Mission Values

The National Center for Law and Economic Justice advances the cause of economic justice for low-income families, individuals, and communities across the country. Because the National Center for Law and Economic Justice believes that this nation should strive to ensure that no one lives in poverty, it subscribes to the following values:

Income Security: Income security is a basic right 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.

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 community building should be encouraged at the local, state, and national levels 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.

Forty Years of Making a Difference

The National Center for Law and Economic Justice was founded 40 years ago to harness the law as a powerful instrument for improving the lives of those at the bottom of the economic ladder. Edward Sparer, the Center’s founder, made the Center a part of the civil rights movement, in which lawyers worked directly with local communities to bring about social change.

From the very start, the Center joined forces with southern civil rights lawyers and community-based reformers, winning groundbreaking victories in the Supreme Court, advocating for fair and humane treatment of low-income persons, and working to empower grassroots groups to participate in policy debates. Our landmark victories in the Supreme Court created important rights:

- Goldberg v. Kelly established the due process right to notice and an opportunity for fair hearing before aid is cut off.
- King v. Smith barred states from denying welfare benefits to families eligible under prior federal welfare law;
- Califano v. Westcott struck down sex discrimination in welfare to work.
- Golding v. Kelly established the due process right to notice and an opportunity for fair hearing before aid is cut off.
- King v. Smith barred states from denying welfare benefits to families eligible under prior federal welfare law.
- Califano v. Westcott struck down sex discrimination in welfare to work.
- We deeper our engagement with grassroots groups through novel technology programs that help strengthen their ability to participate effectively in public policy debates and expand their electoral outreach.

As a result of our focus on families who need a helping hand, we have been able to make benefit programs more humane, and have put the focus back on families who need a helping hand.

We increasingly used the law to assure that eligible people received vital benefits such as Food Stamps, Medicare, and child care benefits as core cash assistance to public benefits programs.

We transformed welfare-to-work programs so that basic education, skills training, and higher education are routinely offered to those who will benefit from them.

We protected low-wage workers as they became our focus back on families who need a helping hand.

We deepened our engagement with grassroots groups through novel technology programs that help strengthen their ability to participate effectively in public policy debates and expand their electoral outreach.

We have always been—and will continue to be—to truly better the lives of low-income people. We are proud that we have been able to make benefit programs more humane, and have put the focus back on families who need a helping hand.
Letter from Executive Director

OUR PROUD OLD NAME—WELFARE LAW CENTER—HAS GROWN TOO NARROW and restrictive. We are addressing many more issues all over the country—as this report makes so clear. “Welfare” just does not convey the range of work on health care, work supports, employee protections, and income supports that are at the core of our program. “Welfare” no longer adequately describes our historic mission: to advance the cause of economic justice for low-income families, individuals, and communities across the country.


I am proud that the Center has done its job so well over the three years set out in this report—and the 37 years before.

Unfortunately, the challenges are growing, as our society retreats from the social compact that should bind us together, a compact to assure the dignity and economic security of every individual in America. At this critical moment, the Center must continue to do all it can to assure that everyone in our country will have a fair chance of living the American Dream.

We are determined to build on the successes of the last 40 years, extend our recent victories into more states and programs, and address the many more issues all over the country.

We are confident that we can continue to make a difference, because of the generous support of an increasing number of donors, the growing involvement of our dedicated Board, the incredible creativity and determination of our staff, and the cooperation of colleagues in law firms, public interest offices, and grassroot groups across the country.

Henry A. Freedman
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Letter from Board Chair

I am enormously grateful to all of you. All of us at the National Center for Law and Economic Justice look forward to your continued partnership with us, with the individuals and families we serve across the country, for many years ahead.

I am grateful for our dedicated Board of Directors—an extraordinary group of lawyers, business leaders, prominent legal scholars, and leaders of community-based organizations—all strongly committed to the Center’s work.

