

WESTERN CENTER
ON LAW & POVERTY
LITIGATION DOCKET
March 17, 2025

Banda v. County of San Bernardino

Illegal barriers to receiving subsistence benefits

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
PUBLIC BENEFITS	County	State	Southern CA	San Bernardino	General Relief applicants in San Bernardino County

Summary | San Bernardino County has erected so many barriers to access its General Relief program that as of January 2020 there were fewer than 200 GR recipients in the county. This lawsuit challenges many of the illegal barriers.

Filed | 2019

Current Status | During the litigation, the County raised grants and took many of the actions demanded in the complaint. The parties have now settled, with the County agreeing to raise grants by more than 50% over the next five years. Fees have also been settled and paid, but the case remains open for monitoring.

Co-Counsel | Inland Counties Legal Services; Public Interest Law Project

Black Parallel School Board v. Sacramento City Unified School District

Segregating and punishing Black students with disabilities

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
ACCESS TO JUSTICE	Other	Federal	Northern CA	Sacramento	Black students and all students with disabilities in Sacramento

Summary | The Sacramento City Unified School District has effectively segregated students with disabilities, particularly Black students; and disproportionately punishes Black students, particularly those with disabilities. This violates state and federal law.

Filed | 2019

Current Status | Following three years of structured settlement negotiations, during which the District agreed to important changes, the case has been settled. Attorneys' fees were negotiated and paid, but significant monitoring will be required.

Co-Counsel | Equal Justice Society; National Center for Youth Law; Disability Rights California

Community Power Collective v. City of Los Angeles

Enforcement of state law protecting sidewalk vendors

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HEALTH	City	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Sidewalk vendors in LA and consumers
<i>Summary</i>	Western Center-sponsored legislation enacted in 2018 prohibited cities from outlawing sidewalk vendors except to the extent necessary to protect health and safety. The City of LA adopted an ordinance that prohibits vending in several areas without documenting a health or safety need for the prohibition.				
<i>Filed</i>	2022				
<i>Current Status</i>	Suit filed, then City demurred. The court overruled the demurrer in an order strongly suggesting that the City had acted illegally. Settlement has been reached on the merits. Attorneys' fees will be negotiated or litigated.				
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Public Counsel; Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP.				

Etter v. Board of Supervisors for L.A. County

Enforcement of County's obligation to provide medical services to indigent residents.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HEALTH	County	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Indigent LA County residents
<i>Summary</i>	This class action enforced the County's obligation under Welfare and Institutions Code section 17000 to provide medical care to indigent county residents commensurate with the person's ability to pay and to affirmatively advise patients of the availability of care based on ability to pay. In July 1987, judgment was entered pursuant to a stipulated consent decree between the parties regarding the county's Ability to Pay (ATP) program that, in part, required the County to provide notice to plaintiffs' counsel of proposed policy changes to ATP. The consent decree was modified by the parties in 2000 to create the Outpatient Reduced-Cost Simplified Application (ORSA).				
<i>Filed</i>	1985				
<i>Current Status</i>	Monitoring work ongoing.				
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Pre-1996, co-counsel had been NLS-LA (formerly San Fernando Valley Neighborhood Legal Services); LAFLA; ACLU and NHeLP. Dating back to at least 2011, WCLP has been the only remaining plaintiff's counsel engaged in monitoring the county's compliance with the permanent injunction.				

Foster v. Renovate America

Holding County accountable for program that stripped wealth from poor people

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	County Other	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Low-income homeowners

Summary | Alma Foster signed up for what was sold to her as a \$7,500 roof repair but ended up as a \$84,000 debt added to her property taxes as part of an ill-fated LA County program that was supposed to assist homeowners in making their homes energy efficient but often ended up in foreclosures. Ms. Foster sued the County and its contractors, then settled with the contractors.

Filed | 2019

Current Status | The Superior Court issued summary judgment for the County based on the court's interpretation of a government immunity statute. Western Center has associated in as co-counsel on an appeal, and briefing has been completed. Oral argument has been set for March 27, 2025.

Co-Counsel | Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County

LA Forward v. City of Los Angeles

Sabotage of affordable housing project

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	City	State	Southern CA	LA	Low-income people throughout LA

Summary | The LA City Council approved a large affordable and supportive housing project in Venice, but then a newly elected Councilmember and City Attorney began a campaign to thwart the project. The suit alleged the City has violated state fair housing laws and equal protection guarantees.

Filed | 2024

Current Status | After suit filed and discovery begun, City filed an anti-SLAPP motion, which the court denied.

Co-Counsel | Public Counsel, Strumwasser & Woocher.

