

# JUSTICE VOICE POWER



20  
Annual Report  
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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.







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**Western Center on Law and Poverty** fights for justice for low-income Californians by improving and transforming the public policy systems that touch their lives.

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We focus on health care, affordable housing, public benefits, racial equity and access to justice issues, using a multi-pronged approach to improve the lives of Californians living in poverty. Our staff brings impact litigation in state and federal courts, educates policymakers and stakeholders, sponsors legislation, conducts budget advocacy, promotes better programs and policies at administrative agencies, and provides consultation and trainings to the State’s legal services programs and community-based organizations.

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## OUR WORK

IMPROVING AND TRANSFORMING THE PUBLIC POLICY SYSTEMS THAT TOUCH THE LIVES OF LOW-INCOME CALIFORNIANS

### Poverty in California

75% of all people living in poverty are people of color

A third of all Californians living in deep poverty are children

Poverty affects 29% of people with disabilities in California

Each night over 100,000 people are homeless in our state

Immigrants make up 31% of those living in poverty in the state

## WESTERN CENTER WORKS STATEWIDE

Our 19 staff attorneys and advocates successfully tackle complex issues by combining impact litigation and legislative advocacy statewide. They work from our Los Angeles, Oakland, and Sacramento offices to help government “do the right thing” by enforcing existing laws, creating new ones, and building needed programs.

## WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

- Affordable Housing
- Quality Health Care
- Life Sustaining Public Benefits Programs
- Access to Justice
- Racial Equity





# SOME OF OUR LITIGATION VICTORIES IN 2015

## Ensuring Basic Needs Programs and Security for Poor Families

Lawsuit eliminates Alameda County food stamp application backlog

The permanent injunction, along with class certification, requires Alameda County, which had sat on thousands of CalFresh applications, to act on emergency applications in 3 days and all others in 30 days.

*Lilley v. County of Alameda*

Co-counsel: Public Interest Law Project, and Pillsbury

## Securing Safe Housing

Kern reforms its low-income rental assistance program

The Housing Authority of the County of Kern revised its entire Administrative Plan, added professional hearing officers, retrained its staff, and restored eliminated vouchers.

*Murphy et al. v. Housing Authority of the County of Kern*

Co-counsel: Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, and Sidley Austin LLP.

## 28 Day Shuffle Enjoined in Orange County

An injunction barred enforcement of a Costa Mesa ordinance prohibiting tenants from staying more than 30 days in a motel, thus forcing them each month to move from the only affordable housing in the city.

*Dadey v. Costa Mesa*

Co-counsel: Public Law Center, and Haynes and Boone LLP.

