

The logo for Public Counsel is centered within a white square with rounded corners. The text "Public Counsel" is written in a serif font, with "Public" on the top line and "Counsel" on the bottom line. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic element consisting of two parallel diagonal lines, one blue and one grey, that intersect the end of the word "Counsel".

Public  
Counsel

ANNUAL REPORT

# Dear Friends,

This economy has been devastating for people in California and across the nation. More families are losing their jobs and homes, more children are losing out on their educational futures, more veterans are returning home to find fewer opportunities, and more businesses are struggling to get off the ground.

As the economic crisis has deepened, we have risen up to meet it.

I am proud to report that, in 2011, Public Counsel once again affirmed its commitment to equality and opportunity for all. We launched an ambitious new project to support Los Angeles neighborhoods ravaged by foreclosure and eviction, and expanded substantially our special education services for children. We also started two new offices to serve our veterans in Hollywood and at the Veterans Affairs West Los Angeles Medical Center, and embarked on another full-service legal office at the Jordan Downs housing complex in Los Angeles' historic Watts neighborhood as it undergoes a \$1 billion redevelopment.

Thanks to your generous and growing support, we added an additional five staff attorneys to our ranks, bringing our total staff size to 100. We broadened our work in Sacramento by sponsoring, drafting, and supporting numerous bills in the last legislative term that will improve the lives of tens of thousands of foster children and youth with developmental disabilities around the state.

We have increased our docket of impact cases, obtained legal protection for thousands of LAUSD students who faced losing more than 70% of their teachers to layoffs, and protected 3,400 Section 8 families in the Antelope Valley from a campaign of harassment and discrimination by their municipal leaders.

We have also deepened the enormous base of *pro bono* support that is our engine of change. This has allowed us to help more clients (32,132) and mobilize more volunteers (5,023) to meet the need in our communities.

But numbers don't tell the whole story of our impact. Public Counsel's story is written on the faces and in the voices of the people we serve, and you'll meet some of them in the pages that follow.

These difficult times require all of us not only to act, but to act swiftly and decisively. To those who choose to do harm to our communities, our message is simple: *We will go after you.* Whether it is a con artist defrauding a homeowner in trouble, a school district ignoring the civil rights of a child, a government agency failing to fulfill its duties to the homeless, or a duplicitous business strip-mining equity from our neighborhoods—Public Counsel is not afraid to step in aggressively to achieve justice.

Together with all of you, we are a force for good in people's lives. Thank you for joining the fight, and please continue to stay involved in the months and years ahead.



**Hernán Vera**  
President and CEO



# PUBLIC COUNSEL CHANGES LIVES

# We

touch people's lives and help them do more than they ever thought possible. That's the essence of justice, hope, and opportunity. Whether it's one person's life or litigation affecting thousands of people, we help people take charge of their futures. Here are some of the areas where we made a difference in 2011:

## Impact Litigation

Fights for the rights of families, students, and hard-working Californians through Impact Litigation affecting thousands of people.



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## Homelessness Prevention

Prevents homelessness for families and individuals, and assists others to escape life on the streets.



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## Early Care and Education

Works with Early Care and Education providers to expand their businesses, help our economy grow, and make sure children get an educational head start with quality early care.



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## Children's Rights

Expands Children's Rights through litigation, lobbying, and direct services to hundreds of foster youth, students, and adoptive children.



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## Community Development

Fosters Community Development by helping nonprofits and small businesses cut through the red tape and pursue their dreams.



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## Immigrants' Rights

Promotes Immigrants' Rights nationwide and represents children, victims of domestic violence, and people fleeing torture.



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## Veterans Advancement

Campaigns for Veterans Advancement by helping military veterans overcome trauma, escape homelessness, and provide for their families.



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## Appellate Law and Pro Se

Assists unrepresented civil litigants at court-based clinics in the state appellate and federal district courts and handles appeals in selected cases.



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## Consumer Law

Champions Consumer Law in the economic crisis, including representing families who risk losing their homes over fraud and providing legal advice to people facing bankruptcy.



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**A Force  
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**IMPACT LITIGATION:** Public Counsel brings suit in federal and state courts to challenge systemic and recurring discrimination and protect the civil and economic rights of families, students, and working people.



Sharail Reed at a press conference announcing *Reed v. State*.

## ‘I don’t have the **RIGHT** teachers.’

A teacher can make all the difference in a student’s life, yet at some Los Angeles schools more than 70% of teachers were laid off due to budget cuts, and students got the message their education was expendable.

Eighth-grader Sharail Reed and her classmates at Markham Middle School knew this was wrong. “I don’t have the right teachers,” she told CNN. Public Counsel fought to make sure students at struggling Los Angeles schools have the same opportunity as other students to achieve their dreams.

“These students deserve the best of what we have promised them,” Public Counsel’s Impact Litigation Director Catherine Lhamon told the *New York Times*. “If you have students who are going to see 17 different teachers in a year because so much is churning, they are not getting that.”

Because of Public Counsel’s ***Reed v. State*** lawsuit with the ACLU of Southern California and Morrison & Foerster LLP, 75,000 Los Angeles students won stability to succeed each year and other school districts took notice. This became a national story as schools faced layoffs that affected children’s education.

“This was a seminal case, one that people are looking at all across the country,” said Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. “Public Counsel took it on, and they won. The kids of Los Angeles won.”

**YOUTH IN TROUBLE NEED AN EDUCATION**, and Los Angeles is home to one of the nation’s most troubled education systems: the Challenger probation camp. Teachers at the county’s largest juvenile justice facility missed classes, punished students who asked for instruction, and awarded a high school diploma to a student who was illiterate.

