

NELP

NATIONAL
EMPLOYMENT
LAW PROJECT

NELP IMPACT REPORT 2018-19



**LEGACY,
REFLECTION,
AND CONNECTION**



Raise the Floor Alliance brings Chicago area worker centers together into a collective voice for economic policies that foster permanent, full-time, family-supporting work. Photo Credit: Raise the Floor Alliance

NELP thanks our partners for their dedication to the movement for workers' rights across the country.

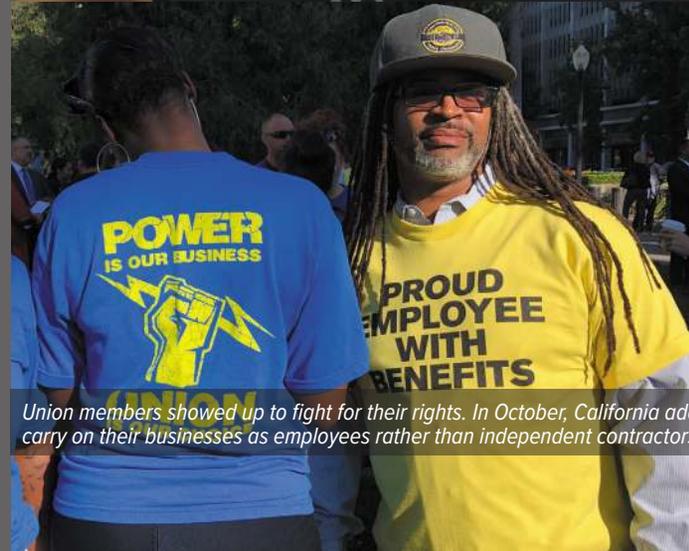
Learn more about all NELP partners at nelp.org.



NY Caring Majority is a movement of seniors people with disabilities, family caregivers, domestic workers, and home care providers from all across New York state. Photo Credit: NY Caring Majority

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Union members showed up to fight for their rights. In October, California adopted AB5, the law requiring companies to treat workers they hire to carry on their businesses as employees rather than independent contractors. Photo Credit: IBEW 1245



...We are proud of our legacy, but we are not resting on it. We will continue to listen and learn from movement partners as we fight for equity and justice.”



This year, as National Employment Law Project (NELP) celebrated our 50th Anniversary, we’ve reflected often on our mission, our history, how and why we do our work, and our partners—each of you who have helped us pave a path towards improved labor standards and worker protections. As you will see on the facing page, there is much for us to celebrate together.

Though our movement faces deep challenges, we know that working together is how we gain power and strength for all workers. And we know that when the attacks intensify, it is because the voice and power of working people threaten the greed, racism, and inequitable power structures that thrive on dividing us.

At NELP, we understand the need to change and adapt as the economy, business and workplace practices evolve. Change has been a constant for us, from when we began as a local workers’ rights clinic, housed at Columbia Law School; to when we became a national legal services backup center; to our emergence as a leading national advocacy group

and convener of allies in the fight for workers’ rights. Partnering with allies around the nation, we have strengthened unemployment insurance and workers compensation programs, won minimum wage increases and tackled systemic wage theft, advanced fair-chance hiring for people with records, fought for safe and healthy workplaces, tackled abusive labor practices in the “gig” economy, and in many other ways, elevated and addressed economic and workplace challenges facing workers of color, women and immigrants in low-wage jobs. The following pages reflect on our work and our impact throughout 2018 and 2019.

Looking back on what we have won and the road we’ve traveled with you, we are proud of our legacy, but we are not resting on it. We will continue to listen and learn from movement partners as we fight for equity and justice. We will amplify the voices of workers and organizers, the true experts on the issues confronting workers in the low-wage economy. We will strive to put work and working people — regardless of race, sex, class, sexuality, immigration status or any

other marker opponents use to divide us—front and center in our national conversation. And we will never stop fighting for an economy and workplaces that fairly and justly recognize and reward work and working people as the drivers of our nation’s strength and prosperity.

To all of you who have supported NELP over the years, we extend our deepest gratitude. You sustain us, enabling us to maintain the fight and deepen capacity of our partners. I invite you to, learn more about our work, learn more about how to engage with NELP through our online platform NELP Connect, access or share resources, and join us for the fight ahead.

In my final year as NELP’s executive director, I have been proud of all we have achieved together – and confident that, under the leadership of incoming executive director Rebecca Dixon, and with your support, NELP’s impact will only grow and deepen in the coming years.

