Leading the fight in California's courts, counties and capital.
On the cover: “People Coming” 10’ x 50’ mural, hand glazed ceramic tile. By Richard Wyatt, Jr.
Western Center leads the fight in the courts, counties and capital to secure housing, health care and a strong safety net for low-income Californians.
From the Director and Board Chairs

2013 was a landmark year for Western Center and our clients. After two years of intense planning, advocacy and “in the weeds” policy work, we celebrated the launch of the Affordable Care Act, which expanded health care coverage to 1.6 million low-income Californians and provided affordable health care to millions of other working households. This dramatic expansion in coverage represents a sea of change for the state. As we look forward, we are committed to solidifying and guaranteeing these wins and seeking creative solutions to expand coverage to those not reached by the Affordable Care Act.

On the public benefits front, for the first time in over a decade, our advocates successfully increased CalWORKs safety net grants for the state’s poorest households, over one million children and their parents. Equally astonishing, we secured victory after victory for many of the most vulnerable residents of the state, single men and women who are living on the streets or perched on the edge of homelessness. Nearly one dozen counties agreed to increase their General Relief/Assistance grants after litigation and negotiations with Western Center attorneys.

Western Center’s aggressive affordable housing agenda resulted in new protections for mobile home park households, public housing residents, and victims of domestic violence and trafficking. In the wake of the elimination of redevelopment, we renewed and reshaped our agenda aimed at securing a new source of funding to generate hundreds of millions of dollars for affordable housing.

Western Center opened a new Bay Area office, further strengthening our statewide efforts and we are pleased to report that our staff expanded to 32, including 19 attorneys and advocates.

On behalf of the board and staff of Western Center, we thank our colleagues, supporters and partners for helping make 2013 a momentous year. We eagerly look forward to joining with our current friends and new supporters as Western Center builds upon these victories in the coming years.

Paul Tepper, Executive Director
Western Center on Law & Poverty

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Board of Directors
Paul Hastings LLP

David Elson, Co-Chair
Board of Directors
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP
Western Center on Law & Poverty means impact!
We attain real-world, system-wide solutions on behalf of all low-income Californians through litigation, legislative and policy advocacy, and support for front line legal aid programs.
We are California’s oldest and largest legal services support center.

8.3 million people
BELOW 125% of POVERTY level

- 4.4 million Women
- 3.4 million Immigrants
- 2.8 million Children
- 2.8 million People below 50% of poverty level
- 1.1 million People with disabilities

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Sarah Palmer knows hard work – she’s been employed in the food industry since she was 13 years old. When she later became pregnant, Sarah realized her demanding job as a chef would not be enough to pay for childcare and health insurance. Sarah returned to school all the while working and being a good parent. The CalFresh benefits (food stamps) Sarah and her daughter were receiving as she finished school kept them from going hungry. But the overly complicated reporting requirements were time consuming and embarrassing. Sarah had to disclose her situation to her daughter’s daycare provider.

The Working Families Anti-Hunger Act of 2013, a bill co-sponsored by Western Center, became law in October 2013. Aimed at working parents like Ms. Palmer, it maximizes eligibility and enrollment in CalFresh, including simplifying the process to report childcare expenses and reducing the reporting burden.

On an average night in Fullerton, about 300 people call the sidewalks and benches their bed for the night. Despite this undeniable need, Fullerton City Council summarily rejected an agreement proposed by Orange County that would allow a shelter to operate at a vacant property.

When Curtis Gamble, a long-time community organizer and Navy veteran, heard about the proposed new shelter he quickly got involved attending meetings and hearings. Curtis, who lost his job and who has been homeless since 2009, talked about the need for respite from the streets, a place to store belongings, get medical attention, and help overcoming addictions. “When your family comes to visit you in a shelter, they can see you are not in a desperate situation. People treat you differently if they don’t realize you are living on the streets.”

Mr. Gamble, the Legal Aid Society of Orange County and Western Center filed a lawsuit on behalf of all people who are homeless in Fullerton.

“Thanks to this bill, other working parents won’t have to choose between disclosing their personal finances to their childcare providers and going without food.”

“It is a lot easier having legal representation... they treat you differently when you walk into the City Council meetings. It’s like having a big brother. The community sees this too, and it gives them hope.”

Sarah Palmer

Curtis Gamble
Edwin Davis

When Edwin Davis, a single dad of two, lost his full time job in 2011, he also lost his health insurance. His next job did not provide health benefits so Edwin looked for individual plans. Because he has a pre-existing condition, insurance companies either would not cover him or offered plans with premiums and deductibles completely out of reach.