But Public Counsel’s Education Rights Director Laura Faer believes every youth deserves a fair shot and a decent education. ***Casey A. v. Jon R. Gundry*** is changing a broken system. “We have the opportunity to transform this from one of the worst education systems in the nation to a model for others to follow,” said Faer.

Faer was named California Lawyer of the Year for her work on the case with the ACLU and Disability Rights Legal Center.



# ‘They’ve made **CRIMINALS** out of everyone associated with **Section 8.**’

–Antelope Valley resident V. Jesse Smith, to the *New York Times*



Public Counsel's Catherine Lhamon with V. Jesse Smith and Emmett Murrell.

Police raids, racially discriminatory policies, and hateful rhetoric—that’s what 11,000 black and Latino residents of the Antelope Valley who are part of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program faced in the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale. Public Counsel filed *The Community Action League v. Lancaster* in June to end this harassment, and reached a sweeping settlement with the County of Los Angeles to protect residents’ right to live where they choose.

# ‘It feels like you’re suffocating.’

– C. Velasquez, a worker in the Central Valley to the *Los Angeles Times* about conditions in California’s fields



Farm workers and their children protest for safer working conditions.

A Public Counsel lawsuit has exposed a vicious reality: 650,000 California farm workers are at constant risk of heat-related illness and even death because of the state’s failure to enforce a regulation meant to keep outdoor workers safe. The *Los Angeles Times* profiled our litigation efforts in *Bautista v. State* in 2011, and we are pursuing stronger protections for workers in the billion-dollar agricultural business.

# PUBLIC COUNSEL GIVES HOPE

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION:

Public Counsel combines policy advocacy and direct legal service to expand social services in Los Angeles County, protect legal rights, and keep clients in their homes and off the streets.



An Antelope Valley college class is fighting for families' rights.

*'When people get the benefits they need, it is LIFE-CHANGING.'*

Los Angeles residents in need count on critical public services to feed their families or keep a roof over their heads. For more than two decades, Public Counsel has been on their side.

Public Counsel volunteers work one-on-one with people in social services offices to make sure they understand their rights and get the services they need. That's the mission of Public Counsel CARES—Connecting Angelenos to Resources and Essential Services (formerly known as the General Relief Advocacy Project).

The students of Charter College in the Antelope Valley know why it matters. A class of future paralegals has adopted their community, where people affected by the economic crisis crowd the local social services office.

"I've been on the other side where I was literally homeless, I was living on the street," said Bonnie Allison, who is now studying to be a paralegal. "So I know how hopeless you are, like nothing is ever going to go right in your life. You can't go apply for a job when you haven't been able to shower and you have no clean clothes. I know how that feels."

"When people get the benefits they need it is life changing," said her classmate Laura Graham. "It's connecting people to things that they wouldn't otherwise

have had access to like shelters, clinics, food banks, even rights that they don't know they have."

Added Elisa Ramirez: "We can go home and feel happy that we helped someone to get one step closer to what we have."

## CARING...AND GROWING

Hundreds of attorneys and law students were introduced to Public Counsel through this project fighting for the rights of families and individuals seeking emergency services to address or avoid homelessness.

Public Counsel volunteers provide resources and information on benefits including General Relief, Cal-Fresh (formerly known as Food Stamps), CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal.

We connect people to services that help them find a job, keep their home, escape domestic violence or recover from substance abuse. And we advocate for positive changes in the nation's largest social service system.

For nearly 25 years Public Counsel volunteers from major firms and local colleges and universities have been on the front line for Angelenos in need.



LEARN MORE: GO TO [PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG](http://PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG) AND VISIT OUR NEW PUBLIC COUNSEL CARES PAGE

## ‘What’s good for children is GOOD FOR COMMUNITIES.’



**EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION:** Public Counsel helps early care providers expand and encourages economic growth and educational opportunity for children by working with local governments to clear roadblocks to growth.

*Early care providers can help close the education gap for children in high-poverty areas.*

When you’re trying to change children’s futures, starting early matters. That’s especially true in education.

Harvard University researchers have found that quality early care can boost the educational achievement of children from low-income areas. Without it, children fall further behind their peers.

The gap in available early care is largest in the crowded communities of Southeast Los Angeles, where 1 in 5 children age 4 or younger has no access to neighborhood child-care.

“What’s good for children is good for communities,” said Public Counsel Senior Staff Attorney Karla Pleitez Howell. “Quality early care helps children make connections they need for later success in school, and it’s an economic driver for working families.” Child-care providers are also job-creators. Recently Public Counsel spearheaded a meeting of city leaders, education providers and child-care advocates to break down the barriers holding them back.

The White House has also recognized that access to early care education is a building block to create “neighborhoods of opportunity” in high-poverty areas.

“Public Counsel is helping cities and counties plan for early care today, so that child-care operators will not have to battle through a time-consuming and expensive land use approval process,” said attorney Sean Matsler of Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP. “Their leadership is going to mean that a whole generation of families will have access to quality, affordable child-care services.”



**LEARN MORE: GO TO [PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG](http://PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG)  
AND CHECK OUT OUR INTERACTIVE  
CHILD-CARE MAP PROJECT**





**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:** Fourteen staff attorneys and five social workers provide litigation and services for students, children, and families. Public Counsel has finalized 7,000 adoptions for children in the foster care system since 1997.