In grateful solidarity,
Christine L. Queen

NELP's Impact



**IN THE LAST DECADE ALONE,
NELP'S LEADERSHIP IN
AREAS SUCH AS:**

- Raising wages through the minimum wage and other victories,
- Providing fair-chance employment for people with arrest or conviction records,
- Creating the strongest unemployment insurance benefits in U.S. history,
- Improving conditions for temporary workers, and
- Strengthening health and safety standards for workers

**HAS HELPED
ADVANCE ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY AND
SECURITY FOR UP TO:**

100
**MILLION WORKERS
AND JOBSEEKERS**



Youth leader Giovana Castaneda and Director of Organizing Craig Garcia represented Make the Road - New Jersey at our 50th Anniversary gala.

“

We have a federal minimum wage because workers everywhere in this country should be paid enough to meet their needs and live with dignity...” Owens said. “Finally the House has affirmed what we’ve known for years: \$15 an hour is the bare minimum needed to get by in this country.”

- Christine Owens,
NELP Executive Director

Since January 2018, NELP’s Work Quality team provided legal, policy, and communications support to more than a dozen campaigns to raise state and local minimum wages, including **successful \$15 statewide campaigns this year in NJ, IL, MD and CT.**

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The federal minimum wage coalition – led by NELP, SEIU and EPI and including more than 100 organizations – scored an unprecedented milestone in June 2019, with U.S. House of Representatives **passage of the “Raise the Wage Act,”** which **gradually phases in a \$15 federal standard;** eliminates subminimum wages for tipped employees, young workers and people with disabilities; and indexes the rate to rise annually.

In early 2019, NELP supported the visionary leadership and intense organizing of young members of **Make the Road – New Jersey,** who **successfully fought to include young workers in the state’s new \$15 minimum wage law.**

Providing ongoing legal and technical assistance, NELP was a key partner in the **successful campaign to repeal Colorado’s law barring local minimum wages,** marking the first legislative rollback of these bans on local action.



Colorado People’s Alliance (COPA) is a racial justice, member-led organization, which builds power to improve the lives of all Coloradans through leadership development, organizing and alliance building. Photo Credit: COPA



NELP and allies are working to expand fair-chance hiring laws to every corner of the nation, because a conviction in one's past shouldn't be a life sentence to joblessness. Photo Credit: Vocal-NY



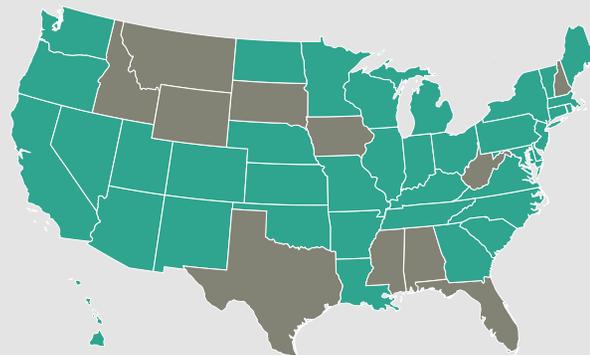
NELP's research and policy analysis, along with technical support for partners, helped to broaden work opportunities for people with records across the country, with legislatures in at least 21 states adopting fair chance licensing and hiring reforms in 2018 and 2019. Of these, 13 states (along with 18 cities and counties) extended fair chance laws to private sector employers.

NELP's Work Equity team convened **focus groups in Los Angeles with participants and graduates of two leading Prop 39 pre-apprenticeship programs serving people with records seeking employment in unions jobs.**

These focus groups provide first person accounts that will shape NELP recommendations for successful implementation and expansion of California's ambitious Prison to Employment Initiative; a model to expand pre-apprenticeships & apprenticeships for communities of color with records.

NELP, in partnership with the Opportunity Institute and the Stanford Criminal Justice Center, provided expertise for **formal guidance issued by the California Community College Chancellor urging the state's community colleges to adopt fair chance hiring best practices**, and we conducted trainings across the state to educate and encourage community colleges to implement these practices.

NELP received funding from the Art for Justice Fund, an innovative \$100 million five-year multi-funder initiative that aims to turn art into action for criminal justice reform. With the grant, NELP will be building a bold reentry agenda grounded in racial equity in partnership with groups in Illinois, Louisiana, and Ohio.



WITH SO MUCH ACTION IN SO MANY PLACES, 3/4 OF THE U.S. POPULATION LIVES IN A JURISDICTION THAT HAS BANNED THE BOX.