Thanks to Covered California, Edwin and millions of others can get the health insurance they need without being penalized for their pre-existing conditions. “I’ve been waiting for this! It feels good to know I can afford to pay for decent health care and be healthy for my kids.”

Rev. Vic Jenkins

In 2009, Rev. Vic Jenkins called his daughter, Robin. She had been having very serious problems with her fiancé, who had recently been in jail, and Robin had obtained a domestic violence restraining order against him. But lately Robin had been thinking about letting her fiancé come back. It was impossible to pay the rent on her own and she could not terminate the lease. Robin felt she had no choice but to let him return to help out. Vic and her family had urged her to reconsider.

While Vic was talking to Robin, the unthinkable happened. After asking Vic to “stay on the phone”, Vic heard a scuffle and his daughter yelling “put that down!” It was followed by a bloodcurdling scream. Robin had been stabbed multiple times and was dead.

Rev. Jenkins turned his daughter’s death into a crusade to help other women escape violent situations. In committee hearings for SB 612 (Leno), a Western Center sponsored bill, Vic passionately explained why the bill could have saved his daughter’s life. The bill became law, making it possible for survivors of domestic violence and trafficking to terminate a lease for personal safety reasons.

“I was always scared I would get sick again and that I couldn’t pay the doctor’s bills. I worried about who would take care of my kids.”

“At a time when compassion and justice appears to be in short supply, and the balance between hope and despair seems to be out of kilter, I am heartened to know that there are those fighting the good fight and winning...I’m referring specifically to the Western Center on Law & Poverty.”
AREAS OF FOCUS

- Health Care Reform
- Coverage for the Uninsured
- County Indigent Health Care Program
- Mental Health Services
- Illegal Debt Collection
**Litigation**

- **Medical services preserved for 5,000 undocumented Fresno residents**
  - Sequoia v. Fresno County Board of Supervisors

  Western Center stopped Fresno County from immediately dissolving a 30 year-old injunction, which requires the County to provide health care services to all indigent persons, including those who are undocumented.

- **Medicare coverage reinstated and retroactive benefits paid to 1,434 low-income seniors and persons with disabilities whose coverage was terminated due to faulty computer systems**
  - Ledezma v. Shewry

  Western Center advocates celebrated the Governor’s signing of two Medi-Cal bills, which expand coverage to 1.6 million Californians and streamline the application process.

- **Automatic Medi-Cal eligibility for all children born to mothers receiving Medi-Cal**
  - Maternal and Child Health Access v. CA Department of Health Care Services

- **Adoption of an indigent health care program covering hundreds of Humboldt residents and agreement to provide coverage for many out-of-state incurred injuries**
  - Brown v. Crandall and McGrath v. County of Humboldt

**Legislation**

- **Affordable healthcare coverage for 1.6 million Californians**
  - ABX1 1 (Pérez)
  - SBX1 1 (Hernandez)

  After two years of intense education and policy work, Western Center advocates celebrated the Governor’s signing of two Medi-Cal bills, which expand coverage to 1.6 million Californians and streamline the application process.

- **Creation of a new Health Home program for frequent homeless users of emergency rooms and Medi-Cal beneficiaries who have chronic health conditions**
  - AB 361 (Mitchell)

- **Dental care for 3 million California adults**

- **Budget negotiations**

**Administrative Advocacy**

- **Health care for 5,000 Refugees from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Latin America and Burma**

  After negotiations, the state agreed not to disenroll 5,000 recently resettled refugees from the Refugee Medical Assistance Program nor require an English language paper application for other health care.

- **The successful transition of more than 635,000 California adults from the Low Income Health Program into Medi-Cal**

- **Emergency coverage for 12,000 indigent adults in rural counties**

- **Improved and streamlined joint Covered California/Medi-Cal application and appeals process for millions of low-income Californians**

**Support Center**

- **Regional Health Policy Summits**
- **Health Care Legislation Affecting Low-Income Consumers Reports**
- **Health Consumer Alliance Training Series**
- **Affordable Care Act Trainings**
- **Health Care for People Not Covered by the ACA Trainings**
- **Low Income Health Program Workgroup**
HOUSING Highlights

Litigation

Due process protections for hundreds of Upland residents
Jones v. Upland Housing Authority

After the federal court issued a mandatory preliminary injunction, the Upland Housing Authority agreed to change its housing policies for all Section 8 applicants to ensure constitutional due process protections.

Legislation

Protection for victims of domestic violence and trafficking
SB 612 (Leno)

Current law allows survivors of domestic violence to terminate a lease by providing documentation of abuse in the form of a police report or a court-issued protective order. SB 612 expands the accepted options for documentation of abuse and extends the law’s provisions to survivors of human trafficking.

