

NCCRC

National Coalition for a
Civil Right to Counsel



2024

2024

Throughout this year, the NCCRC has proudly continued the work of

supporting the nationwide movement to establish the right to counsel in critical civil cases. **Our project is the only one in the country that does this work exclusively and at a national level.** *We do this work because the right to counsel helps people protect their basic needs, moves our courts closer to delivering fundamental fairness and access to justice, and ensures that our communities have one more tool to use in the fight against poverty and racial inequity.* In the past year, the national civil right to counsel movement - comprised of impacted individuals, volunteers, community organizers, legal services providers, academics, government staff, and so many others - expanded again with new laws, pilot projects, research, and resources, and new jurisdictions joining the fight. As this movement has grown, the NCCRC has also expanded, welcoming new staff, participants, and partners to our network.

Our mission and vision

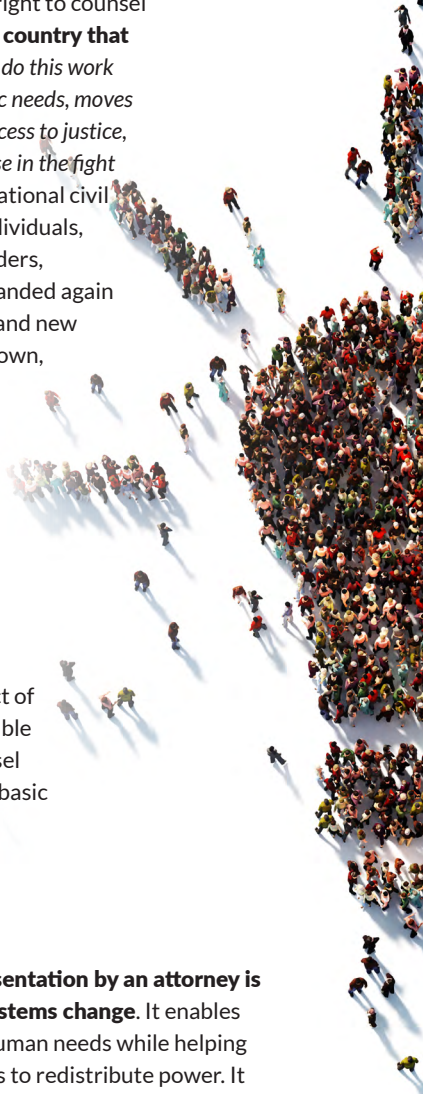
The **National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel (NCCRC)** is working to ensure that individuals have a right to effective counsel when facing the loss of their basic human needs in the civil legal system.

Our vision

We envision a world where all 50 states and the District of Columbia adopt and effectively implement an enforceable right to high-quality, fully funded, client-directed counsel for people in civil cases who are facing the loss of their basic human needs, thus moving towards reversing systemic disempowerment and unfairness, restoring faith in the system, and advancing equal justice.

Why we do this work

We engage in this work because the **right to full representation by an attorney is an evidence-based approach that promotes actual systems change.** It enables people to enforce their rights and protect their basic human needs while helping to effectuate the laws passed to protect people. It helps to redistribute power. It works towards restoring confidence in the justice system. It advances race equity by providing one form of relief to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities disproportionately harmed by, and entangled in, a civil justice system rooted in systemic racism. And it rejects the scarcity-based operations of legal services while advancing long-term fiscal responsibility.