*The Koeppel family surrounds a photo of Lilac Koeppel, who adopted 9 children over 13 years.*

## How a Remarkable Adoption Led

At just three months of age, Alice's (not her real name) biological father shook her with so much force that he fractured her skull and ribs. Alice now has profound mental retardation, daily seizures, and is legally blind. She cannot walk, talk, crawl or sit up. Her sister witnessed the abuse and herself was abused.

Their grandparents stepped up to adopt the two girls. Unfortunately, they were in legal limbo. For nearly a year and a half, Alice could not access

the critical services that she needed to progress.

"If adoptive parents can't seek services on behalf of children, who will?" asked Veronica Kuumdjian, a volunteer attorney from Reed Smith LLP who took on the family's adoption and then successfully fought for her.

In an effort to make sure an estimated 1,000 foster and adoptive children like Alice don't fall through the cracks, Public Counsel sponsored SB 368. The law gives adoptive parents and other

# ‘Children need **SOMEONE** just to believe in them.’

Richelle Koeppe and her mother, Lilac, built an amazing family - with 9 adopted children and more than 40 foster children over 13 years.

When Lilac died this year after a lengthy illness, she left a legacy of high expectations and boundless love.

“My mom didn’t know how to be a foster parent, she only knew how to be a mom,” Richelle says. Briana, now 21, was the first of nine children Lilac Koeppe adopted. She was born with a heart defect and struggled to walk. Her mom sweet-talked doctors and sought out physical therapy.

“Growing up in this family I’ve just learned to not let anything get in the way of what you want to do,” Briana said.

Public Counsel and *pro bono* attorneys helped the Koeppes adopt three children, and fought for more than a year when one was denied life-changing services. After Lilac died, the family started a memorial fund to support Public Counsel’s work.

Michael McDonough, an attorney from Bingham McCutchen LLP who worked with the Koeppes, said they are “putting a message out to the world that these are kids worth fighting for.”

“Lilac Koeppe will never know the influence she had in this life,” said McDonough. “It will go on 100 years.”

“All children need someone just to believe in them, and to fight for them and to be their advocate,” said Richelle. “It’s about giving kids a chance who just need a family to love them and accept them for who they are and help them to be the best family they can be. And it’s that simple.”



**LEARN MORE: GO TO [PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG](https://publiccounsel.org)  
TO WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT THE  
KOEPE FAMILY**

## to Statewide Change for Children



permanent caregivers the authority to make decisions about developmental services for their children.

“This bill is about protecting some of the most vulnerable young people in our state,” said the law’s author, Sen. Carol Liu.

“Adoptive parents and long-term foster families are already responsible for a child’s educational future, and now they can help meet children’s developmental needs as well,” said Public Counsel Staff Attorney Brian Capra.

