

# nclej

National Center for  
Law and Economic Justice

2014 -  
2015  
REPORT



**JOINING WITH LOW-INCOME  
PEOPLE TO FIGHT FOR FAIRNESS**

## Mission

Advancing the cause of economic justice for low-income families, individuals, and communities across the country.

## Values

Because NCLEJ's Board and staff believe that this nation should strive to ensure that no one lives in poverty or is denied basic human rights, we subscribe to the following values:

- Income Security:** Income security is a basic goal and fundamental defense against poverty.
- Access to Employment:** Low-income people should have full opportunity to participate in all forms of education, training, and services to help them secure and retain living wage jobs.
- Access to Health Care:** All low-income people should receive affordable, comprehensive, high-quality health care.
- Fair Treatment:** Fairness must be the foundation of government administration.
- Public Accountability:** Governmental decision-making and administration should be open, accessible, and responsive to constituents.
- Access to Justice:** Low-income people must have effective access to the justice system to challenge violations of their rights, secure effective relief, and gain greater public accountability.
- Fair and Safe Workplace:** All workers should be assured a safe workplace, a living wage, and full protection from discrimination.
- Community Action:** Community action and coalition building should be encouraged at the local, state, and national level as powerful strategies for social change.
- Civic Participation:** Low-income individuals and their communities should have a voice in shaping the public policies that affect their lives.



Jennifer M. Selendy

## From the CHAIR and EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Marc Cohan

We are pleased to share this report on the significant accomplishments of the National Center for Law and Economic Justice (NCLEJ) in 2014 and 2015.

In 2015, NCLEJ celebrated its 50th anniversary. Honoring that legacy, NCLEJ's skilled attorneys continue to work collaboratively with low-income people and their advocates across the country. We have made important progress on a wide range of issues facing those in need, using a combination of groundbreaking litigation, policy advocacy, and support for community organizing. Key accomplishments have included:

- fighting in court to protect access to food stamps so that families and individuals across the country do not go hungry;
- advocating for fair pay, safe working conditions, freedom from discrimination, access to workers compensation, and prevention of wage theft for low-wage workers;
- ensuring that low-income New Yorkers who are blind or visually impaired can get information about food stamps and Medicaid in formats they can use;
- enforcing Americans with Disabilities Act protections for residents of public housing suffering from asthma, which is exacerbated by unaddressed moisture and mold in their homes;
- combatting abusive debt collection practices that target low-income people; and
- increasing access to needed health care and child care.

These efforts reflect NCLEJ's unyielding commitment to its core mission – increasing hope, opportunity, and dignity for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. As we look to the future, NCLEJ staff will continue to use their legal skills with imagination and tenacity, joining with low-income people nationwide to fight for fairness for those in need.

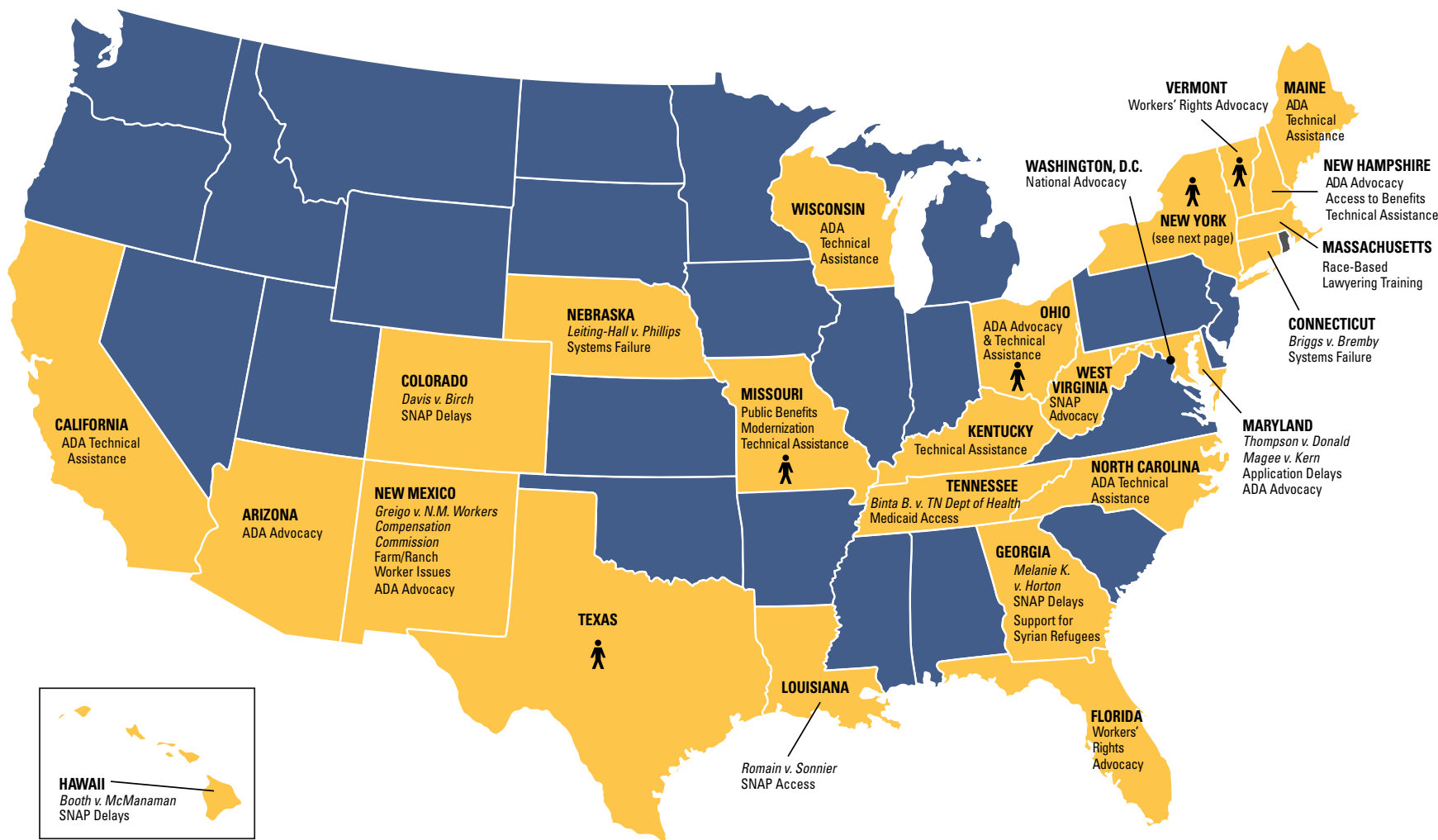
Thank you to everyone who has made this vital work possible: our generous financial supporters, an extraordinarily dedicated staff, a committed Board of Directors, law firms that have provided invaluable pro bono assistance, our fellow public interest and legal services advocates, and our dinner honorees and sponsors. Many are listed in this report, and we thank them all.

