

Four hands are positioned to form a protective frame around the title. Two hands at the top have their fingers pointing towards each other, while two hands at the bottom have their fingers pointing away from each other, creating a central space for the text.

# 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

NATIONAL LAW CENTER  
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

# OUR HISTORY

Law Center Founder and Executive Director Maria Foscarinis began her legal career as a litigation associate at the Wall Street firm Sullivan & Cromwell. During her time there, she represented homeless families pro bono, and as she witnessed first-hand the severe shortage of safe and affordable housing in America, she began to realize the crucial role of legal advocacy in addressing this national crisis. In 1985, Maria left Sullivan & Cromwell to fully devote herself to the fight to end homelessness.

In 1987, Maria led the campaign to pass the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the first major federal legislation to address the problem.

In 1989, she founded the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. Since then, the Law Center has worked to sustain and expand federal aid to homeless persons and served as a leader in the right to housing movement. In 2011, the U.S. government acknowledged -- for the first time in history -- that it is obligated to address homelessness as a human rights issue.



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# OUR MISSION



Since 1989, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty has served as the legal arm of the national movement to end and prevent homelessness. Through policy advocacy, public education, and impact litigation, the Law Center seeks systematic reform and works to meet both the immediate and long-term needs of homeless and poor people. Through training and technical assistance, it supports effective advocacy by local groups across the country.

The Law Center works with community-based and national allies to enforce and implement existing legal rights and advocate for new policies and resources to end and prevent homelessness. In all of its work, the Law Center leverages the pro bono assistance of major national law firms through its Lawyers' Executive Advisory Partners (LEAP) program.

# A Message from our Founder & Executive Director

*Dear Friends of the Law Center:*

In 2011, with your support, the Law Center won major victories in the fight to end homelessness and ensure the human right to housing.

For the first time ever, thanks to our advocacy and your support, our government acknowledged that homelessness is a human rights issue here at home—and committed to do more to ensure housing for all. With our advocacy, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued new rules to protect housing rights for domestic violence survivors. With our advocacy, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the U.S. Department of Justice worked to develop strategies to protect homeless people from being unfairly targeted by law enforcement. We fought efforts in Congress to take away service providers' rights to use, without charge, vacant federal property to house and help homeless people. And we worked with advocates in communities across the country to protect the human and civil rights of homeless residents.

Thanks to your support, we launched our innovative Project LEARN—training and leveraging the resources of pro bono lawyers to help make sure homeless children can get the education they need and deserve. And thanks to your support, we filed major federal litigation to protect the right of homeless Americans to vote.

Your support also helped us educate the public. Our report, *Criminalizing Crisis*, garnered major national and local media attention, and helped advocates across the country make the case for constructive, not punitive, responses to street homelessness. Our National Forum on the Human Right to Housing brought together scores of advocates, including formerly homeless advocates, and generated media attention. Our lunch with George Stephanopoulos highlighted the growth of homelessness—and its changing face.

I am so proud of all that we have accomplished together. Our work has transformed the lives of people all over America—and has reformed systems that affect many more. There is so much more we can do. Homelessness remains at an all-time high, especially for families, children, and youth. The foreclosure crisis and recession affected many of us, but no one more than those who have lost their homes.

Let us not rest until homelessness is no more in America.



Sincerely,

**Maria Foscarinis**  
*Founder and Executive Director*

# A Message from the Chair of the Board of Directors

*Dear Friends of the Law Center:*

For the past eight years, it has been my privilege to serve on the Law Center's board of directors. With your support we have worked to change the lives of homeless and poor people.

While we have achieved much over the last year, we still have hundreds of thousands of people suffering through a slow economic recovery and continued foreclosures. More Americans are living in poverty than ever before. We know what works to end and prevent homelessness, but we need strong advocates to ensure our nation puts in place effective solutions that help those in need.

Now is the time to renew our common commitment to ensure no man, woman, or child is without a safe place to call home. I know that if we stand together, that goal is in reach.

Thank you for your generosity and support.



Sincerely,

**Vasiliki Tsaganos**  
*Chair*

# HOUSING

## Strengthening Rights & Building Resources



### Protecting Renters at Foreclosure

The Law Center was a primary advocate for the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act (PTFA), which gives renters the right to remain in their home through the end of their lease when an owner is foreclosed on. In 2011, the Law Center worked with Members of Congress on legislation to strengthen PTFA's protections and make the law permanent. We also forged partnerships with the National Association of Realtors and Bank of America to ensure their foreclosure notices make renters aware of their rights—preventing wrongful eviction and homelessness.

### Helping Homeless Service Providers Get Free Property

Since 1987, the Law Center has helped homeless service providers obtain federal surplus property, free of charge, through Title V of the McKinney-Vento Act. When the Administration and Members of Congress tried to dismantle Title V in 2011, the Law Center testified before both the House and Senate in support of this program that serves over 2.4 million homeless persons each year. We continue to protect this right, including advocating in federal court to hold the Administration accountable to its obligations under the law.

