

# IN JUST TIMES

*a publication of the*

NATIONAL LAW CENTER  
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



*Changing Laws, Changing Lives*

November 2017



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Dear Friends,

November is a time we mark Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week and Thanksgiving, a time of reflection and gratitude.

Here at the Law Center, we are grateful to our fellow advocates across the country fighting for basic fairness and human decency with and on behalf of our homeless neighbors. We are also grateful to our [LEAP firms](#) and pro bono partners who donate their time and talent to fight with us, multiplying our impact many times over.



Maria Foscarinis  
Executive Director

But as much as I reflect on the many reasons for gratitude, I am also overwhelmed by sadness and anger at the unbelievable cruelty now being inflicted so needlessly on homeless Americans. In Denver, police enforcing the city's urban camping ban are literally [tearing down tents and snatching blankets from people](#) simply trying to survive on the city's frigid streets.

Although this may seem an especially shocking example, [caught on video](#), it is not unique, and Denver is by no means alone. In Washington, D.C., a [police officer "rousted"](#) a homeless woman sleeping in a doorway, pulled her up by her ears, hit her in the head, and destroyed her meager belongings. Fortunately, this police officer was arrested and convicted after fellow police officers who witnessed this turned him in.

As you'll read below, in San Diego, disabled homeless people sleeping in their vehicles—their last remaining shelter—are being ticketed, and some have had their vehicles towed. We are proud to partner with [Disability Rights California](#), [Fish & Richardson P.C.](#), and others to challenge the city in federal court.

I'm so grateful that we are able to take action against injustice—and contribute to the struggle for a more just world. Thank you for making our work possible with your support, and all of us at the Law Center wish you a happy Thanksgiving.



Maria Foscarinis  
Founder & Executive Director

## 2017 McKinney-Vento Awards Raises Over \$250,000 for Homelessness

By Maggie Ardiente, Development & Communications Director



The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty's McKinney-Vento Awards Reception, held on October 24, 2017, in Washington, DC, was a rousing success, raising over a quarter of a million dollars for legal advocacy on behalf of millions of homeless Americans. Over 150 lawyers, advocates, and supporters in attendance were treated to inspirational speeches on the importance of ending homelessness.

U.S. Senator Cory Booker, recipient of the 2017 Bruce F. Vento Award, implored attendees to “stay faithful” as advocates make progress in Congress to pass laws that protect homeless

youth. The National Football League's Vernon Davis, recipient of the 2017 Stewart B. McKinney Award, shared how his grandmother's empathy for people experiencing homeless helped shape his charitable giving. Rajib Chanda, accepting the 2017 Pro Bono Counsel Award on behalf of the law firm Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, emphasized the importance of pro bono work and the impact the firm has made in partnering with the Law Center. And Juanita Rocha, recipient of the 2017 Personal Achievement Award, gave an emotional and moving speech about her family experiencing homelessness and the obstacles she overcame to keep her son in school.

The Law Center would like to thank our 2017 major sponsors: the San Francisco 49ers; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; Jeffrey & Kendra Simes; Bank of America Charitable Foundation; Latham & Watkins LLP; Porterfield, Fetting & Sears LLC; Bruce & Lori Laitman Rosenblum; and our many sponsors at the Justice Patron, Justice Advocate, and Amici levels. Special thanks to our event emcee, Stephanie Ramos of ABC News, the Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel's event and audio-visual staff, the Law Center's Board of Directors, and the Law Center's 2017 McKinney-Vento Host Committee.

Photos and video from the event are available on the [Law Center's Facebook page](#). Attendees who would like to make a pledge to support the Law Center can donate securely online at [www.nlchp.org/donate](http://www.nlchp.org/donate). We hope to see you all at next year's awards!

## **Lawsuit Filed Against City of San Diego on Behalf of RV and Vehicle Residents**

By Tristia Bauman, Senior Attorney

[The Law Center](#), Disability Rights California, and the law firm of Fish & Richardson P.C. [filed a class-action lawsuit](#) challenging the City of San Diego's enforcement of ordinances banning nighttime RV parking and vehicle habitation. The suit was filed on behalf of a class of homeless persons who own RVs or other vehicles but cannot afford the city's high rents.