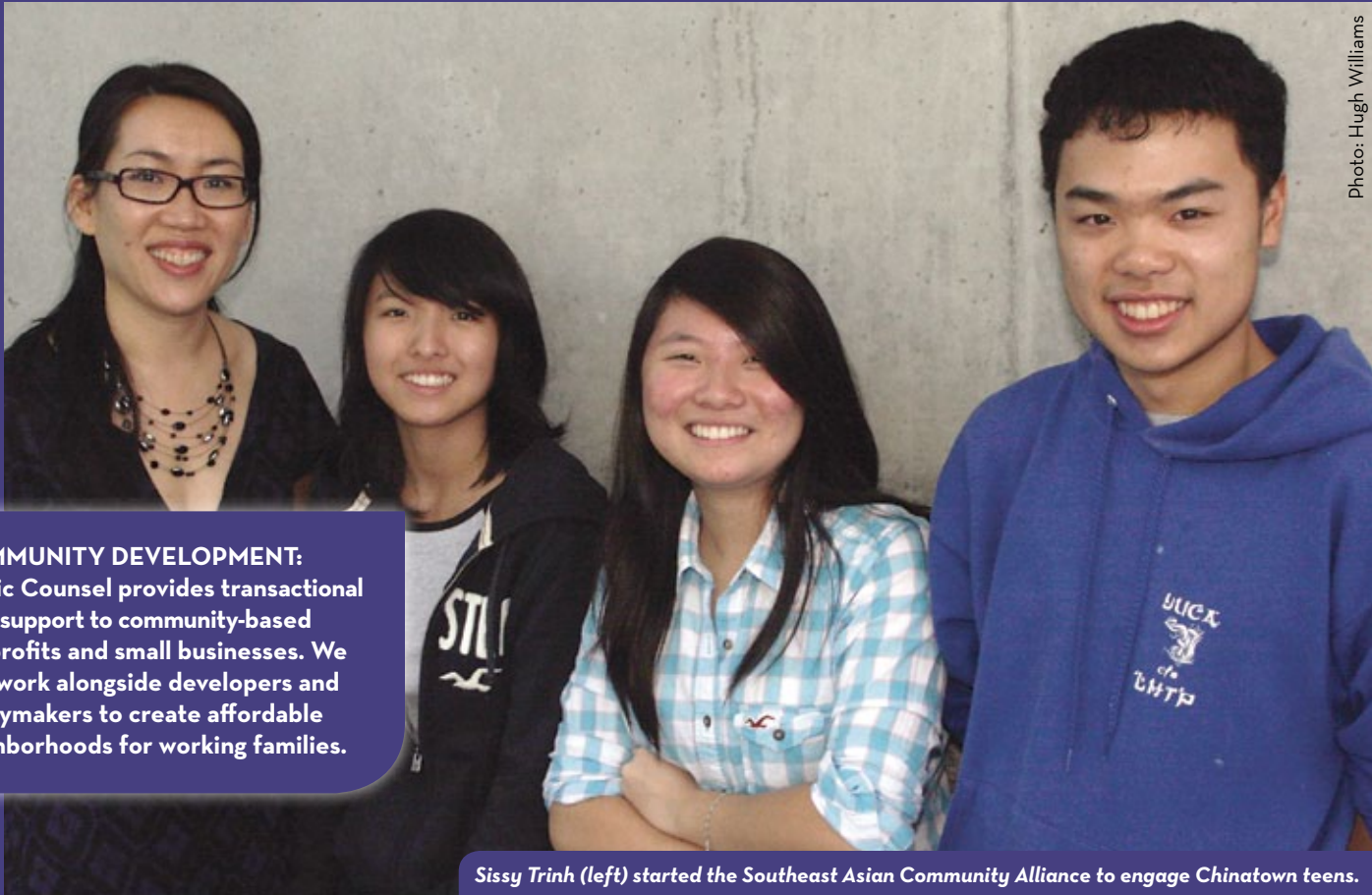


Photo: Hugh Williams

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** Public Counsel provides transactional legal support to community-based nonprofits and small businesses. We also work alongside developers and policymakers to create affordable neighborhoods for working families.

*Sissy Trinh (left) started the Southeast Asian Community Alliance to engage Chinatown teens.*

## Working for a Cleaner, Greener

With Southern California planning for development along mass transit corridors, Public Counsel is helping to define what it will look like.

“As our city and region take steps toward a cleaner, greener future, we want to make sure that everyone gets there together,” said Shashi Hanuman, directing attorney of Public Counsel’s Community Development Project. “This means planning for quality jobs, accessible transit, health care, housing, and child-care for families.”

In 2011, Public Counsel helped launch and provide legal muscle for the Alliance for Community Transit - Los Angeles, a coalition of community-based and environmental groups including

Green L.A. and the Natural Resources Defense Council. ACT-LA is working with communities, elected leaders, and city planners to make sure people don’t get left behind as our transit system grows. Other projects include:

- We are expanding child care in Southeast Los Angeles County, which has the area’s highest level of childhood obesity and shortage of quality early care.
- We negotiated an agreement that will bring a local-hire requirement, health care, and resources for small businesses and affordable housing to a private development in South Los Angeles.



# 'It's OUR City, too.'

Imagine the city of the future. Will it have traffic-choked freeways, ever-increasing pollution, and neighborhoods divided by lines of wealth and poverty? Or will it have smog-busting transit and bike lanes, playgrounds and parks, and housing that everyone can afford?

The high-school youth of the Southeast Asian Community Alliance are thinking big. They are planning for the future of their neighborhood on the rapidly changing edge of downtown Los Angeles.

"All that we're asking for in our community are jobs that you can feed your family with, a home that you can live in, and a place with air to breathe that doesn't kill you," 15-year-old Brandon Cao told the *Los Angeles Times*, which called him a "community leader in training."

Public Counsel helped incorporate the Southeast Asian Community Alliance and has stayed involved as the group pushes for a community voice in its neighborhood. With new parks, mass transit, and development planned along the Los Angeles River, the working-class communities of Chinatown and Lincoln Heights are poised for rapid redevelopment.



"This area is a template for what the rest of Los Angeles could look like some day," said Public Counsel Senior Staff Attorney Serena Lin. "We want to make sure there's room for everyone."



**LEARN MORE: GO TO [PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG](https://publiccounsel.org) TO WATCH A SHORT VIDEO THAT CHINATOWN STUDENTS CREATED ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD**

## Future for All

- We are increasing the capacity of local youth and adult leaders to participate in the decisions that will change the face of their city.
- We are bringing environmental justice to communities to address pollution at the Port of Los Angeles.
- We are partners in the struggle to make transit in Los Angeles accessible to everyone and supported the successful effort for a bus-only lane on Wilshire Boulevard that will benefit hard-working commuters and veterans traveling to the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center.



*The community development team.*



# PUBLIC COUNSEL HELPS IMMIGRANTS



**IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS:** Public Counsel runs one of the nation's largest immigration asylum practices for victims of persecution, domestic violence, or childhood abuse and neglect, and participates in local and national litigation and policy affecting immigrants.

*José Antonio Franco Gonzales with his mother, Maria, and father, Francisco, after his release from detention.*

Photo: Ken Steinhardt / The Orange County Register

## Immigrants Fleeing Torture and Violence Need Somewhere to Turn for Help



*Frederick celebrating his graduation with a friend.*

Frederick escaped government persecution in Cameroon and applied for asylum in the United States. With Public Counsel's help, he was granted asylum, became a permanent U.S. resident, and graduated from nursing school.

Public Counsel runs California's largest asylum practice and has represented hundreds of people from Cameroon and other repressive regimes around the world. Our work for asylum seekers was featured this year in a national Associated Press story, and our clinic at UCLA Law School is inspiring a new generation of attorneys to get involved.

# 'IMAGINE being held in jail... without even a basic understanding of why you are there.'

When José Antonio Franco Gonzales walked out of an immigration detention facility in 2010 and into the arms of his family, it opened a window onto a netherworld of the U.S. justice system: the treatment of immigrants with severe mental disabilities.

Public Counsel, the ACLU, the law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, and other groups are fighting for the rights of people like Mr. Franco, who languished for four years with no access to an attorney. In a series of strongly worded decisions in **Franco v. Holder**, U.S. District Court Judge Dolly Gee ordered representation for several detained immigrants and certified the class action lawsuit.

"Imagine being held in jail, sometimes for years, without even a basic understanding of why you are there," said Public Counsel Staff Attorney Talia Inlender, who is representing Mr. Franco in his ongoing immigration case. "That's the reality for too many immigrants with severe mental disabilities."

