



Seeking Candidates to Sponsor in 2019 for Fellowships in 2020

In light of the Trump administration's threats to social safety net programs, civil rights, and the rights of immigrants, low-wage workers and their communities, the work of the National Center for Law and Economic Justice is more important than ever. NCLEJ seeks energetic, motivated candidates with a record of commitment to social justice, experience in developing and implementing projects, and excellent writing, legal research and communication skills, to apply for fellowships that would start in September 2020.

NCLEJ has already completed our selection process for EJW and Skadden candidates for this funding cycle.

NCLEJ advances the cause of economic justice for low-income families, individuals, and communities across the country, using ground-breaking, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and support for grassroots organizing. Because poverty disproportionately impacts communities of color and families headed by women, the Center applies this strategy to advance racial, immigrant, and gender justice. Our current advocacy is focused on 1) preserving and maintaining access to government benefits; 2) protecting and securing the rights of low-wage workers; 3) combatting unlawful debt collection; and 4) advocating for persons with disabilities. For more information, see our website and this video about our work: <http://nclej.org/news/nclej-debuts-new-video-at-annual-awards-dinner>.

NCLEJ welcomes applications describing possible projects that fit within NCLEJ's mission and areas of work, as well as applications from individuals who have not yet formulated a project. Projects can be national or regional in scope, or focused on the New York City area, and can include impact litigation, legal and policy advocacy, training, and community education. We will work with selected applicants to develop a project in an area of emerging work, such as:

- 1. Protecting the Rights of Women in Low-Wage Jobs.** While society is experiencing a reckoning regarding the harassment and discrimination faced by women at work, knowledge of the problem has yet to translate to concrete solutions. Current legal protections are often insufficient to protect women working low-wage jobs. Tipped workers, who are disproportionately women, face pervasive wage theft and sexual harassment. Care work is undervalued, and care workers are deprived of fair pay, often with the explicit approval of government agencies meant to protect workers. Potential projects include fighting for equal pay by using the law to combat pregnancy discrimination, litigation and policy reform in collaboration with upstate or New York City-based worker centers, and a multi-pronged advocacy approach at the national level.
- 2. Challenging Unconstitutional Collection of Criminal Justice Debt.** Over the last decade, many states have imposed onerous "user fees" on people who have criminal convictions, seeking to balance state budgets on the backs of the indigent defendants processed through the system. As a result, many people with criminal convictions emerge from court owing thousands of dollars in fines and fees on top of their sentences. People who are too poor to pay are punished with jail time, extended probation, and the deprivation of their driver's licenses. The Fellow would work with partner organizations around the country to address these problems using a variety of tools including litigation and policy advocacy.

3. Protecting Access to Health Care under Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). One in five Americans and one in three of the nation’s children are insured by Medicaid or CHIP. Despite recent gains in health care coverage through the expansion of Medicaid in many states throughout the country, the Trump administration and various states are beginning to implement policy changes intended to reduce access to vital health care services through these programs. The Fellow would develop a project addressing systemic barriers to medically necessary services caused by these forthcoming developments, and in partnership with local advocacy organizations in one or more states, use a combination of individual assistance, impact litigation, and policy work to help increase and protect health care access.

4. Fighting for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Persons with disabilities are frequently discriminated against and denied access to Food Stamps, Medicaid, and other public benefits. Projects could address issues related to disability-based discrimination: the right to counsel in administrative hearings as a reasonable accommodation for persons with mental impairments; refusal to provide interpreters for persons who are deaf; ensuring adequate access to personal care services for persons with disabilities living at home, to prevent their institutionalization; and ensuring that persons with disabilities are provided meaningful access to public benefits, including Food Stamps, Medicaid, housing, disaster relief, and cash assistance.

5. Defending the Rights of Immigrants. From aggressive enforcement tactics to overturning the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, the Trump Administration is attacking immigrant communities, including targeting activists and leaders. NCLEJ’s existing work defending low-wage immigrant workers’ right to organize, educating organizations and community members, and preserving access to critical safety net programs has become increasingly important. The Fellow would design a project that protects the rights of low-income immigrant communities through strategic litigation, support for community-based organization, community education, and policy advocacy.

6. Protecting Families’ Access to Safety Net Programs. Various initiatives by the Trump Administration and state agencies threaten families’ access to critical safety net programs, including SNAP (food stamps), Medicaid, and cash assistance. These threats include tighter work requirements that unfairly end benefits for vulnerable people who cannot comply, drug testing, procedural hurdles, and other eligibility restrictions. Working with partners in various states, the Fellow would develop and implement advocacy strategies to protect families’ access to these essential benefits.

NCLEJ is an equal opportunity employer and will not discriminate because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, predisposing genetic characteristics, marital or family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other consideration prohibited by law. Persons who are of color, are former recipients of public assistance, or have grown up in poverty are especially encouraged to apply.

The current scale calls for a law graduate to receive \$62,400. Generous benefits.

NCLEJ has already completed our selection process for EJW and Skadden candidates for this funding cycle, but we welcome applications from candidates who plan to apply for other funding sources.

Please submit (1) a cover letter setting out why you believe you would be a good candidate for such a fellowship, and your ideas about what you would hope to accomplish in such a fellowship, (2) a resume, (3) a writing sample, and (4) three references. Send these materials by e-mail to fellowship@nclej.org. Your application will be acknowledged by e-mail.