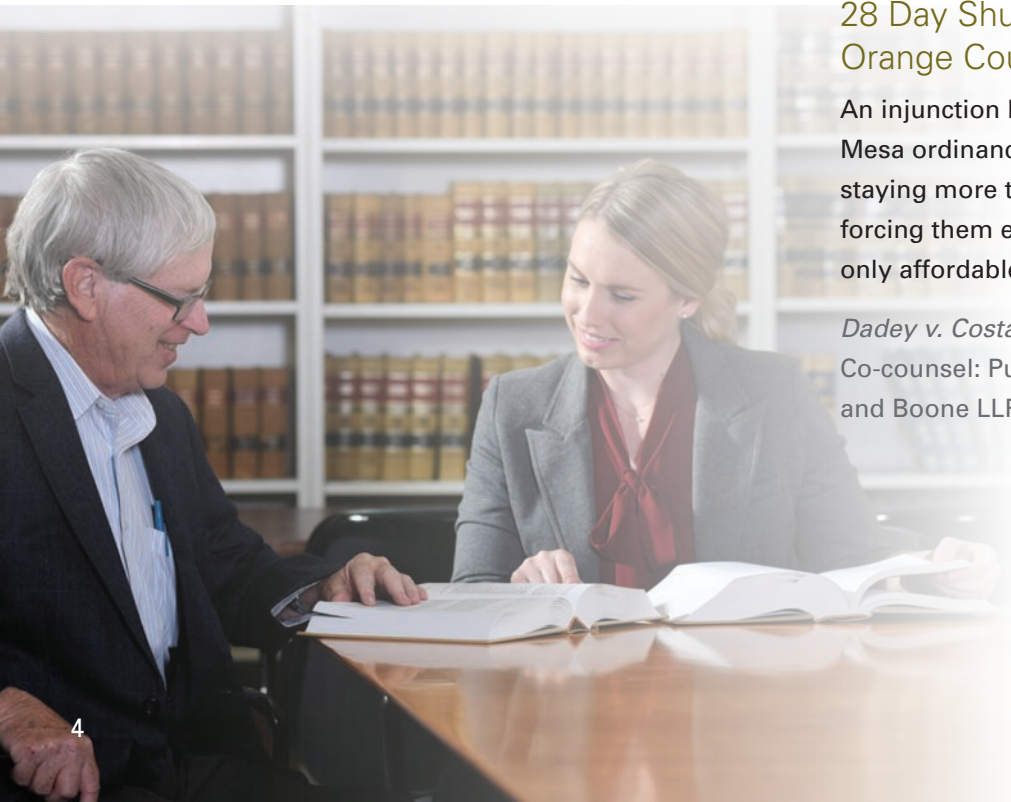
## Health Care for All

Health care coverage protected for seniors, families, and immigrants

The state can not terminate a Medi-Cal recipient for making an error on a redetermination form unless it provides notice that they will be immediately reinstated if the error is fixed within 90 days.

*Korean Community Center of the East Bay v. Douglas*

Co-counsel: Neighborhood Legal Services, Legal Aid Foundation of LA, Bay Area Legal Aid, Asian American Advancing Justice, and Kirkland and Ellis LLP.



## Mr. Kim's Story

Mr. Kim is a U.S. citizen who only speaks Korean and received regular, life-saving care for epilepsy through the Medi-Cal program. In 2014, he was sent Medi-Cal redetermination forms in English, which he couldn't understand. Mr. Kim had previously visited the local welfare office and was not provided with translation assistance or information about interpretive services, so he enlisted the aid of a friend who spoke a little more English than he did. The friend inaccurately filled out the form and shortly thereafter Mr. Kim's benefits were abruptly terminated, without further inquiry, when he was misclassified as undocumented. Mr. Kim went to the welfare office but was unable to communicate with them and for three months went without epilepsy treatment. Ultimately, he contacted the Korean Resource Center where advocates jumped in to help him resolve the problem.

The County's failure to help put Mr. Kim and hundreds of thousands like him in grave danger so Western Center and our co-counsel filed *KCEB v. Douglas*. In 2015 the Alameda Superior Court issued a preliminary injunction to enforce critical due process rights for all Medi-Cal recipients facing terminations for alleged failure to provide ongoing eligibility information. The litigation continues with a trial scheduled for late 2016.



## Help for Seniors, People Who are Homeless, and Adults with Disabilities

### Medical care for people with life threatening illnesses

Elderly residents and persons with complex medical conditions, such as cancer and AIDS, can now more easily keep their established doctors and not be forced into Medi-Cal managed care.

#### *Saavedra v. Douglas*

Co-counsel: Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, and the National Health Law Program

### Kern County increases grants and overhauls welfare program for homeless and disabled residents

Indigent residents, who had unlawfully been denied public assistance, won a dramatic overhaul of Kern County's general assistance program. The County increased the monthly grant from \$226 to \$331; eliminated a burdensome application process to receive aid, which is now available immediately; provides transportation assistance; and makes accommodations for disabled applicants and recipients.

#### *Mills v. County of Kern*

Co-counsel: Irell & Manella LLP, and Jennison & Dodds LLP.