At a news conference in San Diego's Balboa Park on November 16, 2017, advocates pointed out that many of those targeted were hard-working people who paid taxes all their lives before falling on hard times. Valerie Grischy, one of the named plaintiffs, was a licensed chiropractor with a successful career before getting into a serious car accident in 2009. Her only income is SSI benefits. She said, "When I saw that I got less than \$900 a month on disability I knew that I could either pay rent or pay for other necessities I need to live, but not both. So I used my back SSI money to get an RV."

Attorneys will argue that the city's ticketing policies are unconstitutional and discriminate against people with disabilities, in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The lawsuit seeks an order requiring the city to stop ticketing until it has permanent accessible and affordable housing for the group. The suit also seeks damages, restitution, and attorneys' fees.

## **Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign Marks One-Year Anniversary**

By Eric Tars, Senior Attorney

On November 15, 2016, more than 100 national and local organizations, led by the Law Center and the [National Coalition for the Homeless](#), launched the [Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign](#), calling for comprehensive housing solutions to end and prevent homelessness and an immediate cessation of the criminalization that only prolongs and worsens it.

In the past year, the number of HNH Campaign endorsers has grown from its initial roster of just over 100 to more than 600 organizations and individuals. Organizational champions include [Care for the Homeless](#) and [Urban Pathways](#) in New York City, who are moving their Continuum of Care to take an active role in opposing criminalization; [HerStory Ensemble](#), leading the [fight for a homeless bill of rights in Delaware](#); and the Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, bringing the voices of homeless persons together with budget and statistical analysis to make the case for housing. Notable individuals who have endorsed include Salt Lake City County Mayor Ben McAdams, who [spoke out strongly against sweeps of homeless encampments](#) without providing adequate housing alternatives; New York City Councilor Stephen Levin, who helped pass the first-in-the-nation [right to counsel in housing court](#) law that is expected to keep tens of thousands of New Yorkers in their apartments; and Dane County (Madison), WI, Supervisor Heidi Wegleitner who is currently [leading a budget fight](#) where the county is making a literal choice between housing and handcuffs, as they debate spending millions on a jail expansion instead of providing housing and services to keep people out of jail in the first place.

The Law Center has supported the HNH Campaign by providing new tools for endorsers to use in their advocacy, such as our [Housing Not Handcuffs report](#) on the growth of criminalization of homelessness, a [litigation manual](#), [messaging tips](#), and a [one-pager](#) advocacy document to help advocates make the case against criminalization and for constructive alternatives.

In the next year, with the support of its fellow HNH endorsers, the Law Center hopes to continue growing the HNH Campaign and seeing more communities implement its [model policies](#) at the federal, state, and local level to end the crisis of homelessness and put us on a path to where everyone can enjoy their basic human right to safe, adequate, and affordable housing. [Endorse the campaign](#) if you haven't already, and encourage others to join you in supporting an end to the criminalization of homelessness!

## NEWS from the LAW CENTER

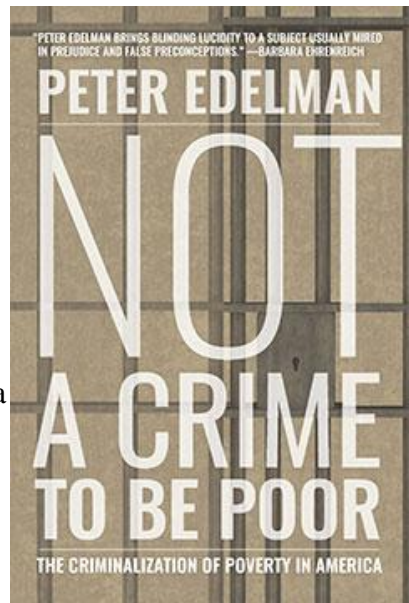
**Law Center Releases Education Manual After Natural Disasters Disrupt Children's Education**

In the aftermath of the devastating disasters across the country, displaced students are at risk of disruption to their education. Whether they are forced to leave a damaged home or the school district is closed, displaced students are entitled to protections under McKinney-Vento. Under the Act, homeless students have the right to attend a school district without having an established residency in the district. The Law Center released a [\*Homeless Education Advocacy Manual: Disaster Edition\*](#), as a resource to guide homeless students and their families through their rights to educational continuity and stability during disaster recovery. The report was created with the pro bono support of Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP and financial support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, the Dimick Foundation, and the Ogden Foundation.