WORK EQUITY

NELP's groundbreaking reports, **Uber State Interference and Rights at Risk**, highlighted gig and other companies' attempts to rewrite rules of employment under state and federal laws—and write off labor rights for workers providing these companies' services.



Partnering with the Chicago Workers' Collaborative and other allies, **NELP's Work Structures team helped launch Temp Worker Justice (TWJ)**, the first national organization solely focused on addressing issues facing temporary workers through research, education, on-the-ground organizing support, and legal support for workplace leaders and partner organizations.

Concerned over employers' growing use of technology to monitor, manage, discipline and intrude on workers' private lives, **NELP helped launch and now co-leads a coalition of labor and consumer advocates in California** that is working to deliver comprehensive legal protections for workers' privacy interests under state laws and policies.

NELP worked with state and national partners to win an **innovative Domestic Worker Bill of Rights in Seattle, WA**, which covers domestic workers whether or not they are classified as "employees" and includes worker representatives on a local standards-setting board.



The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) is the nation's leading voice for dignity and fairness for the millions of domestic workers in the United States. Photo Credit: NDWA

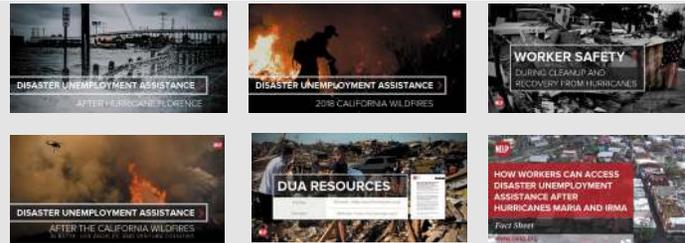
NELP SUPPORTED NEW JERSEY PARTNERS IN DEVELOPING MODELS FOR AND SECURING INTRODUCTION OF A COMPREHENSIVE BILL EXTENDING CRITICAL LABOR RIGHTS TO TEMP WORKERS IN THE STATE.

In September 2019, **California passed the landmark law AB5** to use the clear and fair ABC test to determine when a company must be accountable to workers as its employees. The law protects employee rights and lifting wages and benefits of Uber drivers, gig workers, janitors, nail salon workers, construction workers, homecare workers, and more.

Partnering with unions representing home care workers, **NELP helped generate public opposition to and media attention on a regulation aimed at dismantling some home care workers' collective bargaining rights**, by stripping away a longstanding, convenient mechanism for paying dues.

NELP OFFERED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TO PARTNERS IN 12 STATES AND PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN SUCCESSFULLY FIGHTING HARMFUL UI REFORMS IN IOWA, KENTUCKY, AND MISSOURI.

Working closely with state partners, we blocked a legislative attempt in Ohio to deny workers compensation coverage for seriously injured undocumented workers and **secured introduction of first-of-its-kind legislation in Massachusetts to strengthen anti-retaliation protections for injured workers who file compensation claims.**



Providing testimony, technical assistance, and guidance for federal and state policy makers and partners, **NELP led the charge to support unemployment benefits for furloughed federal employees forced to work without pay during the government shutdown**, and helped win local compensation legislation covering the potentially eligible 195,000 federal employees living in D.C.

NELP coordinated coalition efforts responding to proposed federal regulations undercutting important protections for jobless workers, including proposals to expand state agency authority to drug-test UI applicants and privatize employment services. Our work helped generate numerous public comments and media attention.



Photo Credit: NY Caring Majority



In response to devastating natural disasters, we published seven fact sheets on accessing Disaster Unemployment Assistance as well as a fact sheet on health and safety for workers during hurricane clean ups. In just one snapshot, we logged more than 17,500 visits to the webpage.

Government Affairs & Legal Advocacy

NELP advocates for the priorities of working people before federal and state legislatures, federal administrative and executive agencies, the Executive branch, as well as in the media, through public education efforts and by supporting our on-the-ground partners.



Casa Latina's mission is to empower Latino immigrants through educational and economic opportunities. Photo Credit: Casa Latina

NELP's Government Affairs team, in conjunction with our Legal Team, played a leading role in coordinating and submitting opposition comments, along with other actions, in **response to over a dozen major attacks on federal labor standards by the Trump Labor Department and National Labor Relations board**, threatening rights and protections for millions of workers.

NELP authored 20 amicus briefs in the U.S. Supreme Court, federal Courts of Appeals and state courts, making the case for strong legal standards upholding workers' rights to good jobs, economic security protections and employer accountability for labor practices.

