



# Northwest Justice Project

## NJP News | Volume 2| Issue 5/6



*The staff and board of directors of the Northwest Justice Project extends our very best wishes for a happy and peaceful holiday season, and a joyful and healthy New Year to our friends, supporters, clients, and all of your families and communities.*

**ALERTS: 2017 Affordable Care Act Open Enrollment: [Apply Now! \(More Info Here\)](#). & Immigrant Community Education Workshops - [Get schedule here!](#)**

In 2016 NJP protected families and removed barriers to justice and opportunity. I extend my heartfelt appreciation especially to NJP-Pasco's Jefferson Coulter, Karla Camac Carlisle and Linda Banda, for their remarkable leadership in [City of Richland v. Wakefield](#), a seminal case in which the Washington Supreme Court ruled that federal law prohibits the jailing of disabled persons for failure to pay legal financial obligations. This is a tremendous victory for all low-income communities and our work to promote equal justice, opportunity, and dignity!

## NJP Preserves Affordable Housing

Rising rents, worsening homelessness, and growing tent cities and encampments have a serious impact on communities across the state. Every day NJP works to address the fundamental need for decent affordable housing and asserts all legal rights and protections to avoid evictions and preserve affordable housing.

In a recent case, NJP stopped the imminent eviction of 65 families with Section 8 rent vouchers in South King County. New building owners gave tenants notice that Section 8 vouchers would no longer be accepted. All 23 families in one building are African American, many are female-headed households, and other households have disabled family members. NJP attorneys Scott Crain and Matt Brady represented the tenants and raised fair housing violations. As a result of their efforts, the new owners withdrew the notices for one building and delayed until June, 2017 their notices to the other building.



The Renton City Council is now considering an ordinance to prevent landlords from discriminating against renters in the Section 8 rent subsidy program, as have other communities in King County. See press coverage: [Seattle Times](#), [Kiro 7](#), and [King 5](#). NJP's case also generated a lengthy story on the impact of [rising Seattle rents on the section 8 program](#). The problem of landlords discriminating against tenants based on their source of income or rent payments is widespread. This summer NJP hosted a summer [Fredrickson Fellowship](#) to work on the problem.

---



## Family Safety Transforms Lives

Ruth\* and her two children, ages 4 and 9, had to flee. Her husband had thrown her against the wall, pushed her onto the ground, and stabbed into the floor next to her head, threatening to kill her while the children were asleep in the next room. Ruth secured an emergency protective order, but the father hired a lawyer and sued for divorce. NJP's Vancouver office helped Ruth defend herself in the case and avoid having to face her abuser in court.

On Ruth's behalf, NJP proposed a parenting plan that required the father to take parenting and anger management classes, and demanded that Ruth have sole decision-making authority. NJP negotiated final orders, divorcing the parties, putting in place restrictions on the father to protect Ruth and the children, and providing for child support. With their safety assured, the father can visit his children and try to re-establish his relationship.

\* Not the real name

---

## Economic Security for Our Most Vulnerable

Andy\* is permanently disabled and his sole source of income is Social Security Disability benefits (SSDI). Because of his disability, Andy was able to find a special work program that accommodated disabled persons. Unfortunately, the Social Security Administration decided to terminate his SSDI benefits claiming he was working and had been overpaid. His benefits were cut off, and he lost his apartment.

Despite Andy's best efforts, and with the help of relatives, Andy's attempts to appeal the decision were unsuccessful. NJP's Longview office represented Andy to request reconsideration and expedite reinstatement. Andy's monthly benefits were soon reinstated, but NJP had to continue fighting the case until SSA canceled the overpayment and awarded retroactive benefits of more than \$20,000 owed to Andy!

\* Not the real name

---

## Snohomish County Courts Remove Barriers to Justice!

Snohomish County judicial officers have agreed to full compliance with General Court Rule 34 (GR 34). This rule directs the waiver of court and clerk fees based on inability to pay. Uniform implementation of GR 34 across Washington Courts has been a difficult and slow process. Congratulations to NJP-Everett and Snohomish County Legal Services who worked closely with the court to bring about compliance. All NJP offices across the state are making great efforts to educate judges and clerks on full implementation of GR 34, and continue to monitor progress.



In addition, NJP-Everett's leadership on our Drivers Relicensing focus has resulted in the Snohomish District Court, with 4 divisions around the county, embracing community service as a way to pay off fines and sanctions. Community service will remove a significant hardship for low-income individuals ordered to pay fines to restore driver's licenses. Monitoring and implementation

will take place through Friendship Diversion Services.

---

## A Washington First: Spanish Language "HotDocs" Interview

NJP has launched our first Spanish language HotDocs interview on WashingtonLawHelp. The HotDocs interview asks a user questions in Spanish and completes a ready-to-print Answer to a Debt Collection lawsuit in English. The HotDocs [Spanish Language interview is available here](#).

NJP already has [several short HotDocs interactive interviews in English](#) to prompt users through interview question and generate completed court and other documents.

---

To learn more about our work contact [Bryan Baker](#), Director of Development, like us on [Facebook](#), and [visit our website](#) where you can access our [annual reports](#) and explore more of NJP. Also, please share NJP News with your friends and colleagues so they can join NJP in helping make equal justice a reality in Washington State.

Sincerely,



César E. Torres  
Executive Director