With gratitude,

Jennifer M. Selendy  
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# National Advocacy Reaches 25 States

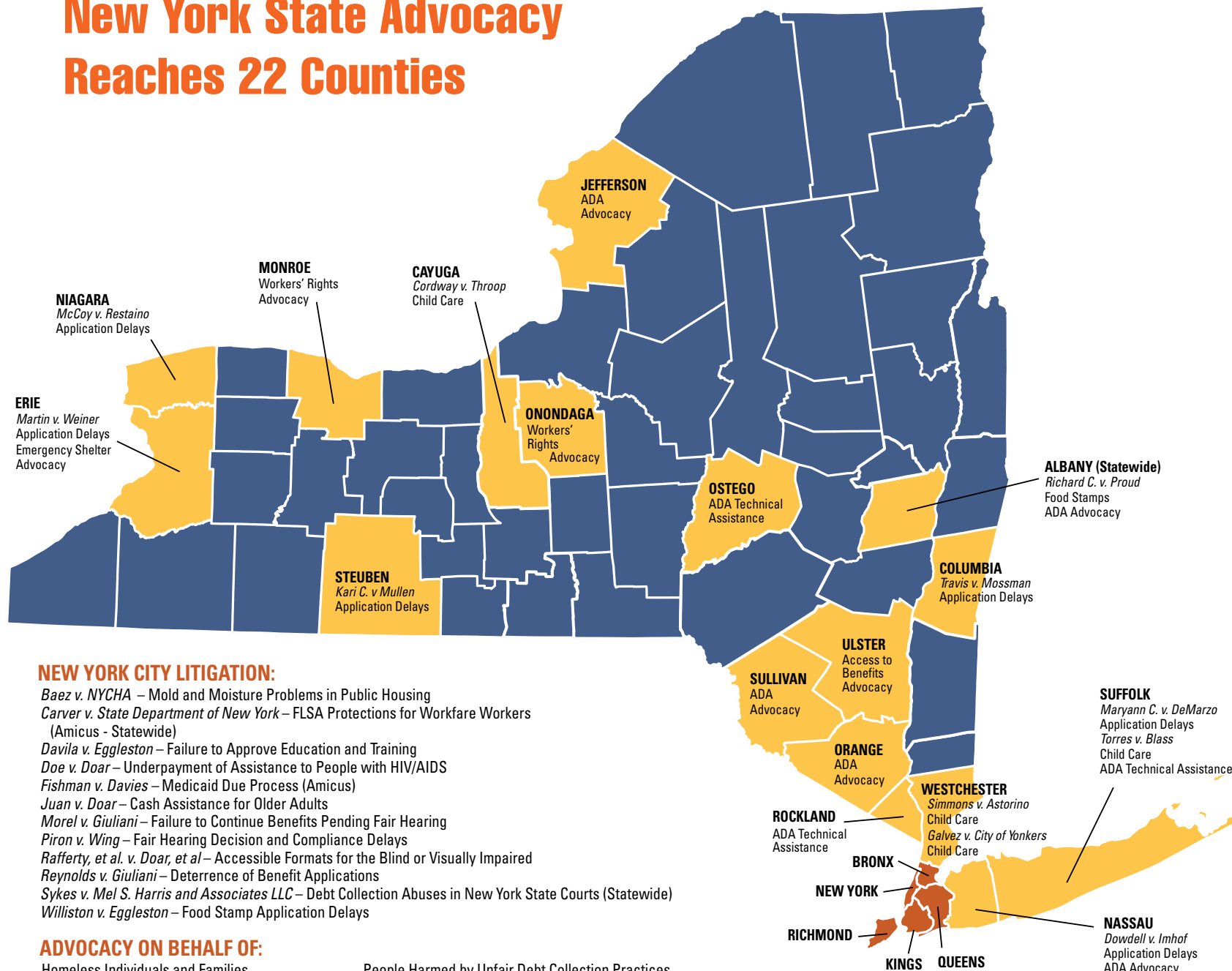


– Board advocate working in this state

## Nationally:

- Louisiana restored \$4.3 million in lost food stamps to more than 24,000 low-income adults without dependents** effective January 2016. NCLEJ and the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice had filed suit to challenge an unlawful new policy that cut food stamps to this population. The new Governor credited the lawsuit as driving the decision to restore assistance.
- In Georgia, we challenged a system-wide failure to process food stamp applications and renewals. Thanks to our class-action lawsuit, *Melanie K. v. Horton*, **nearly 48,000 low-income Georgia families who were wrongly deprived of food stamps are benefitting from a \$22 million settlement.**
- Low-wage workers nationwide face systemic violations of their most basic rights. We are collaborating with **worker centers and other organizations to combat widespread wage theft, discrimination, dangerous working conditions, and lack of access to workers' compensation.**

# New York State Advocacy Reaches 22 Counties



## NEW YORK CITY LITIGATION:

- Baez v. NYCHA* – Mold and Moisture Problems in Public Housing
- Carver v. State Department of New York* – FLSA Protections for Workfare Workers (Amicus - Statewide)
- Davila v. Eggleston* – Failure to Approve Education and Training
- Doe v. Doar* – Underpayment of Assistance to People with HIV/AIDS
- Fishman v. Davies* – Medicaid Due Process (Amicus)
- Juan v. Doar* – Cash Assistance for Older Adults
- Morel v. Giuliani* – Failure to Continue Benefits Pending Fair Hearing
- Piron v. Wing* – Fair Hearing Decision and Compliance Delays
- Rafferty, et al. v. Doar, et al* – Accessible Formats for the Blind or Visually Impaired
- Reynolds v. Giuliani* – Deterrence of Benefit Applications
- Sykes v. Mel S. Harris and Associates LLC* – Debt Collection Abuses in New York State Courts (Statewide)
- Williston v. Eggleston* – Food Stamp Application Delays

## ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF:

- Homeless Individuals and Families
- Low-Income People with Disabilities
- Low-Wage Workers, including Pregnant Workers