Extension of time from 90 days to 3 years to challenge deficient local general plans
AB 325 (Alejo)

Increased protection for mobile home owners facing park closings
SB 510 (Jackson)

Administrative Advocacy

Rent reductions in Santa Monica

After a year of meetings, discussions, research, and drafting, advocates at Western Center and LAFLA successfully convinced the City Council of Santa Monica to lower rents by several hundred dollars from current levels for all future affordable units built in the city pursuant to the Affordable Housing Production Program.

Support Center

California Housing Policy Summit

Practicing Law Institute Eviction Defense Training and Course Handbook

Housing Practice Tips Series

Housing Task Force Training Series

Housing Bill of Rights

Foreclosure Training Series

Bed Bug Working Group

Western Center Housing Policy Summit

Navneet Grewal presenting a housing training

Brian Augusta at State Senate hearing
AREAS OF FOCUS

• Tenant Rights
• Affordable Housing Production
• Foreclosures
• Fair Housing
• Affordable Housing Preservation
AREAS OF FOCUS

- CalWORKs
- CalFresh
- SSI
- Foster Care
- Child Care
- Financial Empowerment
Litigation
New employment and training opportunities for 58,000 California families
Flores v. Lightbourne
Less than two weeks after the case was filed, the State agreed to make training and employment opportunities available to 58,000 CalWORKs families who had previously been barred from the services.
San Diego County's General Relief Program transformed on behalf of thousands of indigent adults

Legislation
A landmark increase in CalWORKs grants for 550,000 California families
Thanks to years of passionate and effective advocacy by Western Center and our allies, the California Legislature and the Governor agreed to start restoring the public benefits safety net by increasing CalWORKs grants by 5%.
Increased welfare benefits for unemployed and disabled veterans
SB 134 (Hueso)
AB 1094 (Brown)
New program protections for pregnant and breastfeeding women who are required to work as a condition of receiving CalWORKs
SB 252 (Liu)
Removed bureaucratic obstacles preventing working families with small children from receiving CalFresh
SB 672 (Leno)

New policies designed to increase CalFresh enrollment among homeless youth
AB 309 (Mitchell)
Overdraft fees banned and other protections secured for unemployment and safety-net benefits deposited onto prepaid debit cards
AB 1280 (Pérez)

Administrative Advocacy
General Assistance benefits increased by $40 per month for residents of 11 counties
In response to a demand letter from Western Center, 11 California counties agreed to increase benefits.
General Relief enrollment in Orange County increased by 500%
Six months of illegally denied aid restored to 4,000 Los Angeles CalWORKs households
Changes to policy to accurately recognize CalWORKs recipients’ previously uncounted welfare-to-work hours

Support Center
Practicing Law Institute Public Benefits Training and Course Handbook
Student & CalWORKs Know Your Rights Handbook and Training Series
CalWORKs and CalFresh Semiannual Report
Welfare Task Force Training Series
Benchmark Institute Public Benefits Training
California Poverty Briefings

Jessica Bartholow speaking about WIC benefits
**Access to Courts**

**Attorneys’ Fees for Legal Services**

**Consumer Protections for 2.5 Million Immigrants**

**AB 1159 (Gonzalez)**

This law makes it illegal for attorneys or consultants to demand payment from clients seeking immigration reform act services prior to the enactment of the law. It also bans the use of the term “notario” for non-lawyers.

**Legislation**

**Administrative Advocacy**

**E-Filing Tailored to Meet Needs of Low-Income Californians**

As part of an advocacy effort led by LAAC, Western Center and others successfully persuaded the Judicial Council Advisory Committee to adopt all of the advocates’ principal recommendations regarding implementation of e-filing in California Superior Courts, including not making e-filing mandatory.

Timely administrative hearings for thousands of California welfare applicants and recipients

**Support Center**

**Access to Courts Updates**

**Strategies and Procedures for Litigating Writ Petitions Training Series**

**Drafting Effective Settlement Agreements Training**

**Discovery, Declarations, and Expert Witnesses Trainings**

“Western Center advocates are some of the most diligent in the state, if not the country. Their breadth of knowledge and polished diplomacy demands respect and produces meaningful impact for the low-income Californians they represent.”