About 33,000 immigrants are detained daily, and the government estimates that over 1,000 of them have mental disabilities. Yet the government has no procedure to resolve their cases, including for individuals who are unable to understand the proceedings against them due to severe mental disabilities.

"It is profoundly disturbing that the government continues to pretend that this helpless population needs no assistance," said Michael H. Steinberg of Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, who argued the class certification motion in federal court. Because of the case, "it will be much more difficult for the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to avoid what is clearly a problem that must be addressed."

Last year Inlender wrote an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* about the incredible cost of the policy. "In a system in which the most vulnerable are left without lawyers, nobody wins," she wrote. "Not immigrants and their families, not taxpayers and not the government."



Maria Franco announcing the filing of Franco v. Holder.



**LEARN MORE: GO TO PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG  
TO READ STAFF ATTORNEY TALIA INLENDER'S  
OP-ED IN THE LOS ANGELES TIMES ABOUT  
"IMMIGRANT DETAINEES, LOST IN AMERICA"**



# PUBLIC COUNSEL HONORS VETERANS

**VETERANS ADVANCEMENT:** Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement delivers on our nation's promise to veterans, and has worked in nearly 40 states to stabilize the living situation of veterans and their families, secure income, and provide veterans with broad-based legal representation.



*Wounded Iraq war veterans like Aaron Huffman need help to secure benefits they deserve.*

## Helping Los Angeles Veterans in Need



Hollywood's homeless veterans will now have help clearing legal barriers with support from LA City Councilman Eric Garcetti, Aileen Getty and the Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation.

Through the three-year project, Public Counsel attorneys will partner with service agencies in the Hollywood area to provide direct legal representation to veterans. They will also train case workers to recognize veterans' legal issues before they become a barrier to finding a home.

"We know that there are dozens of homeless veterans on Hollywood's streets and those who risked their lives to defend our country deserve better. This project will help get them the shelter, care, and services they need," said Councilman Garcetti, who is a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve component.

# 'America's debt to its soldiers doesn't end when they return home —that's when it STARTS.'

Veterans often face an uphill fight when they leave the service. For many, one of their hardest battles is to win the benefits they deserve.

Launched in 2009, Public Counsel's Center for Veterans Advancement is a one-stop legal shop for veterans and their families from World War II through Iraq and Afghanistan.

Albert Hutchinson's case is typical of how we help. Last year, we found *pro bono* attorney Jeffrey Brown of Pircher, Nichols & Meeks to assist Mr. Hutchinson, a Vietnam veteran who had been exposed to Agent Orange, but whose benefits claim had languished for three years. The son of a World War II veteran and an experienced litigator, Brown chased down the paperwork and "did what you have to do - I kept nagging."

It worked. Mr. Hutchinson won over \$100,000 and a monthly disability payment of \$2,500.

Said Brown about working with Public Counsel: "Anything that helps veterans reminds me of my dad, and anything I can do in that sense gives me a good feeling."

From the Vietnam War legacy through the hundreds of thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who face daily struggles, Public Counsel is a national leader on veterans' issues. In the past two years, we have placed *pro bono* attorneys in nearly 40 states.

"America's debt to its soldiers doesn't end when they return home—that's when it starts," said Rick Little, director of the Center for Veterans Advancement at Public Counsel.

## Launching a Legal Office at the West LA VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs' medical center in West Los Angeles is one of the nation's largest, and it serves thousands of veterans every day. In 2011, Public Counsel launched a legal office at the Salvation Army Haven on the VA grounds to bring help directly to people who need it.

The new program started May 26 and provides in-person services including access to VA and Social Security benefits, family law matters, ticket and warrant resolution, expungements of criminal records, and other legal issues that may affect a veteran's access to housing and employment.

The Obama administration has pledged to end homelessness among military veterans, which happens at much higher rates than in the civilian population. Veterans also face substance abuse, mental illness, physical injuries, and the aftershocks of trauma related to their military service. Legal help is often the missing piece in a veteran's recovery.





**‘Without legal help,  
people just get RAILROADED.’**

**APPELLATE LAW AND PRO SE:**  
Public Counsel helps litigants better represent themselves in their civil matters, increases access to justice, and improves efficiency in the courts with clinics in the California Court of Appeal and U.S. District Court.



Photo: Hugh Williams

Litigants at our appellate and federal pro se clinics get hands-on legal assistance.

A diamond ring may mean a lot of things to a person: commitment, accomplishment, or just pride of possession. Or it might be his most valuable possession. When someone walked away with Edward Bullock’s ring at an airport security checkpoint the loss was immeasurable.

Mr. Bullock is an elderly man who uses a wheelchair, and the ring disappeared when TSA agents left his belongings on a conveyor belt while they wheeled him away for a security screening. Mr. Bullock is illiterate, but when he came to Public Counsel’s Proskauer Federal *Pro Se* Clinic we helped him draft a complaint against the TSA and negotiate a settlement for the ring’s full value.

His case is a window onto the immense need we see every day at the nation’s largest federal *pro se* clinic.

With generous seed money from the law firm Proskauer, Public Counsel has helped more than 2,000 people since the clinic opened in February 2009. Public Counsel provides full-service assistance to people proceeding *pro se* in the Central District of California—people who would otherwise be lost in one of the nation’s busiest courthouses.

“So many of our clients are from immigrant com-

munities, have limited reading or writing capacities, or they just don’t understand the legal system,” said Janet Lewis, who directs the Federal *Pro Se* Clinic. “Without legal help, people just get railroaded.”