### Housing is a Human Right

After years of advocacy by the Law Center, the U.S. government finally acknowledged—for the first time in history—that homelessness implicates its human rights obligations. This message was further highlighted at the Law Center's National Forum on the Human Right to Housing. A highlight of the Forum was a panel, moderated by best-selling author Barbara Ehrenreich and broadcast on C-SPAN, on which formerly homeless persons shared their experiences.



# CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

## Protecting Rights & Futures

### Keeping Homeless Kids in School

With over one million children reported homeless by public schools, the need for the Law Center's work is greater than ever. In response, the Law Center launched Project LEARN, a cutting-edge pilot program with pro bono partner DLA Piper LLP. Over 50 DLA Piper attorneys across the country have been trained to help homeless families advocate for their children's right to remain in school and access vital support services under the McKinney-Vento Act.



"It was a stressful time for me, but hearing your voice on many, many occasions gave me hope. You and your associates were so gracious to me."

— *Grandmother of homeless child assisted through Project LEARN*

The Law Center also released *Beds and Buses*, a report showing that it may be more cost-effective to provide homeless families housing nearby a child's school than to transport that child over long distances to make their attendance possible. This solution gives families stable housing, eliminates the strain placed on children by long commutes, and helps schools save money while still meeting their obligations.



### Preventing Survivors From Becoming Homeless

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women. In 2011, the Law Center worked with HUD to improve the way the agency implements housing rights under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). These rights, for which the Law Center was a primary advocate when they were enacted, ensure survivors and their families are not forced to choose between becoming homeless and remaining with an abuser. We also worked with Senator Al Franken (D-MN) to draft a new VAWA bill that strengthens housing provisions and extends the law's protections to sexual assault survivors. The Law Center continues to push Congress to overcome partisan gridlock and reauthorize VAWA to protect poor and homeless women feeling domestic violence.

# CIVIL RIGHTS

## Protecting Basic Freedoms & Human Dignity



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**"If I can serve my country, I should be able to vote for who runs it. These laws are undemocratic and un-American."**

— Carl Ellis, *Homeless Veteran*

### Fighting Criminalization

The Law Center released *Criminalizing Crisis: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities*, which analyzed laws in 234 cities across the country. The report documents a disturbing trend: more and more communities are making it illegal to be homeless. The report explains the problem, assesses policy implications, gives advocates the tools to fight laws at the local level, and promotes constructive alternatives to address homelessness. *Criminalizing Crisis* continues to draw major national media attention to the problem of criminalization and proposed solutions.

The Law Center also prevented passage of laws banning homeless persons from public spaces in California and Maine, and worked with the D.C. Metropolitan Police to establish new guidelines that will prevent officers from giving "move on" orders or conducting property searches based solely on their housing status. And in the Law Center's litigation challenging a St. Petersburg "trespassing" ordinance banning homeless persons from public parks and bus stops, the 11th Circuit Court ruled that the law violates their constitutional rights to due process and free travel.

### Protecting the Right to Vote

In response to the pandemic of voter ID restrictions that could disenfranchise millions of homeless and poor persons, the Law Center filed suit against the state of Wisconsin, challenging its law on constitutional grounds. If successful, the lawsuit—filed in partnership with the ACLU, ACLU of Wisconsin, and Dechert LLP—will create a legal precedent that can be used to strike down other voter ID laws across the country.

### Civil Rights are Human Rights

In Sacramento, the Law Center drew attention to a homeless camp being denied access to clean water and sanitation—leading a United Nations human rights expert to condemn the City's policies as "cruel, inhuman[e], and degrading treatment." In response, the mayor and city council came to the table to discuss constructive solutions that restore homeless persons' rights.

# 2011 McKINNEY- VENTO AWARDS HONOREES



## Stewart B. McKinney Award



## Bruce F. Vento Award



Representative  
Barney Frank

## Pro Bono Counsel Award



## Personal Achievement Award

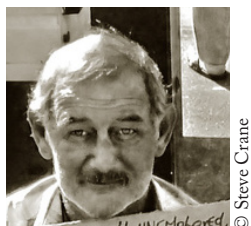


Rob Robinson



## Special Event: The Changing Face of Homelessness, with George Stephanopoulos

Since 2007, family homelessness has increased by 20 percent—a dramatic rise caused by the foreclosure crisis and recession. To draw attention to this crisis and promote solutions, the Law Center organized a special panel discussion moderated by ABC News' George Stephanopoulos. He was joined by Executive Director Maria Foscarinis; Dr. Kim Hopper, Columbia University professor and author of *Reckoning with Homelessness*; and Danae Vachata, a formerly homeless student and president of the Bell Fund. Goodwin Procter hosted the event in their New York office in the New York Times Building.