The Center has enlisted pro bono private counsel to play critical roles in complex litigation, and private lawyers have sought out the Center for its expertise. In the past three years we have partnered with local firms in Austin, Texas and Denver, Colorado, several major national firms in New York City, and a solo practitioner in Jefferson City, Missouri. I appreciate the commitment and compassion of these private lawyers working for the public good. Reflecting on the past 40 years, I am struck by the consistently high quality of our exceptionally talented staff. I am grateful for our dedicated Board of Directors—an extraordinary group of lawyers, business leaders, prominent legal scholars, and leaders of community-based organizations—all strongly committed to the Center’s work.

With your continued support, we will mark the coming years as we have marked each of the last 40 years: with an unflagging dedication to using the law to change the way our nation confronts poverty, so that low-income families are given a real opportunity to move out of poverty.

Paul M. Dodyk
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thank you all so much again for all you did during this terrible year to help us and try to protect our clients. You all were better than great. We can never thank you enough. We were able to turn over to the Center responsibility for briefing the critical legal issues in which you specialize, knowing that our legal arguments were being written by, literally, the foremost experts in the countries in laws and regulations relating to income security programs. We could also be confident that the Center not only brought to the task its knowledge and expertise but sophisticated strategic judgment as well. Being able to hand over to [your staff] important components of each trial, with the absolute assurance that they would be handled well, was an enormous help.

GORDON BONNFYMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TENNESSEE JUSTICE CENTER
“Thanks for your great work! You provided critical, time-urgent assistance that was essential to our successful lawsuit compelling New Hampshire to abide by the federal Medicaid law—so that more than 60,000 low-income children in our state would not lose vital health care coverage. The compassion and dedication of your attorneys, the success of your financiers, and the expertise in federal Medicaid and welfare law to help shape the legal arguments that persuaded the state to mount a robust defense were absolutely essential to our victory.”

R. SCOTT MCCOMIN, A RETIRED STATE DISTRICT JUDGE WHO NOW SERVES AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES, A RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY GROUP WORKING ON LOW-INCOME ISSUES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

THE CENTER'S AMBITIOUS CLASS-ACTION litigation program combines creative legal strategies with comprehensive policy development to convince courts to order states to stop cutting vital health care in violation of federal law and provide basic support for families and individuals living in poverty. All too often, these hard-working families and individuals violate state policies and practices in order to stay eligible for assistance. Our victories demonstrate that states will violate due process and other state laws requiring public officials to help eligible people to apply for benefits, and obtain, and obey, legal rights. (Reynolds v. Gulani)

Effectively Challenged Computer Failures in Colorado to Reverse a Mass Disenrollment of Children

We helped win an appealing preliminary injunction in a three-day trial, which followed a lengthy delay, and secured a settlement that the City had a consistent pattern of failing to provide dental care to children, as required by federal Medicaid and welfare law. Following a three-day trial, we convinced the court that it was City policy to systematically deter and discourage people from applying for benefits and to systematically violate the consistent pattern or failing to provide expected Food Stamps to the hungry. The court ruled that these policies and practices were violations of federal law and state laws requiring public officials to help eligible people to apply for benefits, and obtain, and obey, legal rights. (Rothstein-Baer v. Reynolds)

Preserving Critical Health Care Coverage

The Center has used effective court challenges to reverse state laws requiring public officials to help eligible people apply for benefits, and obtain, and obey, legal rights. (Brancatelli v. Berns; Williston v. Eggertson)

We work throughout the country to achieve our goals with a combination of on-the-ground litigation, policy advocacy, and support for grassroots organizing. This report demonstrates the effectiveness of the Center’s distinctive strategy.

The National Center for Law and Economic Justice is a society in which low-income people can gain access to all of the vital public benefits and services for which they are eligible. When current laws and programs practices are not sufficient, we work diligently for effective reforms throughout the country to achieve our goals with a combination of on-the-ground litigation, policy advocacy, and support for grassroots organizing. This report demonstrates the effectiveness of the Center’s distinctive strategy.