## Our 2015 Cases

Issue	
Health	11
Housing	19
Welfare	6
Access to Justice	2

Defendant	
Federal	2
State	18
County	6
City	10
Other	4

Court	
Federal	8
State	28

Location	
No. California	19
So. California	15
Central California	1
Arizona (9th Circuit)	1

## SOME OF OUR SPONSORED BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW IN 2015:

### Domestic Violence Survivors Protected

AB 418 (Chiu) makes permanent a temporary state law that allows a survivor of domestic violence to terminate a residential lease early without economic ramifications in order to move to safer housing. It also decreases the survivor's remaining rent obligation from 30 days to 14 days.

### Streamlined and Modernized Access to School Meals and CalFresh for Homeless, Poor and Immigrant Children

SB 708 (Mendoza) requires school districts using the online free/reduced cost school meal application to provide links to translated versions of the application and to online CalFresh and health care applications. The law also requires applications to include instructions for homeless and migrant families.

### Affordable Housing Projects Protected

AB 447 (Maienschein) prohibits insurance companies from discriminating against property owners who rent to Section 8 tenants.

AB 433 (Chu) provides for transitional assistance and referral to mental health services for a family receiving CalWORKs when a child has died.

SB 405 (Hertzberg) requires courts to allow individuals to schedule court proceedings, even if bail or civil assessment has been imposed, and clarifies the traffic amnesty program.







## State Budget Victories

Creation of a \$380 million State EITC program that will lift incomes for approximately 825,000 low-income California workers.

\$40 million expansion of Medi-Cal for all children, regardless of immigration status, which is estimated to cover 170,000 low-income children the first year.

15,000 new preschool and child care slots for low wage working families and a rate increase for child care providers.

\$15 million for immigrant legal assistance for deferred action programs and naturalization services.

\$15 million augmentation for the CalWORKs housing support program to help thousands of families avoid homelessness.

10% increase in the Medi-Cal dental provider payment to expand low-income dental care.

Traffic fine amnesty program that will allow Californians to pay off a debt, get their driver's license restored and get back to work.



## THE SOLUTION:

Western Center and a coalition of

### THE ISSUE:

Traffic tickets and court fines disproportionately impact people of color and poor communities

#### The Facts:

- Over 4 million Californians had suspended drivers licenses
- Traffic fines for California drivers averaged \$500
- Suspended licenses could not be restored until the fine was paid in full



#### The report "Not Just a Ferguson Problem"

– How Traffic Courts Drive Inequality in California" is published by Western Center, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, East Bay Community Law Center, A New Way of Life and Legal Services for Prisoners with Children.

March >>

2015



#### The story hits the news –

Dozens of client stories and advocate accounts reflect the economic and racial injustice.

April >>



#### Governor Brown

describes the situation as a "hellhole of desperation" and proposes an amnesty program to help with debt.

May >>



#### With support from Western Center and partners,

the Legislature passes an amnesty plan to restore licenses with payment plan.

June >>



# advocates take action to drive system-wide change

*“When you get 4 million people with suspended licenses and they’re not paying, I think we’ve got a systematic failure.”*

— Mike Herald, Policy Advocate



**The Chief Justice** proposes and the Judicial Council adopts the first of two court rules that begins to dismantle the “Pay for Play” system.

July >>



### Governor signs Western Center

sponsored SB 405 (Hertzberg), requiring courts to allow individuals to schedule proceedings, even if bail or civil assessment has been imposed, and clarifies the traffic amnesty program.

September >>



**Traffic Amnesty begins** and in the first three months 40,000 licenses are restored.

October >>



### Western Center is invited to participate in a White House Convening

– A *Cycle of Incarceration Prison, Debt and Bail Practices*.

December >>



**Western Center co-sponsors SB 881** to eliminate the use of license suspensions to collect traffic debt.

January >>



**Western Center and colleagues release ‘Stopped, Fined, Arrested’ report** documenting racial bias in policing and traffic courts.