The clinic has helped litigants have a voice in court. More than 90% of *pro se* defendants who received a heightened level of assistance from the clinic had favorable outcomes, and the clinic has helped the court manage the increasing stream of *pro se* litigation.

**APPELLATE CLINIC SETS THE STANDARD**

Public Counsel’s one of a kind clinic at the California 2nd District Court of Appeal has become a model for appellate courts across the nation. The clinic was recognized in 2009 with a prestigious Ralph N. Kleps Award for innovation from the California Judicial Council, and last year the Council highlighted the Appellate Clinic in the book “Innovations in the California Courts: 20 Years of Great Ideas.”



**LEARN MORE: GO TO PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG TO GET THE LINK TO THE JUDICIAL COUNSEL’S 2011 BOOK, “INNOVATIONS IN THE CALIFORNIA COURTS”**

## PUBLIC COUNSEL FIGHTS FRAUD

# 'Public Counsel is a powerful FORCE for consumers' rights.'



### CONSUMER LAW:

Public Counsel's experienced consumer attorneys have represented thousands of victims of fraud. They work alongside legislators and prosecutors to target abuses such as patient dumping and faulty loan modifications.

*Jones Day partner Philip Cook (fourth from left) and associates went to bat for victims of fraud.*

Watch out, mortgage fraudsters, auto loan scam artists, and home title takers. Public Counsel is coming after you.

Protecting consumers has long been a Public Counsel core practice. Since 1992, when we won a \$1.3 million jury award on behalf of an 85-year-old Compton homeowner defrauded by a notorious con artist, Public Counsel has fought for the rights of thousands of people who have lost their homes and savings.

Today's victims of consumer fraud are increasingly homeowners, recent immigrants, and people who have lost their jobs as a direct result of the economic meltdown.

"Public Counsel is a powerful force for consumers' rights, helping those most vulnerable to fraud," said Philip Cook, a partner at Jones Day and member of Public Counsel's board.

Between them, attorneys from the Jones Day and Irell & Manella law firms took on 22 complex consumer law cases last year. Those are just two of the dozens of law firms that contributed more than 11,000 hours of free legal help for consumers in 2011.

### HELP FOR FRAUD VICTIMS FACING BANKRUPTCY

Like many Americans in the economic crisis, Christian

Betancourt lost his job as a construction worker. In a last-ditch attempt to save the home he had bought for his family of five, he paid \$7,000 to a loan modification service company. Mr. Betancourt thought the loan company was going to help him save his home. In fact, the company took his money and filed a fraudulent bankruptcy without his knowledge.

Fortunately, he regained his footing at Public Counsel's Debtors Assistance Project, a resource for people who need *pro bono* assistance in bankruptcy proceedings. He was able to get help filing a motion to expunge the bankruptcy from his record. Betancourt was successful—like more than 94% of people who sought Public Counsel's help in 2011 with a bankruptcy filing. Public Counsel provided desperately needed bankruptcy counsel, assistance, and representation to over 4,000 individuals and families.

"When I was talking to the judge, I felt so prepared," said Betancourt.

Without Public Counsel's help, "I don't know how we would be getting through this," U.S. Bankruptcy Court Judge Maureen A. Tighe told the *Daily Journal*. "It's a tremendous public service."

Whether it's one person's life or thousands,

**\$88 MILLION IN**



**32,000  
PEOPLE SERVED**



**1,399 ATTORNEYS  
LAW STUDENTS & PARALEGALS  
HELPING TO PREVENT  
HOMELESSNESS**



**FREE TRAINING**

**1,000**

**NONPROFITS AND SMALL BUSINESSES**



**5 NEW  
PUBLIC COUNSEL-SPONSORED  
LAWS SIGNED TO ASSIST  
CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES**



**50  
ATTORNEYS IN  
FRAUD AND CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**30,000**

**HOURS OF FREE LEGAL HELP FOR  
IMMIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS**



**100  
STAFF**

**EVERY \$1 DONATION**

*Public Counsel made a huge impact in 2011:*

# FREE SERVICES



# 75,000

**LOS ANGELES STUDENTS  
PROTECTED FROM TEACHER LAYOFFS**

**INGS FOR  
00  
L BUSINESSES**



# \$1.5 MILLION

**IN BENEFITS WON SINCE 2009**

# FOR VETERANS

**00  
FIGHTING  
SUMER ABUSE**



# 1,500

**VISITS FROM FEDERAL  
COURT LITIGANTS**



# 5,000

**PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS**

# ED=\$12 IN IMPACT

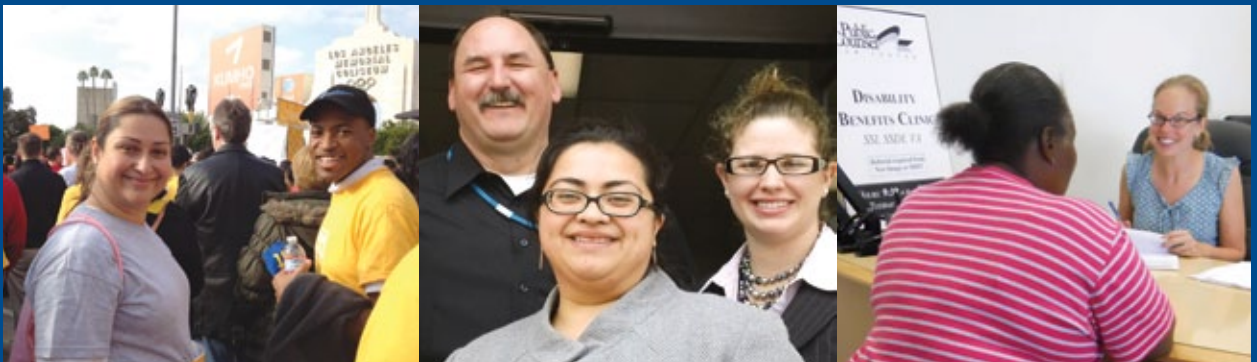


# PUBLIC COUNSEL IS TALENTED



***“Public Counsel has all the tools to take on major litigation, change policy, influence legislation, and have a direct impact in people’s lives.”***