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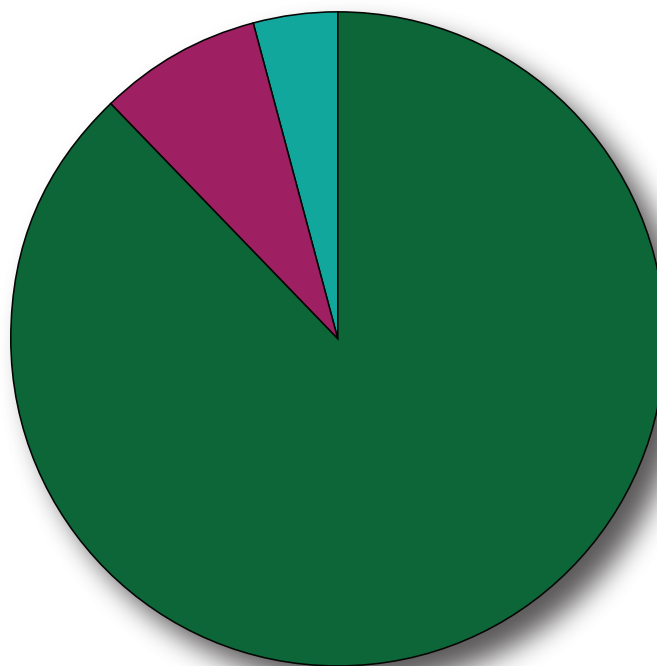
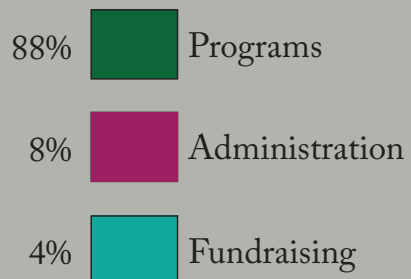
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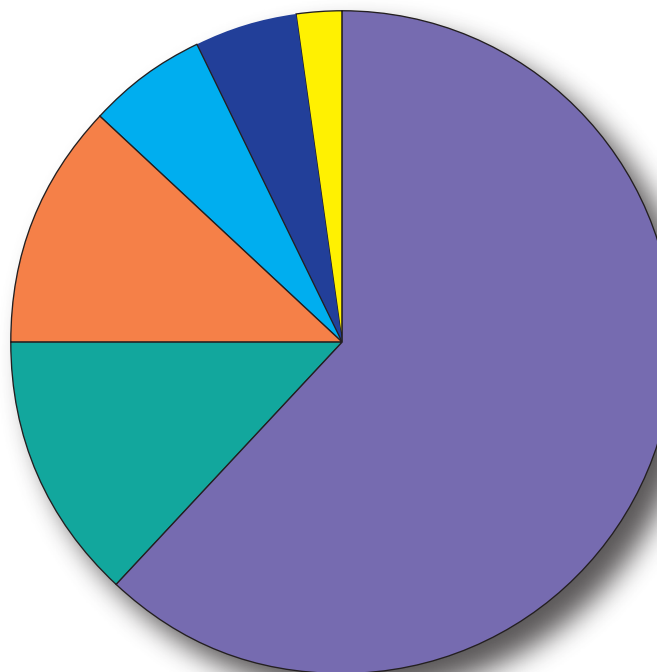
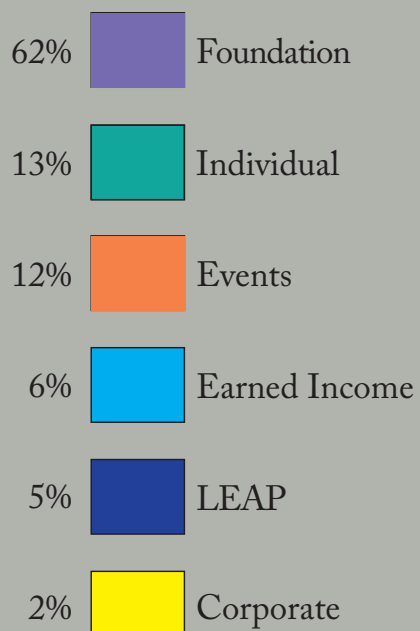
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## Expenses



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TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY



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**Blog | [www.homelessnesslaw.org](http://www.homelessnesslaw.org)**

The Homelessness Law blog offers unique commentary on the movement to end homelessness. We invite you to engage in this conversation by leaving your comments.

**Wiki | [wiki.nlchp.org](http://wiki.nlchp.org)**

Connect with fellow advocates, attorneys, and policymakers on the Law Center's Homelessness Wiki. This central, online tool promotes information-sharing among leading national and local advocacy groups.

**E-Newsletter**

In Just Times, the Law Center's monthly publication, provides brief updates on current issues. Email [aberes@nlchp.org](mailto:aberes@nlchp.org) to subscribe.



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