NCCRC Steering Committee

We're incredibly grateful to our Steering Committee for their enduring support of the coalition, the NCCRC staff, and our national work to advance the right to counsel in civil cases:

Zoe Brennan-Krohn

American Civil Liberties Union

Russell Engler

New England Law | Boston

Pablo Estupiñan

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy

Debra Gardner

Public Justice Center

Danny Greenberg

Experience Justice

Alan Houseman

National Equal Justice Library

Earl Johnson

Western Center on Law and Poverty

Ainat Margalit

American Bar Association, SCLAID

Clare Pastore

USC Gould School of Law

Rasheedah Phillips

PolicyLink

Hazel Remesch

Enterprise Community Partners

Anjana Samant

American Civil Liberties Union

Andrew Scherer

New York Law School

Radhika Singh

Nat'l Legal Aid and Defender Ass'n

David Udell

Nat'l Center for Access to Justice at
Fordham Univ. School of Law

Natalece Washington

Nat'l Ass'n of Counsel for Children

This year, long-time members **Debi Perluss and Jayne Tyrell** stepped down from the Steering Committee. These remarkable advocates for the civil right to counsel have been connected with the National Coalition since its founding. We are deeply grateful to both Debi and Jayne for their advocacy, support, energy, and ideas throughout the years. Thank you for making such a positive difference in the work of the NCCRC and in how we execute our mission!

2024: NEW TEAM, NEW WEBSITE, AND BIG PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

This year marked some significant milestones for us!

SHURON AND ANDREW JOIN THE NCCRC TEAM!

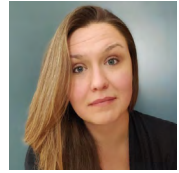
Since 2020, the NCCRC has grown significantly and built out a dedicated team of five staff members! Our expanded team allows us to enhance our civil right to counsel advocacy around the country. We're building stronger relationships with on-the-ground advocates, fostering more collaboration across the civil right to counsel movement, and delivering essential resources.

In 2024, we were thrilled to welcome two talented new members. Shuron Jones joins us as the Tenant Right to Counsel Enactment Advisor, bringing her invaluable experience as an organizer with Homes for All in St. Louis. Her leadership in the successful campaign to pass tenant right to counsel exemplifies the impact of grassroots advocacy. Andrew Ashbrook joins us as Tenant Right to Counsel Implementation Advisor and brings his wealth of on-the-ground experience as a Supervising Attorney at the Bronx Defenders, a legal services provider that is a part of NYC's historic tenant right to counsel.

With Shuron and Andrew, our tenant right to counsel team has been able to expand its expertise, increase our implementation support of the 24 jurisdictions with an enacted tenant right to counsel, and assist over 150 jurisdictions that are working to enact a tenant right to counsel.



John Pollock
Coordinator



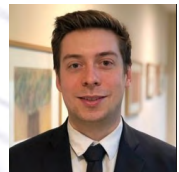
Maria Roumiantseva
Associate Coordinator



Amanda Insalaco
Legal Research and
Legislative Specialist



Shuron Jones
Tenant Right to Counsel
Enactment Advisor



Andrew Ashbrook
Tenant Right to Counsel
Implementation Advisor



Our website has a fresh new look and updated features!

This fall we launched our new website! This work has been years in the making. With the new website (still at civilrighttocounsel.org) we're better able to coordinate and maintain civil right to counsel research and resources through our [Resource Library](#), keep you updated on key developments in your states and regions through our [news page](#), and helpfully show pending state-level legislation directly in the [civil RTC status map](#)! The state legislation is automatically imported daily into the map, so you can now see significant bills that have been introduced in the same place that you're checking out other recent activities such as pilot projects and new reports. And, keep an eye out for new participant-only features in the new year!

NCCRC
National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel
Ensuring individuals have a right to effective counsel when facing the loss of their basic human needs in the civil legal system.

ABOUT US +
ABOUT CIVIL RTC +
NEWS
RESOURCE LIBRARY +
GET INVOLVED
DONATE
STATUS MAP

SEARCH

A right to counsel in critical civil cases is a safeguard when it matters most.

Do you have a right to counsel?

Featured: U.S. ranked 107th out of 142 countries on access to civil justice

The 2024 World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index ranked the U.S. 107th out of 142 countries in the world on access to civil justice.

