

IN JUST TIMES

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NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



Changing Laws, Changing Lives

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Dear Friends,

The past few weeks have seen the [tragic killing of an unarmed homeless man](#) on the streets of L.A. and the [horrific comments by a member of the U.S. Congress](#) about homelessness. **And these are just two reported examples of what is a much larger trend: the dehumanization of homeless Americans.**

Criminalization plays a big part in this trend by codifying it in laws and policies. We're working in partnership with many others to [fight criminalization](#) and to support proactive efforts to fight it such as [Homeless Bills of Rights at the city, state and regional levels](#). As you'll read in this month's *In Just Times*, we are making progress and building momentum.



Maria Foscarinis
Executive Director

At our National Forum on the Human Right to Housing, to be held June 24-25 in Washington, D.C., we'll be convening a group of stakeholders from around the country to discuss strategies for moving forward. Our goal is not simply to fight against criminalization, but to fight for the right to housing. We are grateful to Microsoft for hosting the Forum.

While attendance will be limited, we invite all our friends and supporters to share thoughts about this topic, and how we can reach the goal of stopping criminalization and ensuring a right to housing for all homeless people. Please send your ideas to righttohousing@nlchp.org.

Thank you for your support!

Two Midwestern Cities Take Steps to Protect Their Citizens Experiencing Homelessness



Over the past two months, two Midwestern cities, Cincinnati, OH, and Indianapolis, IN, showed unprecedented leadership in protecting homeless persons' rights. On January 22nd, Cincinnati became the third U.S. city to pass legislation [protecting homeless persons from hate crimes](#). And on March 2nd, the Indianapolis City Council passed a [Homeless Bill of Rights](#), one of the first cities to do so. Unfortunately, the Indianapolis Bill of Rights was vetoed by Mayor Greg Ballard late last week.

Under the Cincinnati hate crimes legislation, introduced by Councilman Chris Seelbach, violators can be charged up to an additional 180 days of imprisonment. Local advocates, including the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, emphasize that for the ordinance to be meaningful, law enforcement and prosecution must prioritize its enforcement, including letting people know about the law.

Indianapolis' Homeless Bill of Rights was an excellent step in the direction of ensuring the equal humanity and dignity of homeless persons. Following [the trend of Homeless Bills of Rights passed](#) in Rhode Island, Illinois, and Connecticut, the bill would have protected homeless persons' equal access to public facilities and services, and promoted equal treatment by city officials. The Indianapolis bill went further than previous efforts, ensuring affirmative protection from displacement from homeless encampments until adequate alternatives are provided and requiring storage of personal belongings for 60 days.

Local advocate Don Sawyer's documentary, [Uncharted](#), helped to spur the introduction of the bill. **He thanked the Law Center as “a great support and resource for homeless advocates in Indianapolis, including the author of Proposal 291, Councilor Leroy Robinson, during the process of passing its homeless bill of rights. The National Law Center gave legal advice on proposal language, provided helpful comparative documents from other parts of the country, and gave moral support to advocates fighting for homeless rights in Indianapolis.”**

Interested in Working for the Law Center?

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty has open positions for a Legal Director and Attorney to join our team - [click here](#) to learn more.

The Law Center and UN Reporting

Watch this [new documentary short](#) on how organizations, like the Law Center, affect change in the reporting process of the UN Committee against Torture. [Read more here](#) from the creators of the documentary, OMCT.



State Homeless Bills of Rights Picking Up Steam!

The past few months have seen an exciting string of developments in the movement for homeless bills of rights, highlighted by the Law Center in its recent report [From Wrongs to Rights](#). Bills to protect the civil and human rights of homeless persons have been introduced in California, Colorado, Hawaii, and Oregon and are starting to gain momentum.

[California SB608](#), [Colorado HB15-1264](#), and [Oregon's SB629](#) "Right to Rest Act" bills are part of a coordinated campaign facilitated by the [Western Regional Advocacy Project](#). Each has been recently introduced, awaits action in various committees, and is in need of strong support from advocates in these states.

Hawaii's [Houseless Persons' Bill of Rights, SB1014](#) has cleared all the Hawaii Senate committees through which it must pass, and now the bill is on its way to the Hawaii Assembly. Local advocate, **Beatriz Cantelomo**, stated, **"I want to personally thank you and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty for all that you have done to support us here in Hawai'i. Your expertise and testimony made a big difference with senators who were unsure on how to support the bill. NLCHP's work and credibility has carried a lot of weight in their decision making process."**

The Law Center will continue to share our expertise with advocates and submit testimony to support these bills, and calls on our readers to do so as well!

Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act Has Expired - What Are We Doing?



The Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act (“PTFA”), [a federal law that offered important legal protections to renters in foreclosed properties](#), has now expired. Passed in the wake of the foreclosure crisis, the PTFA provided tenants in foreclosed rental homes with the right to survival of their lease agreements following foreclosure, and the right to a minimum of 90 days’ notice before having to move.

In the absence of the PTFA, the rights of renters in foreclosed properties are governed only by state and local laws. Although 9 states and the District of Columbia have laws that are as or more protective of renters’ rights than the PTFA, the majority of states offer only minimal protections to responsible renters. Indeed, **in many states, renters – even those who had always paid their rent on time and who had no idea that their home was in jeopardy – can be legally evicted with as little as 3 days’ notice.**

The Law Center is working with our national and local partners to promote legislative reform efforts in high-need states where enhanced renters protections modeled on the PTFA are underway or may soon be introduced. In addition, the Law Center has continued to advocate for reintroduction of the PTFA, and bills that would make the PTFA a permanent part of federal law are likely to be introduced in both the U.S. House and Senate in coming weeks.

Pro Bono Numbers for 2014 Are Here!

Financial support of the Law Center is a good return on your investment. For **every dollar you donate, its value is multiplied many times over.** The Law Center has spent the last 25 years cultivating its pro bono network. **In 2014 alone, it received nearly \$3.4 million dollars in donated services from law firms and corporations, and 12 out of 19 were members of our incredible [LEAP community](#).**

If you would like to donate to the Law Center, please [click here!](#)

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

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