

IN JUST TIMES

a publication of the

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



Changing Laws, Changing Lives

August 2018



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Dear Friend,

Dire poverty is increasingly visible in our streets and public places, and many cities are responding in knee-jerk fashion, to make it a crime to sleep, eat, or ask for money in public. We know this is not a solution, and more importantly, this is not how we should treat fellow human beings. That's why the Law Center and critical partners of the [Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign](#) initiated a [letter-writing campaign to remind cities that it should never be a crime to ask for help](#). In fact, bans on begging implicate the right to free expression protected by the First Amendment, and the letters demand that cities repeal bans on panhandling. There are 18 organizations in over a dozen states targeting more than 240 unconstitutional ordinances as part of this effort. [LEAP member](#) McCarter & English is providing pro bono support to the Law Center.



Maria Foscarinis
Executive Director

Spending money on criminalizing homelessness is heartless, ineffective, a waste of taxpayer dollars—and potentially unconstitutional. That's why the Law Center is in federal court [challenging](#) a San Diego law that makes it a crime for people who have lost everything to sleep in their vehicles, often their last remaining shelter. One of the plaintiffs in our case, Valerie Grischy, was a chiropractor before a serious car accident prevented her from working. Now living on \$900 a month, she had to leave her home and move into her RV—putting her at risk of being fined, jailed, and having her RV impounded. For now Valerie is safe, because the Law Center, together with pro bono partner and [LEAP member](#) Fish & Richardson and

local partner Disability Rights California, recently won a preliminary injunction preventing the city from ticketing or towing vehicles being used for shelter. Read more about the case below.

No one should have to live on the street or in their vehicle, or be forced to ask strangers for spare change. We need to invest in housing, not handcuffs. Please consider [endorsing the Campaign](#), and supporting our work to make its call for justice a reality by [donating today](#).



Maria Foscarinis
Founder & Executive Director

Law Center, ACLU, and Legal Aid Sue to Block Ordinance to Criminalize Panhandling in Greensboro, NC

On August 8, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and Legal Aid of North Carolina filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of three people experiencing homelessness, seeking to block a Greensboro, North Carolina, ordinance that criminalizes “aggressive” panhandling and many activities protected by the First Amendment. The lawsuit argues that Greensboro’s ordinance violates the free speech, equal protection, and due process rights of people who ask for contributions in public places in the city. [Read the Law Center’s press release](#).

“We all agree that no one wants to see people begging for help, but the answer is to remove their need to beg, not to punish them for asking,” said Eric Tars, senior attorney at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit. “We told the city council that 100 percent of similar ordinances have been struck down by courts—25 of 25 since 2015. Greensboro residents who want to see something done about panhandling should be outraged that, rather than implementing housing strategies that work, their councilmembers are wasting time and resources passing unconstitutional laws that don’t.”

Judge Orders San Diego to Stop Ticketing Homeless People in Vehicles

A federal judge ordered San Diego police to temporarily stop ticketing homeless people living in their vehicles. The Law Center and Disability Rights California requested the preliminary injunction in an ongoing law suit filed last year. The lawsuit is challenging the city’s ticketing and impoundment policies on the grounds that they are unconstitutional and discriminate against people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“Throwing homeless people with disabilities onto the streets is a senseless and cruel policy,” said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the Law Center. “People on fixed incomes have few affordable housing options, and if an RV or other vehicle is their only available shelter, local governments should not make that option illegal. They should focus on moving unhoused people to permanent, secure housing—not making it more likely that they will end up unsheltered on the streets.”

[Read more about](#) the preliminary injunction hearing.

NEWS from the LAW CENTER

Volunteer Event: Casa Ruby

This month, the Law Center team volunteered at [Casa Ruby](#), a bilingual LGBTQ organization that provides life-saving services to the most vulnerable in Washington, D.C.

Thank you to the Law Center’s 2018 Summer Interns

We’re pleased to recognize and thank the following students who participated in our 2018 Summer Intern

Program: **Janna Driskell** (Duke University), **LeGrand Northcutt** (University of Richmond), **Darren O’Connor** (University of Denver), **Nathaniel Pettit** (Brown University), **Brandy Ryan** (University of Michigan), **Charlotte Schwebel** (Colorado College), **Harry Seavey** (Yale University), **Fina Short** (Tufts University), and **Alisha Zhao** (Stanford University). Thank you for all your hard work this summer!



Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign Surpasses 700 Endorsements

Over 700 organizations, elected officials, and advocates have endorsed the Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign! Read the latest [summer issue of the Housing Not Handcuffs newsletter](#)

and be sure to participate in the next [Housing Not Handcuffs Web Convening](#) on September 13 at 2:00pm EDT. Special thanks to our AmeriCorps VISTAs Dejah Craddock, Nicole Davies, and Rachel Lee for their work on the campaign!

NLCHP in the Media

San Diego Union-Tribune (Aug. 12): [Homelessness Not a Crime, But Can Lead to Tickets, Jail](#)

Yes! Weekly: [Civil Rights Groups Challenge Greensboro's Unconstitutional Panhandling Ordinance](#)

Huffington Post (Aug. 8): [America's Housing Crisis is Forcing More People to Live in Vehicles](#)

World News Group (Aug. 8): [Home Sweet RV](#)

How Stuff Works (Aug. 6): [Homeless Americans Can Vote, But It Isn't Easy](#)

CBS News (Jul. 31): [More Americans are Forced to Reside in Their Vehicles](#)

San Diego Union-Tribune (Jul. 27): [Judge Weighs Injunction on RV Parking Restriction](#)

CityMetric (Jul. 25): [Criminalizing Homelessness is Not Just Cruel, It's Costly, Too](#)

Q Voice News (Jul. 18): [Cyndi Lauper Wants You to Help End LGBTQ Youth Homelessness](#)

Colorado Springs Gazette (Jul. 9): [Criminalizing Homelessness is Not the Answer](#)

Events

September 13: Housing Not Handcuffs Web Convening

Join our quarterly Housing Not Handcuffs Web Convening on Thursday, September 13, at 2:00pm EDT to hear announcements and discussion of recent

NATIONAL LAW CENTER
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Thursday, September 13
2:00 pm ET / 11:00 am PT

HOUSING

and upcoming Housing Not Handcuffs campaign activities across the country. [Register now.](#)



Save the Date! November 13, 2018 - 20th Annual McKinney-Vento Awards

Mark your calendars now and don't miss the Law Center's biggest event of the year! The 20th Annual McKinney-Vento Awards Reception will be held Tuesday, November 13, 2018, from 6:00pm-9:00pm in Washington, D.C. at the Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel. We're pleased to announce that year's recipient of the Stewart B. McKinney Award will be healthcare company **Kaiser Permanente**, the Pro Bono Counsel Awardee will be **Goldman Sachs Pro Bono Committee**. More honorees will be announced soon. More information, including sponsorship opportunities, is available at nlchp.org/mvawards.



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