READ MORE

Civil right to counsel status map

Civil right to counsel in the news

2024-10-29
Delaware finally enacts right to counsel for parents

2024-10-24
U.S. ranked 107th out of 142 countries on access to civil justice

2024-10-24
All about Milwaukee's universal tenant representation program

We began the incredible journey of strategic planning. In recognition of how much the civil right to counsel movement and the NCCRC have grown in the last twenty years, and to become better equipped to handle the successes and challenges on both fronts, we engaged [Triple Creeks Consulting](#) (TCC) this past summer. TCC is helping us streamline internal operations and set out our plan for the future of our civil right to counsel advocacy.

We continued to educate on and raise the profile of civil right to counsel work. This year, we spoke and hosted panels at over a dozen conferences and events, including the Equal Justice Conference, National Legal Aid & Defender Association Annual Conference, Housing Justice Network Annual Conference, Southern Conference on Homelessness, Self Represented Litigation Network Summit, the Fordham Symposium on Access to Justice. We also made presentations to ChangeLabs, Civil Justice Research Initiative, Legal Impact Network, National Civil Justice Institute, and more! At these conferences and events, we not only inform and educate but also get a chance to learn more about the connected work happening around the country. In addition, we kept the right to counsel in the public eye by talking to the press. Our Coordinator, John Pollock, was featured in [NBC Nightly News](#), [Law360](#), and [Harper's Magazine](#), and wrote an [op-ed for the Connecticut Mirror](#) on why a right to counsel for tenants is both transformational and economical.

SPOTLIGHT: The Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Eviction

We advance the tenant right to counsel movement in collaboration with tenant leaders, organizers, eviction defense attorneys, and other supporters from around the nation. **We do this work because as long as evictions exist, and alongside other critical reforms in landlord/tenant law, tenants must have representation in cases that threaten the stability of their housing.**

Tenant RTC is an effective, evidence-based reform that can help inject more transparency, fairness, and equity into notoriously unbalanced eviction cases and other displacement proceedings, which can impact virtually all other basic human needs like child custody, education, employment, and mental and physical health.

The right to counsel for tenants continues to be the fastest-growing area of our work. Organizers, advocates, and policymakers are using the [24 jurisdictions](#) with existing tenant right to counsel laws as models, and many are gearing up to bring this critical protection to tenants in their communities. We support these jurisdictions in their efforts through one-on-one technical assistance, public education, legal research, and development of comprehensive resources.

This year, more tenants in the country have a right to counsel when facing an eviction.

- In April 2024, the **Nebraska** state legislature passed the 23rd tenant right to counsel law in the country, providing a right to counsel for unrepresented public housing tenants in “cities of the metropolitan class”, (Omaha is the only city fitting this definition at the moment). *The NCCRC provided testimony in support of the bill.*
- In July 2024, **LA County** enacted an ordinance establishing a right to counsel for tenants at 80% or below area median income who are facing eviction in the unincorporated areas of the county. This was the 24th jurisdiction, and second county to do so. *The NCCRC supported the advocacy efforts of organizers and advocates in the County and is supporting the continuing work to bring RTC to the City of Los Angeles.*

Did you know? While new tenant RTC laws were passed this year, **existing tenant RTC laws expanded.** Philadelphia expanded to five total zip codes, Michigan earmarked an additional \$2.5 million for Detroit’s RTC, and Washington State approved an additional \$3 million in funding over the next two years.

.....

“One of the most crucial roles that the NCCRC serves is as a connector to organizations implementing tenant RTC across the country. We host a monthly call that allows leaders from many different jurisdictions to discuss issues and learn from each other about how they are approaching RTC. Not only is this a great learning space, but it also is creating a sense of community within the movement.”

—Andrew Ashbrook,
Tenant Right to Counsel
Implementation Advisor

The Powerful Impact of a Tenant Right to Counsel

You can find the links to the jurisdictional reports in our Tenant RTC Enacted Legislation [Matrix](#).