NELP provided testimony and other support for successful efforts in at least six states to extend overtime pay coverage, expand bargaining rights, and strengthen fiduciary protections for workers.

NELP secured a provision in the House appropriations bill blocking implementation of new rules that would allow for hog-slaughter line speeds that are dangerous for workers, consumers and the animals.

NELP SECURED AN ADDITIONAL \$60 MILLION IN APPROPRIATIONS FOR WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION IN THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL.

Responding to regressive Supreme Court decisions slamming the courthouse door on workers and authorizing employers to force all workplace disputes into closed-door, one-on-one, employer-controlled arbitration, **NELP launched a major public education offensive and is actively involved in several state campaigns for new approaches to mitigate this stranglehold on workers' legal rights.**

Strategic Partnerships

NELP partnered with farmworkers, community advocates, worker centers, unions and legal experts to **win groundbreaking New York State legislation ending 80 years of racial exclusion and injustice and extending basic labor protections** like overtime pay and the right to organize to the tens-of-thousands of farmworkers whose labor sustains the state's multi-billion dollar agriculture industry.

The California Strategic Wage Theft Enforcement Partnership, a **NELP-coordinated collaboration with the California Labor Commissioner's Office and 14 workers' rights and legal advocacy organizations**, led to assessments of **\$46 million in wages owed to over 5500 workers in just over 2.5 years**—showing the impact of pro-active, industry-based, collaborative approaches to making labor law real.

With a collaborative of allies from across California, NELP led the **development of a vision-based narrative for work that emphasizes collective action and a future where we all thrive**, and which will inform a long-term worker bill of rights platform for California.

NELP'S WORKER CENTER SUPPORT PROGRAM ASSISTED 26 WORKER CENTERS AND SIMILAR WORKER ORGANIZATIONS IN 19 STATES.

NELP's worker center support program assisted 26 worker centers and similar worker organizations in 19 states with legal and policy advocacy, campaign incubation, strategic communications and coalition-building. Through one-on-one consultations, webinars, and other means, we are also helping worker centers navigate complex legal questions related to application of federal tax and labor law to their organizational structures and strategies.



The Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) educates, organizes and empowers the low income and working class immigrant Chinese community in San Francisco to build collective power with other oppressed communities to demand better living and working conditions and justice for all people. Photo Credit: CPA



Supporting the economic justice movement



NELP provides legal, research, communications, and policy support to worker centers, partners, and allies nationwide.

NELP thanks you for your generosity and commitment to creating good jobs that lift up economic and racial justice, and advance workplace rights.

- In 2018, **NELP paid out \$1,490,000 in grants to state and local partners** to help them expand capacity and drive labor and economic policy reforms at the local levels.
- In 2019, **our NELP 50 Anniversary gala raised over \$350,000 to support our equity fund for NELP's national strategy conference.**
- In November of 2019, **NELP's national conference, "We're All In" brought together 300 attendees and 186 organizations** composed of worker leaders and advocates to connect policy discussion to the real change we need in 2020 and beyond.
- NELP's audited financials and 990 can be found online at **nelp.org/impact**.

SO FAR THIS YEAR, NELP HAS ENGAGED WITH PARTNERS, ADVISED POLICYMAKERS, AND AMPLIFIED WORKERS' VOICES ON LABOR AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE MATTERS AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, AND IN 41 STATES PLUS THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND PUERTO RICO.



Connect with NELP



In 2019, NELP launched a members-only, online community that offers expert information to attorneys, advocates, scholars, policymakers and others who are fighting wage theft and the erosion of labor standards for workers. NELP Connect's resources include state and federal litigation materials; guidance on public-agency wage enforcement practices; model legislation; wage-justice campaign materials; and industry-based research and data.



Join at connect.nelp.org

Features:

- reach directory of worker's rights advocates, lawyers, organizers
- engage in advocacy conversations on discussion boards
- access and contribute to rich resource libraries

Throughout 2019 and 2020, NELP Connect will expand to cover more issues and reach more communities.



www.nelp.org
Visit our website for resource and information on all NELP campaigns.



www.raisetheminimumwage.org
Learn more about our minimum wage fights on the federal, state, and local levels.



www.puttingworkersfirst.org
View Trump administration actions affecting workers and worker organizations.



Or connect with us at Info@nelp.org



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December 2019

NELP's staff are unionized with National Organization of Legal Services Workers, UAW Local 2320.





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ADVANCING
DIGNITY
AND JUSTICE
AT WORK
TOGETHER

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