April >>

>> 2016

For almost 50 years Western Center has intentionally and creatively challenged racially discriminatory institutional practices.

# SOME OF OUR ADMINISTRATIVE ADVOCACY WINS IN 2015:

## Specialty Medicine Costs Lowered

Covered California was persuaded to dramatically lower the cost of specialty prescription drugs for the lowest income enrollees. For example, a prescription that costs \$2,250 now will cost \$150 in 2016.

## Understandable Medi-Cal Notices

Western Center and other advocates negotiated for appropriately translated and consumer friendly Medi-Cal notices so that those enrolled actually understand decisions about their eligibility.

## Improved Medical Care for Pregnant Moms

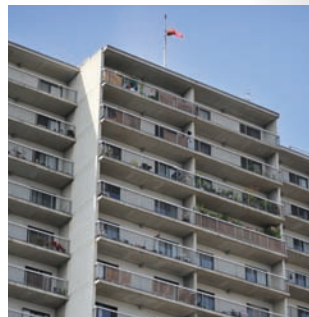
The CA Dept. of Health Care Services agreed to allow pregnant women to stay with their doctor, rather than being forced to enroll in a new plan.

## Food Benefits Restored for 19,000 Angelenos

Western Center and Public Counsel successfully demanded that Los Angeles County provide retroactive CalFresh food assistance benefits to 19,000 people, who were erroneously denied or terminated because the county failed to reprogram computers and implement a law expanding CalFresh.

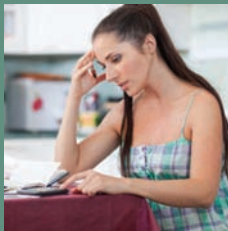
## Protection for Thousands of Low-income Tenants Threatened with Displacement

The State was persuaded to add greater anti-displacement protections in the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program, which uses cap and trade dollars to fund housing, and related infrastructure projects.





## A legal services lawyer in the Central Valley needed help



Western Center handles hundreds of technical assistance matters each year. In one matter, Western

Center attorney Madeline Howard guided a new attorney through her representation of a single mother with a mental health disability. The mother was facing eviction for keeping a “messy house” and the attorney was considering settlement proposals that would force the family from their home. Madeline spent many hours with the attorney, providing strategic pre-trial assistance and sample briefs and letters. Ultimately, the landlord agreed to allow the family to stay in the unit subject to periodic inspections and due process protections in the event the landlord claimed a breach in the future.



## A Sample of Our Publications

- Housing Health Care and Welfare Practice Tips
- Litigation and Legislative Updates
- Who are the Remaining Uninsured? Western Center and the National Health Law Program Report

## 2015 Support Center Service Numbers

<b>Administrative Advocacy</b>	24
<b>Brief Service</b>	671
<b>Community Support</b>	20
<b>Conference / Training / Workshop</b>	84
<b>Consultation Only-Advocacy</b>	51
<b>In-Depth Consultation</b>	72
<b>Legislative Advocacy</b>	4
<b>Other Advocacy Support</b>	119
<b>Publications</b>	12
<b>Research assistance</b>	64

## Some of Our Trainings

- Western Center Advocacy & Litigation Skills 101 (simultaneous webcast training: Los Angeles, Sacramento, Oakland)
- Health, Housing, and Public Benefits Task Force Trainings
- Regional Health Policy Summit and ACA Trainings
- State Bar Fair Housing Symposium
- Racial Justice Training Institute
- CalWORKs and Students: A guide to education opportunities
- Getting Serious About Attorneys’ Fees and Discovery Training

# PRO BONO PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

manatt



Melinda  
Dutton



Alexander  
Dworkowitz



Alice Lam



O'MELVENY & MYERS LLP



Brian Kelly



Chris  
Whittaker



Brett  
Williamson

*"Manatt is proud to have had the opportunity to work with the Western Center on such an important project. Advocates across California rely on the guide to help their clients obtain health care coverage, and we are honored to be able to assist the Western Center with a tool that will help Californians obtain needed health care."*

The manual of California's Health Care Coverage Options is the comprehensive and authoritative guide that equips advocates with the essential information and tools they need to successfully advise and represent their clients. It includes in-depth coverage and expert analysis of the laws, regulations, eligibility criteria, application procedures, and due process rights for the various Medi-Cal programs, as well as for subsidized insurance through Covered California. The manual also offers general counsel regarding county-based indigent health programs.