- Hernán Vera, President and CEO



*From top left: Adoption Day at Edelman Children’s Court; Public Counsel staff who served as clerks in the federal judiciary are (clockwise from back left) Maureen Carroll (9th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Stephen Reinhardt), Laura Faer (Judge Reinhardt), Catherine Lhamon (9th Circuit Judge William A. Norris), Lisa Jaskol (9th Circuit Judge Harry Pregerson), Martha Matthews (Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun), Talia Inlender (Judge Reinhardt), Kristen Jackson (9th Circuit Court Judge Raymond C. Fisher); Judy Verduzco; Kelly Evans with clients; Sarah Evans with client; Rick Little, Cecilia Ley, and Nancy Wheeler; Barbara Garcia Le and Will Watts at United Way HomeWalk; California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye with Laura Faer.*

Public Counsel's staff is 100-strong in nine legal practice areas. They include seven former law clerks at the U.S. appellate or Supreme Court level, five social workers, paralegals, intake specialists, and volunteer coordinators. Our attorneys are national experts in child welfare, immigration, veterans advocacy, special education, impact litigation, and economic justice.

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# PUBLIC COUNSEL IS POWERFUL



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***“Every year Public Counsel helps thousands of people make meaningful, positive changes in their lives. By assisting those among us struggling with poverty or injustice, Public Counsel and its volunteers make our entire community stronger.”***

- Gail M. Title, Public Counsel Chairperson 2011-2012 and chair of the Entertainment and Media Litigation Practice at Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP



Top: Public Counsel board members at our annual retreat. Second row: President Bill Clinton and Barbra Streisand at the 2011 William O. Douglas Dinner; actor Sara Ramirez at our Just Fashion event; board member David Johnson and Museum of Contemporary Art Director Jeffrey Deitch; California Court of Appeal Judge Nora Manella and board member Morgan Chu. Third row: Barbara Lee, Edna Anderson-Owens, Motown founder Berry Gordy, and board member Yakub Hazzard; the Katten Muchin Rosenman team at Public Counsel's Run for Justice at the LA Marathon; board member Randall Sunshine and family. Photo credits: Hugh Williams



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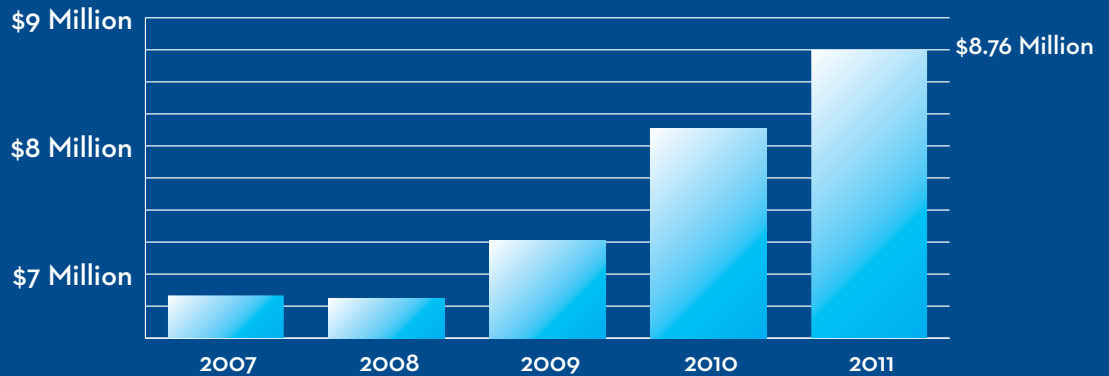
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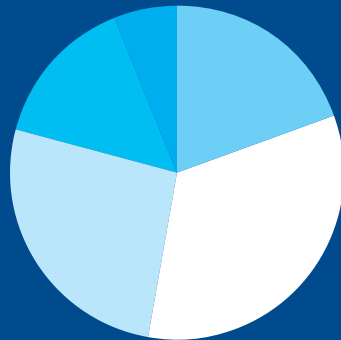
# PUBLIC COUNSEL IS STRONG

Public Counsel is an \$8.7-million organization with strong and balanced support from foundations, private donations, program fees, and State Bar-administered funds.