Will Lightbourne, Director of California Department of Social Services

**Support Center Services**

**Counties Where Cases Were Filed**

**2013 Litigation**

**ISSUE**

Health 12
Housing 23
Welfare 8
Access To Justice 2

**DEFENDANT**

Federal 0
State 19
County 10
City 14
Other 5

**COURT**

Federal 5
State 39

**LOCATION**

No. California 26
So. California 16
Central California 2

**ALAMEDA**

**FRESNO**

**HUMBOLDT**

**KERN**

**LOS ANGELES**

**ORANGE**

**SACRAMENTO**

**SAN BERNARDINO**

**SAN FRANCISCO**

**SAN JOAQUIN**

**SAN MATEO**

**SANTA CLARA**

**SOLANO**

**STANISLAUS**

**VENTURA**

**YOLO**

**2012 2013**

Brief Service 614 778
In Depth Assistance/Community Support 168 143
Conferences/Trainings/Workshops/Publications 49 138
Research 51 85
Advocacy 100 157
Short of Co-Counsel -- 131

Total Units of Service 1037 1432
Thank You to
Our Colleagues, Partners, and Supporters
San Diego General Relief Matter

This post demand letter settlement overhauled the county’s GR program for indigent adults, increased grants, reduced burdensome workfare requirements, increased the cash in hand threshold from $5 to $50 and made help available from the date of application.

“The mission of the Western Center is vital, the cases are high impact and interesting, their advocates are truly first-rate and great colleagues to work with. Our latest collaboration is directed at a critical shortage of affordable housing in the City of Fontana, and we are proud to assist in a case involving such an important issue.”

– Jeff Davidson, Kirkland & Ellis LLP

Macy v. Fontana Redevelopment Agency

This suit seeks to make the Agency repay its housing fund, stop diverting funds, build affordable housing, and remedy discrimination against minorities in need of housing.

“The mission of the Western Center is vital, the cases are high impact and interesting, their advocates are truly first-rate and great colleagues to work with. Our latest collaboration is directed at a critical shortage of affordable housing in the City of Fontana, and we are proud to assist in a case involving such an important issue.”

– Jeff Davidson, Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Venice Town Counsel v. City of Los Angeles

This suit resulted in an appellate victory and later a comprehensive settlement guaranteeing enforcement of the Mello Act, which preserves affordable housing in the Coastal Zone.

“McDermott Will & Emery was proud to assist Western Center on Law & Poverty in the negotiations relating to the Dogtown Station development in Venice. The Western Center's diligence and creativity in this matter was critical to ensuring that additional low and moderate income housing could actually be built.”

– Julian Andre, McDermott Will & Emery

Jones v. Upland Housing Authority

The Upland Housing Authority agreed to change its housing policies for all Section 8 applicants along with granting housing to the named plaintiffs.

“We were honored to work together with Western Center in providing legal services to clients who had spent up to nine years on the waiting list for the Section 8 housing program, only to have their application denied without an opportunity to object. Western Center's dedication to protecting civil rights is unending and, through our collective teamwork, we were able to secure housing vouchers for our clients and revisions to UHA's Section 8 application review process for the benefit of future applicants.”

– Amy Lally, Sidley Austin LLP
THANK YOU TO OUR TOP DONORS WHO HAVE INVESTED IN THE WORK OF WESTERN CENTER

FAIR SHAKE ROCK STARS
Amy Williams and Tiffany Ikeda

GARDEN PARTY

CONGRATULATIONS TO

FAIR SHAKE ROCK STARS
Amy Williams and Tiffany Ikeda

GARDEN PARTY

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The Nation.

Western Center was cited as one of “Ten groups that are laying the foundation for an economic justice revival” in the Nation Magazine’s February 3rd issue.

“Translating grassroots activism into legislative victories will require strong inside/outside partnerships at the local, state and federal levels. One group that has mastered this delicate dance is the Western Center on Law and Poverty in Sacramento, California...Follow this group to see how diverse coalitions get results at the state level.”

Our advocates and attorneys are the “go to” experts when it comes to housing, health care, public benefits and access to justice issues. Some of the media outlets that interviewed and cited our staff in 2013 were:

- TIME
- Pasadena Star-News
- San Francisco Chronicle
- abc7
- Le Monde
- The Herald
- KQED News
- Daily Journal
- The Fresno Bee
- Telemundo
- Tavis
- San Jose Mercury News
- Los Angeles Times
- Seattle Times
Western Center thanks Richard Wyatt Jr., who has very kindly allowed us to feature his amazing artwork on the cover of our 2014 Annual Report.

Mr. Wyatt has been a presence in the Los Angeles art scene since he was twelve years old when he created his prize-winning drawing at the Watts Chalk-In, a street art competition. His early art education included studies at the Watts Towers Art Center, Studio Watts Workshop, the Tutor Art Program/Otis Art Institute and a B.F.A. from UCLA. Mr. Wyatt has taught drawing and painting at UC Irvine, the Otis/Parsons Art Institute, and the Watts Towers Art Center. For more than 30 years, Mr. Wyatt has actively created art for public and corporate spaces with more than 30 murals to his credit and has also produced a significant body of smaller scale paintings and drawings that have been regularly exhibited in galleries and museums.