In case after case, the Center's aggressive litigation has taken on the federal and state agencies responsible for welfare and health care programs that exist in the states to protect the rights of the nation's most vulnerable families. The Center's litigation is the most effective way to advance the cause of economic justice and improve the quality of life for all Americans. The Center's success in this regard is due to the hard work of our clients, our dedicated staff, and our wonderful board of directors.

The National Center for Law and Economic Justice was founded in 1985 to fight to provide health care coverage to low-income families. We continue to pursue this vision by employing the combination of creative legal strategies with comprehensive policy development to convince courts to order states to stop cutting vital health care in violation of federal law and provide basic support for families and individuals living in poverty. All too often, these hard-working families and individuals violate state policies and practices in order to stay eligible for assistance. Our victories demonstrate that states will violate due process and other state laws requiring public officials to help eligible people to apply for benefits, and obtain, and obey, legal rights. (Reynolds v. Gulani)

We successfully challenged state laws that required public officials to help eligible people apply for benefits, and obtain, and obey, legal rights. (Rothstein-Baer v. Reynolds)

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MORE THAN 20 PERCENT OF WELFARE RECIPIENTS suffer from psychiatric disabilities, and an untold number have physical disabilities. Yet many state and local welfare programs fail to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandate to provide reasonable accommodations to these persons and make sure that they receive the benefits and services they need — and are legally entitled to. The National Center for Law and Economic Justice has been a national leader in using the ADA to improve welfare programs and services for those with disabilities.

Exposed New York City’s Failure to Implement Its Own Home Visit Policy

In a precedent setting case, a federal appeals court ruled that Title VII Harassment in the Workplace in New York and New Jersey. The Virginia Department of Social Services sought out our expertise and fully involved us in its development of an ADA policy for its welfare programs. Our contributions resulted in a strong new policy that will make it easier for those with disabilities to get and keep benefits.

We provided extensive consultation and advice to the New Jersey Department of Human Services that resulted in a comprehensive ADA policy for the state’s welfare programs. We then trained 350 local agency staff on the policy.

Promoted Access to Benefits for Persons with Disabilities

We are challenging the California Food Stamp agency’s failure to translate Food Stamp materials into non-English languages, so those with limited English proficiency. We published the most substantive and comprehensive guide for welfare advocates, Using the ADA to Protect the Rights of People with Disabilities in TANF Programs: A Manual for Non-Litigation Advocacy. The manual significantly expands advocates’ understanding of the ADA and encourages advocacy on behalf of those with disabilities.

Enforcing the Civil Rights of Low-Income People

POVERTY IS A BITTER ENOUGH BREED. DISCRIMINATION MAKES IT EVEN WORSE. The Center means that our nation’s civil rights laws must protect low-income people seeking or receiving public benefits. Our strategies to protect the civil rights of, and challenge discrimination against, low-income persons, include far-ranging class action litigation, negotiation of improved agency policies, and the investigation and exposure of systemic failures of public benefit programs.

Protected Women from Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in New York

Enforcing civil rights laws that require translation and interpretation is critical toward ensuring the health and well-being of the growing number of our nation’s non-English speaking population. We played a pivotal role in getting the Arizona state agency to comply with its translation of public benefits forms into Spanish and to implement a detailed action plan improving program access for those with limited English proficiency.

We are challenging the California Food Stamp agency’s failure to translate Food Stamp materials into non-English languages, so those with limited English proficiency can have better access to this vital nutrition program. (Su v. Mitchell)

Enforcing the Civil Rights of Low-Income People

We have been a national leader in using the ADA to improve welfare programs and services for those with disabilities.

Promoted Access to Benefits for Families with Limited English Proficiency in Arizona and California

Enforcing civil rights laws that require translation and interpretation is critical toward ensuring the health and well-being of the growing number of our nation’s non-English speaking population. We played a pivotal role in getting the Arizona state agency to comply with its translation of public benefits forms into Spanish and to implement a detailed action plan improving program access for those with limited English proficiency.