*"From the day the firm was founded in 1885, O'Melveny has made a long-standing commitment to serving the underrepresented members of our communities. The Coffman-Tikker/ Shayne case exemplifies the firm's work in ensuring affordable housing, a basic necessity for everyone."*

When the Legislature abolished redevelopment agencies, it authorized the creation of successor agencies to fulfill the enforceable obligations of those abolished agencies. These two cases are making landmark redevelopment law, aimed at securing the funding that will build critically needed affordable housing for low-income Californians.





## Thank You to Our 2015 Pro Bono Partners

Akin Gump LLP  
Alborg, Martin & Budde LLP LLP  
Alston & Bird LLP  
Arnold & Porter LLP  
Bird Marella PC  
Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP  
Brancart & Brancart  
Briggs Law Corporation  
Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy LLP  
Garden City Group Inc.  
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP  
Haynes and Boone LLP  
Horvitz and Levy LLP  
Irell & Manella LLP  
Jenner & Block  
Jennison & Dodds LLP  
Justice Earl Johnson (ret.)  
Keller Rauckauckus LLP  
Kirkland and Ellis LLP  
Law Offices of Chandra Spencer  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips LLP  
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Morrison & Foerster LLP  
Munger Tolles & Olson LLP  
O'Melveny & Myers LLP  
Paul Hastings LLP  
Perkins Coie LLP  
Pillsbury  
PwC LLP  
Proskauer Rose PC  
Reed Smith LLP  
Scheper, Kim & Harris LLP  
Seyfarth Shaw LLP  
Shearman & Sterling LLP  
Sheppard Mullin LLP  
Sidley Austin LLP  
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP  
Susman Godfrey LLP  
WilmerHale  
Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC

## PRO BONO PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

*“Our team efforts paid off in March of 2015 when a Northern District Judge permanently enjoined the County of Alameda to comply fully “within a margin of human error” with the legally mandated application processing times. We view this as a victory that will finally bring a close to the massive backlog of CalFresh applications that led to thousands of low-income households facing hunger, homelessness, undernutrition and serious health risks.”*

Alameda County ranked dead last in the State of California for the processing of CalFresh (also known as food stamps) applications within federal and state mandated timeframes. The County’s chronic non-compliance had for years left thousands of families and individuals who were in dire need of food assistance to go hungry. Pillsbury partnered with Western Center and Public Interest Law Project in *Lilley v. County of Alameda* to successfully require the County to timely process all CalFresh applications.

pillsbury



Stacie Kinser



Elaine Lee



Thomas Loran



Philip Shecter



# THANK YOU

## TO OUR LEGAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC INTEREST LAW PARTNERS!



ACLP of Northern California  
ACLU of San Diego & Imperial  
Counties  
ACLU of Southern California  
Affordable Housing Advocates  
AIDS Legal Referral Panel  
Alameda County Bar Association  
Volunteer Legal Services Corporation  
Alliance for Children's Rights  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |  
Asian Law Caucus  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice |  
Los Angeles  
Asian Law Alliance  
Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach  
Bay Area Legal Aid  
Bayview/Hunters Point Community  
Legal  
Bazon Center  
Benchmark Institute  
Bet Tzedek Legal Services  
California Advocates for Nursing  
Home Reform  
California Indian Legal Services  
California Rural Legal Assistance  
California Rural Legal Assistance  
Foundation  
California Women's Law Center  
Casa Cornelia Law Center  
Center for Health Care Rights  
Center for Human Rights and  
Constitutional Law  
Center for Medicare Advocacy