### **Georgetown Law Professor Peter Edelman Highlights the Law Center in New Book on Poverty**

In his new book, [\*Not a Crime to be Poor\*](#), Georgetown law professor Peter Edelman explains the criminalization of homelessness and poverty in America. Through fines and fees, money bail systems, and laws strictly enforced on the poor, America has created a justice system where some can buy their way out, while others are trapped in inescapable cycles of poverty and homelessness. Research from the Law Center is included in Professor Edelman's book from both the [\*Housing Not Handcuffs\*](#) and [\*No Safe Place\*](#) reports. Professor Edelman also includes insight from Law Center Executive Director Maria Foscarinis regarding current counts and trends of the homeless population, specifically that homeless persons are widely undercounted, and trends are therefore inaccurate.



### **Law Center Staffers Volunteer for Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week**

This year's [\*Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week\*](#) was November 11-19, sponsored by the [\*National Coalition for the Homeless\*](#) and the [\*National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness\*](#). More than 700 community organizations, churches, high schools, college groups, and others participated. Law Center staff and interns participated in a service event in Washington, D.C., serving dinner at [\*Casa Ruby\*](#), a multicultural organization providing services and programs to the most vulnerable in the LGBT community.



## NLCHP in the Media

Dallas Chronicle (Nov. 11): [Vets Need More Than Lip Service](#)

WSAZ News (Nov. 8): [ACLU of West Virginia Has Concerns About Proposed Panhandling Ordinance](#)

Reader's Digest (Nov. 3): [Eight Everyday Things You Didn't Know Were Illegal](#)

The Progressive (Nov. 1): [Denver's Crackdown on Being Homeless](#)

Voices River City-Sacramento (Oct. 25): [The Civil Rights Anti-Camping Trial Against Sacramento—What You Should Know](#)

CityLab (Oct. 20): [Cities Take Both Sides in the 'War on Sitting'](#)

Drexel University News (Oct. 18): [Students Report on Human Rights Concerns in Advance of Visit by U.N. Special Rapporteur](#)

Spare Change News (Oct. 17): [Evacuated Homeless Campers Return to Houston Overpass After Hurricane Harvey](#)