Hunger Action Los Angeles v. County of Los Angeles

Suit to require county to timely provide emergency food aid

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
PUBLIC BENEFITS	County	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Very low-income applicants for emergency food aid in LA County

Summary | LA County is violating state law, which requires that emergency CalFresh (formerly food stamps) benefits be provided within three days for applicants who are extremely low

	income and resources or cannot meet their monthly housing expenses. During the Summer of 2021, more than half of all applicants were forced to wait beyond the three-day deadline for the County to provide benefits.
<i>Filed</i>	2021
<i>Current Status</i>	The County agreed to a stipulated permanent injunction. Plaintiffs later moved to enforce the injunction, and then the case settled both on merits and attorneys' fees. Monitoring ongoing.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County; Public Interest Law Project; Sidley Austin.

KPC Global Medical Center v. Chavez

Challenge to hospital's medical debt collection practices

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HEALTH	Other	State	Southern CA	Riverside	Low-income patients saddled with medical debt

<i>Summary</i>	KPC Global Medical Center is suing patients for unpaid hospital bills without attaching required information that the patients have been informed they can apply for financial assistance. The hospital sued Maria Chavez, a disabled caregiver for five children, and secured a default judgment. Ms. Chavez filed a motion to set aside the default judgment, arguing that KPC violated the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and the Hospital Fair Pricing Act.
<i>Filed</i>	2023
<i>Current Status</i>	KPC stipulated a court order setting aside the default judgment and has promised to dismiss the complaint. Meanwhile, issues concerning KPC's allegedly illegal practices remain to be litigated, and Ms. Chavez has filed an administrative complaint with the Department of Health Care Access and Information, challenging those practices.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Inland Counties Legal Services

Murray v. City and County of San Francisco

Denying full assistance to unhoused General Assistance recipients without notice or opportunity to be heard

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
PUBLIC BENEFITS HOUSING	County	State	Northern CA	San Francisco	Unhoused GA recipients in SF

<i>Summary</i>	San Francisco has set a maximum monthly General Assistance grant of \$687 but only pays \$105 to unhoused residents coupled with an offer of a shelter bed. Beneficiaries are not notified how the reduced grant was calculated and are not given an opportunity to explain at a hearing if disabilities prevent them from accepting certain shelter beds. This violates their due process rights.
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Filed 2023

<i>Current Status</i>	Suit filed and discovery ongoing, including motions to compel.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Bay Area Legal Aid

Padres Buscando el Cambio v. Harbor Regional Center

Challenge to racial discrimination in provision of regional center services

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HEALTH	Other, State	State	Southern CA	LA	Latinx families needing regional center services
<i>Summary</i>	Harbor Regional Center spends far less money on services for Latinx individuals with developmental disabilities than for white individuals and engages in discriminatory practices. This violates statutes prohibiting racial discrimination in the provision of government-funded services.				
<i>Filed</i>	2021				
<i>Current Status</i>	Plaintiff has settled with both Harbor Regional and the Department of Developmental Services, and stipulated judgments have now been entered. Attorneys' fees and costs issues remain.				
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Disability Rights California; Akin Gump; Public Counsel.				

Peoples Collective for Environmental Justice v. County of San Bernardino

Environmental and housing challenge to huge warehouse project in Latinx neighborhood

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	County	State	Southern CA	San Bernardino	Residents of San Bernardino County
<i>Summary</i>	San Bernardino County approved a 213-acre warehouse project in a mostly Latinx neighborhood already over-burdened with pollution and lack of affordable housing.				
<i>Filed</i>	2022				
<i>Current Status</i>	The court ruled that the County's Environmental Impact Report was deficient in several respects, and the County is planning to re-write. The court overruled the County's challenge to the cause of action alleging violation of the obligation to affirmatively further fair housing; and sustained with leave to amend the demurrer to the cause of action alleging discrimination based on disparate impact. Plaintiffs have amended their complaint and filed a new demurrer and motion for judgment on the pleadings.				
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Earth Justice; Center for Biological Diversity; Law Office of Abigail Smith.				