Central California Legal Services  
Centro Legal de la Raza  
Chapman University School of Law  
Family Violence Clinic  
Child Care Law Center  
Children's Rights Clinic at Whittier  
Law School  
Coalition of California Welfare Rights  
Organizations  
Community Legal Services in East  
Palo Alto  
Contra Costa Senior Legal Services  
Disability Rights California  
Disability Rights Education &  
Defense Fund  
Disability Rights Legal Center  
East Bay Community Law Center  
Elder Law & Advocacy  
Equal Justice Society  
Family Violence Law Center  
Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance  
Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law  
Homeless Action Center  
Homeless Advocacy Project  
IELLA Legal Aid Project  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Impact Fund  
Inland Counties Legal Services  
Inner City Law Center  
Insight Center for Community  
Economic Development  
Justice & Diversity Center of the Bar  
Association of San Francisco

Justice in Aging  
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights  
Learning Rights Law Center  
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles  
Legal Aid Foundation of Santa  
Barbara  
Legal Aid of Marin  
Legal Aid of Napa Valley  
Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas  
Legal Aid of Sonoma County  
Legal Aid Society of Orange County  
Legal Aid Society of San Bernardino  
Legal Aid Society of San Diego  
Legal Aid Society of San Mateo  
Legal Aid Society of Santa Clara  
County  
Legal Aid Society-Employment Law  
Center  
Legal Assistance for Seniors  
Legal Assistance to the Elderly  
Legal Services for Children  
Legal Services for Prisoners With  
Children  
Legal Services for Seniors  
Legal Services of Northern California  
Los Angeles Center for Law &  
Justice  
Los Angeles County Bar Association  
Projects  
McGeorge Community Legal  
Services  
Mental Health Advocacy Services  
National Center for Youth Law  
National Consumer Law Center  
National Health Law Program  
National Housing Law Project  
National Immigration Law Center  
Neighborhood Legal Services of L.A.  
County

One Justice  
Positive Resource Center  
Prison Law Office  
Pro Bono Project  
Public Advocates  
Public Counsel  
Public Interest Law Project  
Public Law Center  
Riverside Legal Aid  
San Diego Volunteer Lawyer  
Program, Inc.  
Santa Clara University's Katherine  
and George Alexander Community  
Law Center  
Sargent Shriver National Center  
Senior Adults Legal Assistance  
Senior Citizens Legal Services  
Sonoma County Legal Aid  
Tenants Together  
UC Davis School of Law Legal Clinics  
UCLA School of Law Community  
Economic Development Clinic.  
USD School of Law Legal Clinics  
Voluntary Legal Services Program of  
Northern California  
Wage Justice Center  
Watsonville Law Center  
WorkSafe Law Center  
Youth Law Center  
Yuba-Sutter Legal Center for Seniors

We also are profoundly grateful for  
our partnerships with hundreds of  
other wonderful community-based  
organizations working on behalf of  
low-income Californians.



# WESTERN CENTER IN THE NEWS

Some of the many media features in 2015



THE SACRAMENTO BEE  
Stay Connected >> [sacbee.com](http://sacbee.com)

Daily Journal

The Fresno Bee



San Jose  
Mercury News



SFGATE

ORANGE COUNTY  
REGISTER



Miami Herald  
MIAMIHERALD.COM

## Yes, you can get a discount on those old traffic fines in California

“They got on this hamster wheel where they couldn’t get a job because their license was suspended and they couldn’t get their license un-suspended until they got a job.”

Mike Herald, Policy Advocate

KPCC - Nov 27, 2015

## Medi-Cal applicants entitled to benefits despite delays, judge rules.

“The court decision makes very clear that 45 days means 45 days ... Just because there are problems with computers doesn’t mean people aren’t entitled to their rights.”

