

IN JUST TIMES

a publication of the

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



Changing Laws, Changing Lives

January 2018



DONATE NOW »

Dear Friends—

This is the first 2018 issue of IJT, and I hope it's a healthy, happy, and more just new year for all.

Last year, despite many challenges, the Law Center made important gains in our work to protect the basic rights and dignity of homeless Americans. In partnership with our allies, we challenged unjust laws in court—including [a San Diego law](#) that punishes people for living in their vehicles, typically their last remaining source of shelter; [a camping ban in Houston](#); and [a sleeping ban in Boise](#). We helped ensure homeless children and youth have [access to state education](#), including new rights we helped win under amended federal law, and held state and local agencies accountable to it. We supported local advocates in cities around the country, including assisting in [a successful case that helped homeless encampment residents win a route to housing and protection for their property](#).



Maria Foscarinis
Executive Director

At the federal level, [we joined with other advocates](#) to protest the rollback of critical federal protections by the new Administration while also working with allies within government to preserve and strengthen key policies that remain in place. And we mobilized international human rights bodies, [playing a critical role in the recent visit of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty](#), shining a global light on US homelessness and its criminalization. [Read more about our many accomplishments in 2017](#).

Looking ahead, in 2018 we are moving full steam ahead in our fight to ensure civil rights for homeless people. We continue to push against punitive policies in the courts, including a focus on the disproportionate impact of these laws on communities of color. Simultaneously, we are assisting local governments interested in constructive solutions and engaging supportive voices in law enforcement. We are creating new resources on laws and policies affecting homeless youth, including the high percentage who are LGBTQ, as well as know-your-rights materials for families.

Our work is needed now more than ever. [Thank you for your support!](#)

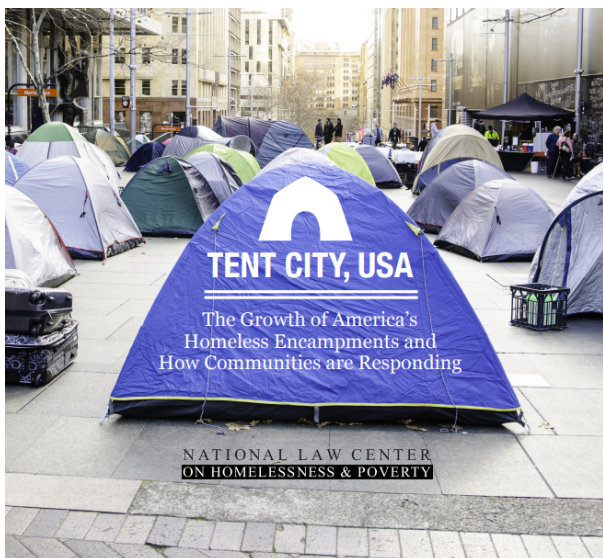


Maria Foscarinis
Founder & Executive Director

Tent City USA: New Report Reveals Rapid Growth of Homeless Encampments

On December 20, 2017, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty released a new report, [*Tent City USA: The Growth of America's Homeless Encampments and How Communities are Responding*](#), reviewing the rapid growth of homeless people living in tents across the United States over the past decade, as measured by documentation in media reports.

Research showed a 1,342 percent increase in homeless encampments reported between 2007 and 2017. Encampments ranged in size, with half showing a size of 11-50 residents, while 17 percent had more than 100 residents. The report tracked the number of unique encampments as reported by the media, acknowledging that there are likely more encampments intentionally hidden or forced to move, and therefore not documented.



As encampments become increasingly common, local governments have enacted laws to prohibit living in tents. Three-quarters of all encampments recorded in the report are prohibited by law; only 4 percent were reported to be legal. Cities such as Denver, CO, Olympia, WA, and San Diego, CA, were cited in the report for particularly harsh laws and

sweeps that criminalize people experiencing homelessness. The report notes that evicting—or “sweeping”—people from tent communities is costly and ineffective, and shares principles and practices for how communities can meet people’s basic needs in the short term.

The Law Center thanks the following law firms for their pro bono research support for *Tent City USA*: Ballard Spahr LLP; Blank Rome LLP; Hunton & Williams LLP; Nixon Peabody LLP; O’Melveny & Myers LLP; and Sullivan & Cromwell LLP; and the following foundations for their generous financial support: Buck Foundation, Butler Family Fund, Deer Creek Foundation, and Oakwood Foundation.

HUD Point-in-Time Counts to Take Place This Week

This week, volunteers from across the country will conduct the annual Point-in-Time Count for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which uses the numbers volunteers provide from their visual street count to report how many people in the U.S. are unsheltered. However, as explained in the Law Center’s report, [*Don’t Count On It: How the HUD Point-in-Time Count Underestimates Homelessness in America*](#), the methodology and results are flawed. Because trends analyses and policy decisions are made based on this number, it is important for an accurate count to take place. The report offers recommendations for how the count can be improved, and some methods already being implemented on a local level in [*places such as New York City*](#).



NEWS from the LAW CENTER

Maria Foscarinis Co-teaching Homelessness Seminar at Columbia Law



Executive Director Maria Foscarinis has been appointed to the adjunct faculty of Columbia Law School and will be co-teaching a Spring 2018 seminar “[Law and Policy of Homelessness](#).” Foscarinis will be joining Dr. Kim Hopper, professor of clinical sociomedical science at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health. The seminar explores the realities of homelessness in New York City and nationally, and legal strategies to address it.