- Parents in Need of Child Care
- People Harmed by Unfair Debt Collection Practices
- People in Need of Public Benefits
- Tenants of Public Housing

## In New York:

- In *Rafferty v. Doar*, we secured the right for food stamp and Medicaid applicants and recipients who are blind or seriously visually impaired to receive notices, forms, and other written communications in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print, and audiotape.
- In collaboration with the New Economy Project, NCLEJ staff helped to secure a \$59 million settlement benefitting more than 350,000 people in *Sykes v. Mel S. Harris & Associates*, a federal class action challenging widespread abusive consumer debt collection practices in NY State courts.
- New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) tenants with asthma will breathe easier as a result of a settlement approved by the court in *Baez v. NYCHA*, filed by NCLEJ and Natural Resources Defense Council. A special master was appointed to help oversee NYCHA's remediation of mold and excess moisture in its apartments.

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## Financial Information

	2014	2015
<b>Public Support and Revenue</b>		
Public Support		
Contributions – unrestricted	\$ 290,182	\$ 193,719
Dodyk Fellowship Support	4,200	32,650
The Freedman Fund for Due Process	317,359	8,642
Grants	371,500	383,567
Special Events, net of direct costs	851,246	647,733
Donated Services	<u>171,450</u>	<u>97,270</u>
Total Public Support	2,005,937	1,363,581
Revenue		
Attorney Fees	458,195	736,592
Interest and other	<u>6,357</u>	<u>3,564</u>
Total Revenue	464,552	740,156
Total Public Support and Revenue	2,470,489	2,103,737
<b>Expenses</b>		
Program Services	1,440,774	1,527,147
Management and General	283,941	259,286
Fundraising	<u>241,355</u>	<u>318,050</u>
Total Expenses	1,966,070	2,104,483
Increase (decrease) in net assets	504,419	(746)
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>1,779,641</u>	2,284,060
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$2,284,060</u>	<u>\$2,283,314</u>

Full report may be viewed on NCLEJ's website ([www.nclej.org](http://www.nclej.org)) or by request from the State of New York, Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

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