We are challenging the California Food Stamp agency’s failure to translate Food Stamp materials into non-English languages, so those with limited English proficiency can have better access to this vital nutrition program. (Su v. Mitchell)

Promoted Access to Public Benefits for Persons with Disabilities

We have been a national leader in using the ADA to improve welfare programs and services for those with disabilities.

Responded to the Virginia Department of Social Services’ Decision to Require Home Visits for People with Disabilities in New York City’s Welfare System

We provided extensive consultation and advice to the New Jersey Department of Human Services that resulted in a comprehensive ADA policy for the state’s welfare programs. We then trained 350 local agency staff on the policy.

Promoted Reforms in New York City’s $200 Million Program for Services to Persons with Disabilities

After New York City announced that it would spend $200 million to hire private contractors to serve more than 135,000 welfare recipients with disabilities over three years, we discovered the City was not complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandate to provide reasonable accommodations to these persons and make sure that they receive the benefits and services they need — and are legally entitled to. The National Center for Law and Economic Justice has been a national leader in using the ADA to improve welfare programs and services for those with disabilities.

Promoted Reforms in New York City’s $200 Million Program for Services to Persons with Disabilities

We provided comprehensive guidance to advocates on Using the ADA.

We have been a national leader in using the ADA to improve welfare programs and services for those with disabilities.
We published Lost in the Maze: Revisiting CARS and Reimagining Justice, persuaded the New York City Council to expand the right to education and training to all persons on public assistance, not just those with children. This important break-through extends the opportunity to secure critical skills to a wider group of low-income families.

Promoted Child Care for Working Parents

As advocates for improved child care for low-income families we were involved in a variety of reform efforts to address the problems caused by byzantine, woefully inadequate child care systems, and to work towards securing the opportunity to secure critical skills to a wider group of low-income families

Promoting Employment by Ensuring Education, Training, and Child Care

OUR INTERNATIONALLY ACCREDITED LOW INCOME NETWORK and a case study on this initiative, and then deployed OSS in a successful and innovative pilot project, we adapted free Open Source Software (OSS) technology-assistance providers fighting for social justice.

Delivered Hands-On Technology Assistance

We created and widely distributed practical, user-friendly training and education materials, organized policy conferences, and forged promising alliances in Texas, New York, Illinois, California, and Alabama. In New York, we hosted dozens of in-state and six national and regional coalitions, including those focusing on immigrants’ rights, workers’ rights, and housing rights for people with AIDS.

LINC: Empowering Low-Income Groups Through Technology

Our Circuit Riders were able to identify each group’s needs, and then tailor our services to fit. We then trained additional Circuit Riders in our methods of technology and advocacy work, whether their need was for basic email and internet access or for making more effective use of data bases in their organizing efforts, including voter registration and voter-fraud campaigns. Groups used technology as the backbone of campaigns to improve welfare recipients’ access to education and training, to fight for protections for domestic violence victims, and to directly stake speaking to low-income programs.

Led the Way with Innovative Technology Applications

LINC Circuit Riders diagrammed the opportunity to use OSS to access data from the Board of Elections datasets so that we could turn it into a format that we were able to use in outreach to voters in low-income communities. The success of our civic engagement project was greatly enhanced by the support of General Motors.

"Without the ongoing assistance from the LINC Project over the last 5 years, we would neither have reached the technological capacity that we have nor would we have so effectively integrated technology into our organizational culture. Our organization’s supporters and clients have been critical to our being able to contact 4,500 voters over the past 5 years. LINC set up a server for us to use to access data from the Board of Elections datasets so that we could turn it into a format that we were able to use in outreach to voters in low-income communities. The success of our civic engagement project was greatly enhanced by the support of General Motors.

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# Financial Information 2004

## Assets and Liabilities

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<td>Net assets</td>
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## Support and Revenue

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## Expenses

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Full report may be obtained by request from State of New York, Office of the Attorney General, Charles Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.