Law Center Joins 75 Organizations to Oppose HUD’s Suspension of Fair Housing Rule

The Law Center joined 75 national civil rights, faith-based, affordable housing, and other organizations to oppose HUD’s sudden and short-sighted decision effectively to suspend the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) regulation. As part of the Fair Housing Act, the AFFH regulation was adopted in 2015 to end discrimination in housing and eliminate barriers created by segregation. The groups call on HUD to reverse its decision and deliver on its promise of fair and equitable housing. [Read our statement](#).



Law Firms: Renew Your LEAP Membership for 2018

Special thanks to the pro bono firms who have joined or renewed their Lawyers’ Executive Advisory Partners (LEAP) membership for 2018:



If your law firm would like renew or join LEAP in 2018, visit www.nlchp.org/leap for more information or contact Development & Communications Director Maggie Ardiente at mardiente@nlchp.org. LEAP members get priority access to our best pro bono projects, special recognition throughout the year, invitations to LEAP-only events, and tickets to our annual McKinney-Vento Awards. Thank you for partnering with the Law Center and helping to end homelessness!

Winter Interns from Brown University

This winter, the Law Center is pleased to welcome undergraduate students participating in Careers for the Common Good Winternships and graduate students participating in the

Masters of Public Affairs program at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, both at Brown University.

Jason Carroll is a first-year student studying French and international relations at the Brown University Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. A DC-area native, Jason enjoys devoting his time to local charities and nonprofits, and hopes to someday work in international policy, public interest advocacy, or governmental affairs.

Tynesia Fields is a current Master's of Public Affairs candidate at Brown University where she focuses on urban policy and social justice through community engagement. She received her B.A. from Brown in 2017 with a degree in urban studies. At the Law Center, Tynesia is evaluating communities to determine whether they are using federal funds to criminalize homelessness. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, she hopes to create and advocate for social policy change, such as increasing affordable housing and improving education, within NYC's marginalized communities.

Rachel Risoleo is a third-year student at Brown University studying international and comparative politics. She plans to explore the roles of politics and urban planning in housing and job discrimination and how political systems can be used to increase housing accessibility. Rachel hopes to pursue a career in human rights or public interest law.

Will Weiran Shang is a current Master's student in public policy at Brown University. While in Japan as an exchange student, he worked with Human Rights Now, where he collaborated on campaigns for lawyers' rights in China and for workers' rights in Asian countries. Will graduated from Brown with a B.A. in international relations and is fluent in Chinese and Japanese. He hopes to apply his knowledge in political economics to help NGOs, international organizations, and governments address policy challenges.

Sidi Wen is a second-year student at Brown University studying computer science and economics. She hopes to explore ways in which technology can be used to further social good.



NLCHP in the Media

Newsweek (Jan. 16): [Why It's Illegal to Feed the Homeless in Cities Across America](#)

Union-Bulletin—WA (Jan. 14): [Walla Walla Has Work to Do in Reducing Homelessness](#)

KKTV 11 News—CO (Jan. 12): [Federal Government Suggests Homeless Rates Going Down, Advocates Still Push Need for Affordable Housing](#)

Seattle Weekly (Jan. 10): [For Homeless Seattleites, a Reprieve From the Debilitating Burden of Warrants](#)

Reuters (Jan. 5): [Amid Icy Temperatures, Some of Washington's Homeless Prefer to Sleep Rough](#)

Dallas News (Jan. 4): [Stop Panhandling in Dallas? Sorry, But That's Illegal](#)

San Francisco Weekly (Jan. 3): [Homelessness Improvement: S.F. Sets Ambitious Goals to Move People Off Streets](#)

St. Augustine Record—FL (Jan. 2): [From Pensacola to Miami, Florida Cities Wrestled with Panhandling in Wake of US District Court Ruling](#)

Washington Post (Dec. 29, 2017): [Even During One of the Year's Coldest Weeks, Some Homeless People are Refusing to Come Inside](#)

The Huffington Post (Dec. 21, 2017): [It Doesn't Make Any Sense to Arrest People Who are Homeless](#)

West Virginia Living Magazine (Winter 2017): [Speaking for the Homeless](#)

Courthouse News (Dec. 21, 2017): [Report: Homeless Camps Up by 1,000 Percent Since 2007](#)

Charleston Gazette-Mail—WV (Dec. 20, 2017) [After Lawsuit, Charleston's Homeless Camp Procedures are Beneficial](#)

Governing Magazine (Dec. 19, 2017): [Once a National Model for Helping Panhandlers, Albuquerque's New Law Could Land Them in Jail](#)

Boise State Public Radio—ID (Dec. 14, 2017): [Feds Say Idaho Homeless Estimate Decreased in 2017 But Advocacy Group is Skeptical](#)

RT (Dec. 13, 2017): [San Francisco Animal Shelter Hires Robot to Keep Homeless People Away](#)

Real Change News (Dec. 13, 2017): [Study: Homeless Census is an Undercount](#)

Events

The Law Center is pleased to partner with **Goldman Sachs** (LEAP member) and attorneys from **Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson** (LEAP member), and **Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP** to conduct a volunteer survey project examining how homeless people are criminalized by law enforcement for conducting life-sustaining activities such as sleeping, eating, or resting. The project will be conducted on January 26 at the Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen in New York City.

Michael Santos, attorney at the Law Center, spoke at [Beyond Housing 2018: A National Conversation on Child Homelessness and Poverty](#) hosted by the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness in New York City on January 11. He spoke on “Providing Wrap-around Legal Services to Homeless Families” with Amy Horton-Newell of the American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty.

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