## REVENUE GROWTH: 2007-2011

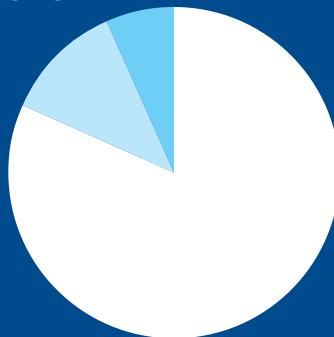


## 2011 REVENUES



Grants	\$1,717,175	19.60%
Contributions	\$2,916,051	33.28%
Program Fees	\$2,328,322	26.57%
IOLTA/Equal Access	\$1,271,036	14.51%
Fees/Cy Pres	\$530,114	6.05%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,762,698</b>	

## 2011 EXPENSES



Program	\$7,069,705	81.77%
Fundraising	\$1,007,692	11.66%
Administration	\$567,945	6.57%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,645,342</b>	

The following foundations supported Public Counsel's work in 2011, in addition to our generous support from law firms, corporations, and individuals:

Atlantic Philanthropies  
Beverly Hills Bar Association  
Burton G. Bettingen Corporation  
California Association of Food Banks  
California Bar Foundation  
California Community Foundation  
California Wellness Foundation  
Carl and Roberta Deutsch Foundation  
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
Eisner Foundation  
Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation  
Equal Access Fund Partnership Grant  
Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund  
Frederick R. Weisman Philanthropic Foundation  
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Land of the Free  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Los Angeles County Bar Association  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Northrup Grumman  
S. Mark Taper Foundation  
Safeway Foundation  
State Bar of California Legal Services Trust Fund  
Stuart Foundation  
The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation  
United Way of Greater Los Angeles



# PUBLIC COUNSEL IS EXPERIENCED

*“You are doing a noble thing. You have no idea how many people you’ve g*

Frederick M. Nicholas and the Beverly Hills Bar Association launch the country’s first bar-sponsored, public interest law firm



1970

Executive Director Steve Nissen and 1986 William O. Douglas Award honoree Gloria Steinem



1986

1989

Actor Louis Gosset Jr., emcee of the 1991 Douglas Dinner, with honoree Alex Haley



1991

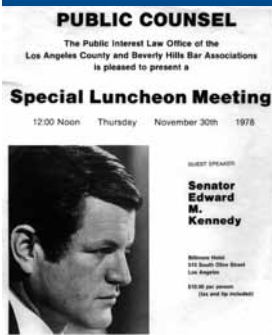
1993

Sargent Shriver, 1999 Douglas Award honoree, and daughter Maria Shriver



1999

2003



Sen. Edward M. Kennedy speaks at a special luncheon as our mission grows



Rep. Barbara Jordan is recipient of the 1989 Douglas Award



Public Counsel acquires our first headquarters



Vice President Al Gore, recipient of the 2003 Douglas Award, with Richard Ziman, longtime Public Counsel supporter

## 40 Years of Passion, Talent and Teamwork

**iven a different story because you stepped into the breach for someone.”**

*- President Bill Clinton at the 40th Anniversary Douglas Dinner*

Public Counsel dedicates our current headquarters under the leadership of then-President Dan Grunfeld



Hernán Vera, newly appointed President and CEO, with 2008 Douglas Dinner emcee, Jay Leno



President Bill Clinton, recipient of the 2011 Douglas Award



2005

2007

2008

2010

2011



Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, 2007 Douglas Award honoree, with her predecessor Warren M. Christopher, who presents the award

Dedication of the Frederick M. Nicholas Garden of Hope with Hernán Vera and past presidents Stan Levy, Fred Nicholas, (Host) Mike Farrell, Steve Nissen, Hon. Charles Palmer and Dan Grunfeld



Catherine Lhamon, Director of Impact Litigation, with Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, launches a lawsuit to protect Los Angeles children from teacher layoffs



**LEARN MORE: GO TO [PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG](http://PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG)  
TO WATCH VIDEOS FROM THE 2011 DOUGLAS DINNER**



# Looking ahead

Public Counsel's Shriver Housing Project team with Director of Homelessness Prevention Will Watts (bottom right).

Public Counsel is poised for major growth in 2012. Our work is getting a big boost from major grants and fundraising that will help us launch new projects and expand others. Here are a few highlights:

## PROTECTING NEIGHBORHOODS

Foreclosures and unemployment have ravaged the neighborhoods of South Los Angeles. Every year thousands of working families wind up on the steps of the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles, one of the nation's busiest civil courtrooms. Many are facing eviction from their homes that could send them and their families into a desperate cycle or even into homelessness.

The Shriver Housing Project aims to support neighborhoods and families by representing thousands of people on the brink of eviction.

"In this economy, struggling neighborhoods need stability, and struggling families need security," said Will Watts, Public Counsel's Director of Homelessness Prevention. "When people have a voice in the legal process, they have more control over their futures."

Public Counsel, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, Inner City Law Center, and the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles launched the Shriver Project with \$8.4 million from the Judicial Council of California. The unprecedented program is one of seven pilot projects created by the Shriver Civil Counsel Act (AB590) in a statewide effort to provide representation to individuals and families in certain high-stakes civil cases.

## GIVING YOUTH A SECOND CHANCE

Youth who wind up in the juvenile justice system too often lose out on their futures too. Every year thousands miss out on their education, wind up in probation camps or on a fast track to jail as an adult. The Everychild Foundation announced its annual \$1 million grant will support a three-year project by Centinela Youth Services to create a justice center across the street from three Los Angeles Juvenile Courts. Public Counsel will provide legal services at the new center, which will serve 1,200 youth. "Our youths' futures aren't written in stone when they enter the juvenile justice system," said Public Counsel President Hernán Vera. "They deserve a chance to take charge of their lives, to get an education, and make a fresh start."

## HELPING FOSTER YOUTH SUCCEED IN SCHOOL

With support from the Stuart Foundation, Eisner Foundation, Carl and Roberta Deutsch Foundation, and Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Public Counsel has placed attorney-social worker teams at two Los Angeles high schools where foster youth are struggling to graduate and will expand our work for foster youth as they take their first steps to living on their own after years in the child welfare system.



**LEARN MORE: GO TO [PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG](http://PUBLICCOUNSEL.ORG)  
TO READ MORE ABOUT OUR UPCOMING WORK**



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