Rivera v. Douglas

Relief for Medi-Cal applicants caught in backlog

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HEALTH	State	State	Northern CA	Alameda	All Medi-Cal applicants

<i>Summary</i>	Hundreds of thousands of Medi-Cal applicants were caught in a backlog when this suit was filed, waiting weeks or months after the state law 45-day deadline to decide applications.
<i>Filed</i>	2014
	The backlog has been reduced and in response to the preliminary injunction motion State has adopted procedures providing services to many applicants pending application determinations.
<i>Current Status</i>	The trial court issued a writ on the main issues and entered judgment for petitioners. The Court of Appeal reversed on June 27, 2019, but the Supreme Court granted review on October 9. After briefing was completed, the Supreme Court, on July 8, issued an order transferring the matter back to the Court of Appeal considering the Department's concession on the two issues presented. A favorable settlement was reached, fees have been paid, and final judgment entered. The case will remain open for monitoring.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Bay Area Legal Aid; Central CA Legal Services; Multiform Advocacy Solutions; Neighborhood Legal Services; NHeLP

Rogel v. City of Lynwood

Affordable housing; attorneys' fee claim

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	City	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Low Income tenants in Lynwood

<i>Summary</i>	Plaintiffs won a major affordable housing settlement against the Lynwood Redevelopment Agency and then moved for attorneys' fees. The trial court (Los Angeles Superior Court) granted the motion, and then reduced the fees by 80%..
<i>Filed</i>	2010
<i>Current Status</i>	The Court of Appeal reversed in a published opinion and ultimately the parties settled. After further litigation, the Department of Finance agreed the fees could be paid. As payments are in multi-year installments, case will remain on Docket.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Public Interest Law Project; Public Counsel; Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher; O'Melveny & Myers

SAJE v. 5959 Franklin Bliss**Challenge to rent gouging during wildfire emergency**

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	Other	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Tenants in Southern California

Summary | Penal Code § 396 prohibits price increases greater than 10% during a declared emergency. Despite such an emergency following major wildfires, many landlords raised their rents more than 10%. This suit challenges rent increases from 25% to 50%.

Filed | 2025

Current Status | Suit filed.

Co-Counsel | Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

St. James v. Bills**Challenge to discrimination against Section 8 voucher holders**

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	Other	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Section 8 voucher holders in Santa Monica

Summary | A major Santa Monica landlord refuses to accept Section 8 vouchers, including from the plaintiff, a long-time resident. This policy violates the Fair Employment and Housing Act and a local ordinance.

Filed | 2020

Current Status | After plaintiff won summary adjudication, the court issued a permanent injunction prohibiting the landlord from discriminating against Section 8 voucher holders. The case has been tentatively settled.

Co-Counsel | Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Tesfai v. Department of Health Care Services**Challenge to policy restricting ability to obtain replacement prosthetics**

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HEALTH	State	State	Northern CA	Alameda	Denti-Cal Beneficiaries in Need of Teeth Prosthetics

Summary | Denti-Cal beneficiaries are statutorily entitled to replacement prosthetics “necessary to prevent a significant disability or to replace previously furnished prostheses that are lost or destroyed due to circumstances beyond the person's Control.” DHCS only permits replacement of lost prosthetics when there is a police or fire report even when, as in petitioner Daniel Tesfai’s case, replacement meets the statutory criteria.

Filed | 2022

<i>Current Status</i>	Mr. Tesfai filed suit seeking administrative mandamus for himself under Code of Civil Procedure § 1094.5 and traditional mandate under § 1085 to challenge the Department's policy. The Department decided to give Mr. Tesfai his prosthetics, mooting out the § 1094.5 claim, but the § 1085 litigation continued. The court overruled the Department's demurrer. Defendants secured federal approval of an amendment to their State Plan which resolved many of the issues in the case, and in March 2025 the court issued a judgment approving a final settlement. Fees and costs issues remain.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Bay Area Legal Aid

Venice Town Council v. City of Los Angeles

Affordable housing in Coastal Zone

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	City Other	State	Southern CA	Los Angeles	Low-income renters in California

<i>Summary</i>	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.
<i>Filed</i>	1995
<i>Current Status</i>	Plaintiffs' counsel negotiated a settlement which will require major development to include affordable housing, as required by the <i>Venice Town Council</i> settlement. Some monitoring continues.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles; McDermott, Will & Emory

Warren v. City of Chico

Challenge to ordinances criminalizing homelessness

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Court</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Who Benefits</u>
HOUSING	City	Federal	Northern CA	Butte	Unhoused people in Chico and elsewhere

<i>Summary</i>	Chico ordinances prohibit camping or sleeping in public places and require confiscation of property perceived as worth less than \$100. This conflicts with controlling Ninth Circuit precedent.
<i>Filed</i>	2021
<i>Current Status</i>	District court issued TRO, and later a preliminary injunction. Settlement was reached, including attorneys' fees, which have been paid. Issues arose over implementation, which have been litigated, mostly favorably. The City has filed a motion to strip the district court of jurisdiction following the U.S. Supreme Court <i>Grants Pass</i> decision.
<i>Co-Counsel</i>	Legal Services of Northern California