WASHINGTON STATE: 50%+
of tenants remained in their homes in known closed cases.

NEW YORK CITY: 84%
of represented tenants remained in their homes.

CONNECTICUT:
Of the 82% of clients who wanted to prevent an involuntary move, 71% achieved that goal.

BOULDER: 63%
of represented cases avoided eviction, which was a 26% increase.

CLEVELAND: 93%
of clients avoided an eviction judgment or an involuntary move.

SAN FRANCISCO: 59%
of represented tenants remained in their homes, and of the 30% who did not remain, 70% received a favorable settlement.

TOLEDO: Nearly 88%
of tenants in closed cases avoided eviction.

KANSAS CITY: 79%
drop in eviction rate in the first 3 months of RTC.

TENANT RIGHT TO COUNSEL JURISDICTIONS

In recognition of the interests at stake, effectiveness of counsel, power imbalance between landlords and tenants, race equity considerations, and cost savings, 17 cities, 5 states, and 2 counties have enacted a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction since 2017, and the movement is still growing.

CITIES

New York City (2017)	Minneapolis (2021)
San Francisco (2018)	Seattle (2021)
Newark (2018)	Kansas City (2021)
Cleveland (2019)	Louisville (2021)
Philadelphia (2020)	New Orleans (2022)
Boulder (2020)	Detroit (2022)
Baltimore (2020)	Jersey City (2023)
Denver (2021)	St. Louis (2023)
Toledo (2021)	

COUNTIES

Westchester County (2023)
Los Angeles County (2024)

STATES

Washington (2021)
Maryland (2021)
Connecticut (2021)
Minnesota (2023)
Nebraska (2024)

This year, we released new tenant RTC resources and trainings!

With our expanded tenant RTC team, we've also deepened our commitment to and collaboration with the tenants, advocates, organizers, and supporters working on tenant right to counsel around the country.



Advancing Racial and Health Justice Through a Right to Counsel for Tenants: A Primer for the Public Health Field

In March 2024, in partnership with Human Impact Partners, ChangeLab Solutions, PolicyLink, and Results for America, we launched this comprehensive resource to assist the public health field in advocating for tenant RTC laws and policies. Our launch webinar in March had over 1,000 registrants!

Beyond the Courtroom: A Tenant Right to Counsel's Broader Impact

In April 2024, we held a webinar about the impacts of a tenant's right to counsel "beyond the courtroom." We heard from leaders in San Francisco, Connecticut, and New York about how tenant RTC has empowered tenants in their jurisdictions to engage in organizing and rent strikes, improved the behavior of systems actors like landlords and judges, led to broader law reform by identifying systemic flaws in the landlord/tenant law, and improved the coordination and efficacy of legal services organizations.

Building Support for a Civil Right to Counsel by Anchoring Your Case in Racial Justice: A Playbook for Justice Seekers Everywhere!

In May 2024, we and New York Law School Wilf Impact Center for Public Interest Law helped The Case Made develop and release this playbook to help advocates incorporate race equity into their RTC advocacy.

Housing Equity in Action: Advancing a Tenant Right to Counsel

In Fall 2024, we co-launched, alongside our partners PolicyLink, Results for America, and Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), the third tenant RTC Sprint. **This was the largest tenant RTC Sprint cohort to date**, with participating teams from 15 jurisdictions around the country, comprised of tenant leaders and organizers, advocates, government officials, and more in a 7-week virtual learning opportunity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Our Coordinator, John Pollock, published a critical new academic work on the right to counsel for tenants: [Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Eviction: Justification, History, and Future](#) in the Fordham Urban Law Journal. The article recaps the history of RTC generally before addressing the growth, successes, and challenges of this burgeoning movement. John also worked with Sen. Cory Booker's office to help draft [US SB 4646](#) around the right to counsel for tenants.
- We kept our network engaged and informed through our biweekly civil right to counsel newsletters and e-alerts.
- We provided input on the National Homelessness Law Center's (NHLC) annual [Human Right to Housing Report Card](#), which ranks the U.S. on the seven internationally recognized elements of the human right to housing, and on the [World Justice Project's 2024 Rule of Law Index](#), which ranks countries on access to and affordability of civil justice (among other factors).