**Santa Cruz Independent Media Center (Oct. 15): [Community Remains in the Shadow of Bell v. Boise](#)**

**CBC News-British Columbia (Oct. 14): [Car-Dwellers Rising: Life on the Curb of Canada's Most Expensive City](#)**

**Honolulu Civil Beat (Oct. 12): [Boat Harbor Encampment Cited as Model for Homeless Safe Zones](#)**

**Truthout (Oct. 12): [How Hurricane Response Efforts Are Sorting People into "Deserving" and "Undeserving" Poor](#)**

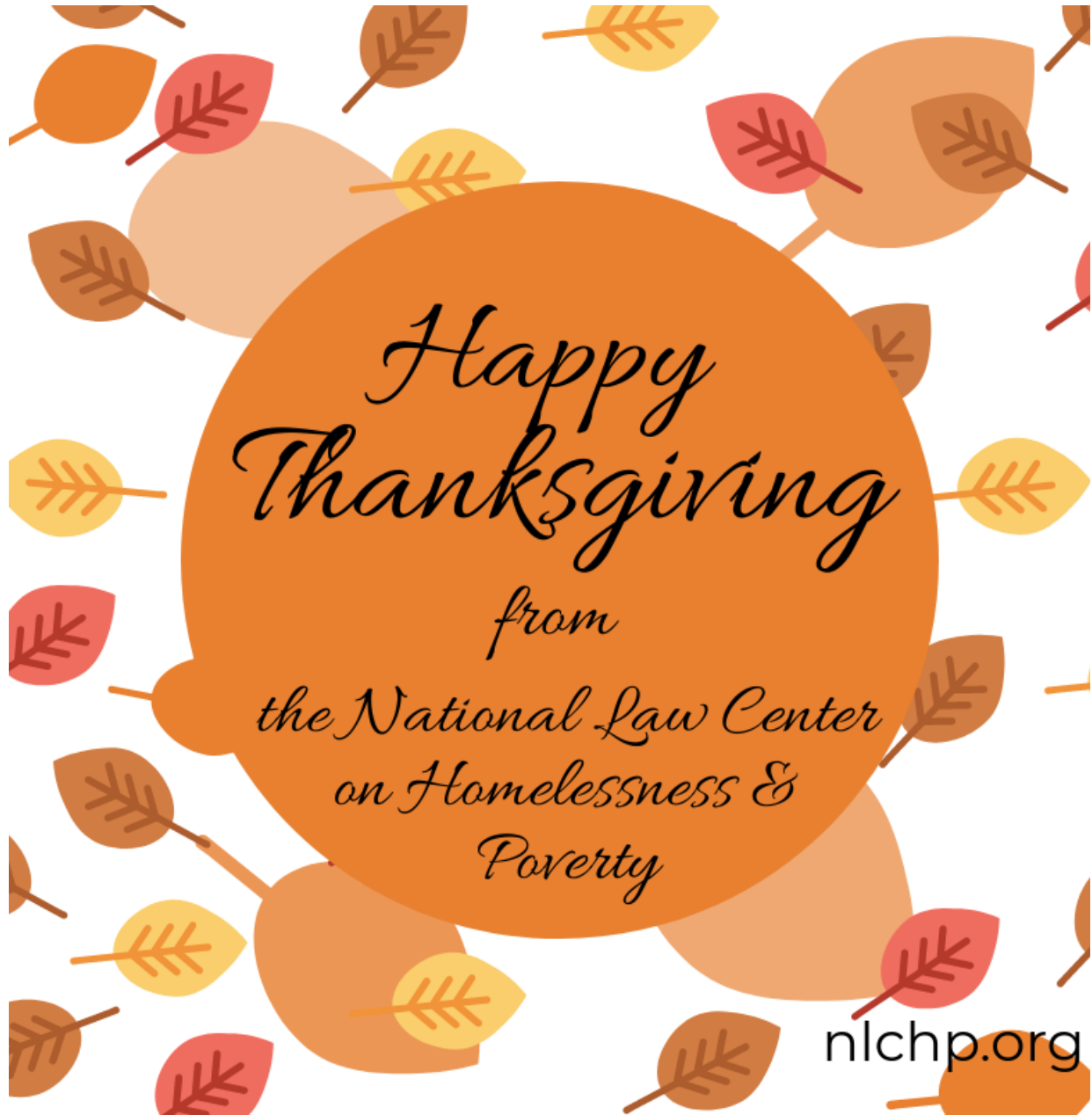
**Daily Press-Newport News, VA (Oct. 11): [Panhandling is Protected](#)**

## Events

**Tristia Bauman**, senior attorney, spoke on "Transforming Vacant and Abandoned Properties" at the [National League of Cities' Summit](#) on November 18, 2017, in Charlotte, NC.

**Michael Santos**, attorney, presented on "The Legal Needs of Homeless Youth" at the [New York Coalition for Homeless Youth Conference](#) in Albany, NY, on November 13, 2017.

**Eric Tars**, senior attorney, will be speaking at the [U.S. Human Rights Network Conference](#) in Atlanta, GA, from December 6-9, 2017.



*Happy  
Thanksgiving*

*from*

*the National Law Center  
on Homelessness &  
Poverty*

nlchp.org

**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](http://www.nlchp.org)



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