Jen Flory, Senior Attorney

Los Angeles Times – January 23, 2015

## Jerry Brown signs bill to help domestic violence survivors

“By reducing the rent obligation to 14 days, this bill frees up funds that could be the difference between a domestic violence survivor securing safe housing and experiencing homelessness.”

Anya Lawler, Policy Advocate

KRON 4 – July 15, 2015

## Two weeks’ schedule notice for workers on California labor agenda

“If their employer is paying them so poorly that they’re relying on public benefits to feed their kids, the least the employer can do is give them time to stand in line and wait for their interview at the welfare office.”

Jessica Bartholow, Policy Advocate

Sacramento Bee – March 27, 2015



# THANK YOU

TO OUR TOP DONORS WHO  
HAVE INVESTED IN THE WORK  
OF WESTERN CENTER

## Western Center fundraising events



Fair Shake



Garden Party



Law Rocks



## WHY I JOINED THE LEGACY SOCIETY

“Western Center is perhaps the most powerful voice that exists for low-income Californians. Through lobbying and high-impact litigation, as well as

supporting other legal service providers throughout the State, Western Center better the lives of millions of Californians every year. Each dollar given to Western Center results in many dollars of benefits to those in need in the areas of health care, housing, and access to justice. My legacy gift will help ensure that Western Center continues to provide those benefits long into the future.” — DOUGLAS B. ADLER

### 50,000-25,000

DIRECTV

Kirkland & Ellis Foundation

Munger, Tolles & Olson  
Foundation

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher  
& Flom LLP

### 24,999-20,000

Sue Himmelrich & Michael Soloff

### 19,999-15,000

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& Crutcher Foundation

The Sidley Austin Foundation

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Adam Baker

Stephen Bates

Jim & Diane Berliner

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John & Louise Brinsley

Davida Brook

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& Commercial Workers  
International Union  
Syd Whalley  
Erich P. Wise  
& Susan E. Anderson Wise  
Noah Zatz

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& Donna Schwarzbach  
Max Greene

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Amy I. Chen  
Mark T. Cramer  
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First 5 LA  
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Key Start Group

## 2015 Financials

REVENUE	
Grants & Contracts	1,645,117
Contributions	1,056,520
Attorneys' Fees	1,899,307
Cy Pres	100,661
Interest & Other Investments	(4,992)
Other	33,664
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>4,730,277</b>

EXPENSES	
Program	2,742,035
General & Administrative	713,680
Fundraising	300,497
2016 Carry Forward	974,065
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>4,730,277</b>



Western Center thanks Favianna Rodriguez for sharing her powerful artwork and unique piece 'Justice Voice Power,' for the cover of our 2016 Annual Report.

Favianna Rodriguez is an interdisciplinary artist, cultural strategist, and organizer based in Oakland, California. Her art and collaborative projects address migration, economic inequality, gender justice, and ecology. Favianna lectures globally on the intersection of art, social justice and cultural equity to catalyze social change, and leads art interventions in communities around the country. Rodriguez collaborates deeply with social movement groups to co-create art that's resilient, empowering and transformative. She is the Executive Director of CultureStrike, a national arts organization that engages artists, writers and performers in migrant rights. In 2012, she was featured in a documentary series by Pharrell Williams titled "Migration is Beautiful" which addressed how artists responded to failed immigrant policy in the United States. In 2009, she co-founded Presente.org, a national online organizing network dedicated to the political empowerment of Latino communities.

Design by Nancy Harasz  
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DATE  
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EVENTS



**FAIR SHAKE:**  
June 29, 2016

**GARDEN PARTY:**  
September 28, 2016





**LOS ANGELES HEADQUARTERS**

3701 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 208  
Los Angeles, CA 90010-2826

Phone: 213-487-7211

**SACRAMENTO**

1107 Ninth Street, Suite #700  
Sacramento, CA 95814-3607

Phone: 916-442-0753

**OAKLAND**

449 Fifteenth Street, Suite 301  
Oakland, CA 94612-2801

Phone: 213-487-7211