In addition, we assisted the development of new pilot programs and the increases in funding for tenant legal representation nationwide. Richmond, VA has a new pilot funded by the City Council while Pennsylvania and Massachusetts approved substantial statewide funding for tenant representation that may set up for a future statewide RTC.

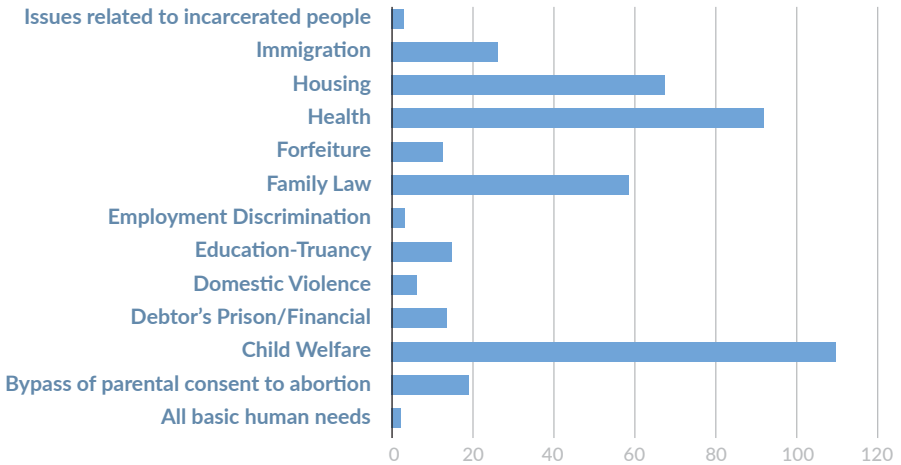
We continue to support tenant right to counsel legislative efforts in 150+ jurisdictions. We provide campaign building, stakeholder identification, data identification and development, bill language, cost estimates, implementation concerns, funding, and tactics to further race equity and tenant empowerment, and help bridge connections within and between jurisdictions. **We're there to support advocates working to establish tenant RTC around the country.**

"TRTC is a policy that has gained traction because of the nature and severity of the eviction problem and its effectiveness at addressing it....Yet it must be emphasized once more that TRTC is not a "silver bullet": it is a complementary reform to so many other housing reforms that must happen. Some of these reforms are further upstream, like affordable housing development and zoning reform that can help fewer people wind up in eviction proceedings in the first place, and some are enactments of substantive tenant rights that TRTC can help enforce, such as a real warranty of habitability, just cause protection, and rent control or stabilization. Ultimately, we should not be choosing between these investments, all of which are necessary to correct a deeply unjust housing market. Instead, we should find inspiration in tenant organizers who have consistently pushed the boundaries of what is 'possible' and made change like the TRTC movement possible."

—John Pollock,
[Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Eviction: Justification, History, and Future](#)

ADVANCEMENT OF A RIGHT TO COUNSEL IN KEY CIVIL AREAS

2024: Frequency of topics



In the 2023-24 legislative session, we tracked and reported on more than 300 bills introduced in 48 states and at the federal level. We provided technical assistance and/or submitted testimony on **more than a dozen critical bills.** Our Legal Research and Legislative Specialist, Amanda Insalaco, does the incredible job of monitoring, interpreting, and reporting on these developments. Amanda's work has a profound impact, allowing us to keep our network informed through our RTC status map and newsletters, and ensuring we submit testimony where necessary.

