, recipient of the Law Center's 2012 Bruce F. Vento Award

PROTECT THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN 2012



Law Center Welcomes Program Associate Janelle Fernandez

The Law Center is pleased to welcome Janelle Fernandez as part of our team. A 2005 graduate of Florida State University, with a Masters in Sociology, Janelle brings a background in program analysis, system design and improvement, and anti-poverty policy advocacy to her work at the Law Center. She will be supporting our Law and Policy team, including our pro bono program. Welcome, Janelle!

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