SPOTLIGHT: Mississippi finally adds RTC for parents, children in neglect and termination cases

After a years-long pilot project—which we supported for more than a decade—demonstrating the effectiveness of and need for a right to counsel in abuse/neglect and termination of parental rights cases, Mississippi passed [SB 2792](#), guaranteeing a right to counsel for low-income custodial parents in such cases. In doing so, Mississippi joins the vast majority of states in providing for such a right. We worked with a broad coalition of stakeholders: judges, legal services programs, public defenders, foundations, and others.

The state also enacted [HB 1149](#), for which the NCCRC submitted testimony in support, which expanded the right to counsel for children in abuse and neglect matters to all stages of the proceedings.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2023-2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

- After many years of attempts, Delaware finally enacted [HB 86](#), establishing a right to counsel for parents in child welfare and termination of parental rights cases (previously, appointment was discretionary with the judge). The NCCRC testified in support.
- New Hampshire passed [NH SB 463](#), which establishes a right to counsel for children placed in certain institutions, while for all other children appointment of counsel remains discretionary. Before this legislation passed, the discretionary appointment of counsel for kids in abuse matters was limited to situations where there was a conflict between the child's wishes and their guardian ad litem's recommendation. SB 463 removed this conflict requirement.
- **New funding development for representation of children and parents in child welfare proceedings!** For a number of years, states have been able to get a dollar-for-dollar match for the costs of providing representation to parents and children in child welfare proceedings. In May 2024, through changes to [Title IV-E](#), changes that we weighed in on and supported, the federal Department of Health and Human Services expanded the costs eligible for federal reimbursement to include expenses related to representing a child not yet in foster care, which could include housing and other types of civil matters.

SPOTLIGHT: Efforts continue to establish the right to counsel through litigation

Over the years, we have helped advocates in various states in litigation to establish a right to counsel as a matter of constitutional law or to interpret right to counsel laws, and this year was no exception. In *Jeter v. Poole*, in a 4-3 decision, the NY Court of Appeals decided among other claims that parents do not have a constitutional right to counsel in administrative proceedings for placing their names on the child abuse/neglect registry, a step implicating both employment and reputation. While not addressing the RTC claim directly, the dissent pointed out the "irony" of the parent winning when represented in the abuse/neglect proceeding but losing when unrepresented in the registry proceeding based on the same issue. And in *Kinard v. Summit*, a Missouri Court of Appeals is weighing whether a person subjected to guardianship has a right to counsel of choice to try to terminate the guardianship. In both cases, we collaborated with other advocacy groups on amicus briefs and helped the appellants prepare for oral arguments.

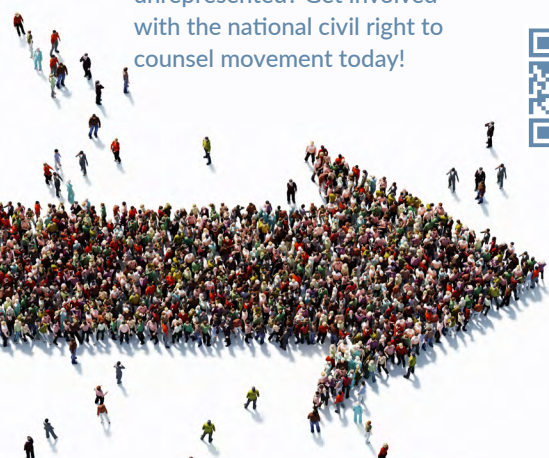
Learn more about the civil right to counsel in our September 2024 discussion at the Public Justice Center's [Justice for Breakfast Series!](#)

NCCRC

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Civil Right to Counsel



Our work to help advance the right to counsel in civil cases wouldn't be possible without your help! As we move into 2025, how will you help to ensure that people facing one of the toughest moments of their lives in a court of law are not also doing so unrepresented? Get involved with the national civil right to counsel movement today!



DONATE

civilrighttocounsel.org/support-us/



SIGN UP FOR OUR E-ALERTS

bit.ly/RTCealerts



LEARN ABOUT BECOMING AN NCCRC PARTICIPANT!

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