



 north carolina  
**JUSTICE CENTER**

# 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

MOVING OUR STATE  
TOWARD JUSTICE FOR ALL



NC Justice Center

*Opportunity and Prosperity for...*

Mike Da  
Nov 3, 1974  
to  
April 1, 2008  
The ER is



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## 2013: THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES.

The Justice Center's mission: to end poverty in North Carolina. To get there, we fight to make sure everyone in North Carolina has access to high-quality education, health care and jobs. We work to protect public education, defend immigrants, expand access to health care and make sure low- and middle-income families have the opportunity to build prosperity. It's a big fight. But we're in it for the long haul.

*We fight because North Carolina needs a champion.*

## THANK YOU FOR HELPING US HELP NORTH CAROLINA.

### Dear Friends of the Justice Center,

Because you, like those of us at the Justice Center, care deeply about North Carolina and its people, you know that 2013 was a challenging year. The Justice Center played a critical role in mitigating the damage from efforts to dismantle progressive policies and programs that had been built over decades and that had made our state a model for the region and the nation. Although we succeeded in protecting some core programs, other policy decisions made last year imposed heavy burdens on the poor and those struggling to remain in the middle class. A focus of our advocacy for 2014 will be ensuring that the public at large and policymakers understand the true impact of the decisions that were made in 2013 and act to reverse these devastating policy choices.

Although we saw some policy losses in 2013, the Justice Center continued to advance the interests and protect the rights of low- and moderate-income families in the courts and in communities across the state. We litigated to recover hundreds of thousands of dollars for victims of abusive consumer, employment and housing practices. Among other victories, we recovered unpaid wages for hundreds of seafood workers, recovered thousands in illegal late fees for apartment residents, and established valuable precedent protecting homeowners from foreclosure. We successfully challenged policies that violated mandates of our state Constitution or failed to comply with state and federal law. For example, we were part of the litigation team that stopped the implementation of the new school voucher program that diverted critical funding from public schools to unregulated private schools. Our staff also provided critical data, analysis and policy recommendations that helped community leaders plan for accessible transit, provide affordable housing, remove barriers for ex-offenders and secure affordable health care.

As we travel across the state, we hear from thousands of North Carolinians about their desire for a new direction for their state. The Justice Center will be working with our partners in the months ahead to develop a comprehensive set of policy initiatives that can help provide that new direction. We hope that each of you will be part of this effort, contributing your ideas, your passion, and your skills to enable us, together, to build a better future for all North Carolinians.

### Thanks to each of you for your support and partnership in the work of the Justice Center.

With warm regards,



**Melinda Lawrence**  
Executive Director



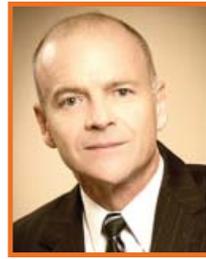
**Bill Wilson**  
Deputy Director





**Dhamian A. Blue**  
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GRAEBE, HANNA  
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**Rev. Cathy Tamsberg**  
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**John I. Wilson**  
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NATIONAL  
EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION (RET.)

*The Justice Center thanks the board members who retired from the Board of Directors at the end of 2013 – Rev. Dr. William Barber, II and Rev. George Reed – for their service and invaluable contributions.*

newsobserver.com

# TAX PLAN IS "NOTHING BUT A PRETTY PIGGY..."

WHERE THIS BIG PIGGY  
GETS ROAST BEEF ...

... AND THESE LITTLE  
PIGGIES GET NONE.



FIND OUT MORE:  
[NCTAXSHIFT.ORG](http://NCTAXSHIFT.ORG)



DONT TAKE  
MONEY  
FROM MY  
SCHOOL!

I WANT A  
TEACHER  
ASSISTANT THIS  
YEAR!



The Justice Center's Budget & Tax Center (BTC) seeks to inform and influence the public debate on budget, tax and economic issues through credible analysis; effective, strategic messages; and promoting broader participation by North Carolinians, particularly those impacted by the policies being enacted.

Changes to the state's tax code will shape North Carolina's economic and social landscape for years to come. In 2013, in the midst of the most prominent tax fight in the country, BTC played a critical role in the public debate about changes to the tax code by serving as the principal source of independent, reliable analysis on state fiscal policies and proposals for the public, policymakers and the media.

Through research, strategic communications and public education, the Justice Center demonstrated the harm to public investments—schools, health care and courts—and to the economy that proposed tax changes would



have. The ultimate outcome is a tax plan that reduces available revenues by at least \$650 million each year once fully implemented and shifts the tax load onto low- and middle-income taxpayers while wealthy taxpayers and profitable corporations get a tax cut.

Experts from the Budget & Tax Center produced the only independent analysis of who would pay under the tax plan, effectively demonstrating that the bottom 80 percent of taxpayers, those with incomes below \$84,000, would generally see their taxes go up under the plan.

BTC dubbed this phenomenon "The Great Tax Shift," where the richest receive the greatest benefit and the tax load is shifted on to those less able to pay. The term—and concern over the impacts on North Carolina taxpayers—came to frame the debate in coverage by the media as well as editorials in all major metro areas. Our engagement of community partners and faith leaders was essential to complement our analysis with stories of the real human impact of the tax changes in communities.

In combination with work to document that fewer dollars would be available to invest in educating our children, building our infrastructure and supporting the health and safety of our communities, BTC was able to demonstrate the harm to the broader economy as well. With help from BTC, economists and business leaders as well as leaders in other states spoke out making clear tax cuts would not deliver on job creation promises or usher in a period of growth. Tax cuts, as these leaders



and the Justice Center argued, were not needed to grow the economy. In fact, BTC's analysis demonstrated that this kind of approach to economic growth has failed in states that have tried it.

BTC efforts to provide rigorous and evidence-based analysis that tells the story of the role of taxes in supporting a stronger North Carolina will continue and gain importance as the impacts of the tax plan and subsequent budget decisions take effect.



NC Policy Watch is a progressive, nonprofit and non-partisan public policy organization and news outlet dedicated to informing elected officials as they debate important issues and, ultimately, to improving the quality of life for all North Carolinians. NC Policy Watch is an independent project of the NC Justice Center, North Carolina's leading private, nonprofit anti-poverty organization.

NC Policy Watch, the front page of North Carolina's progressive media presence, had a spectacular year

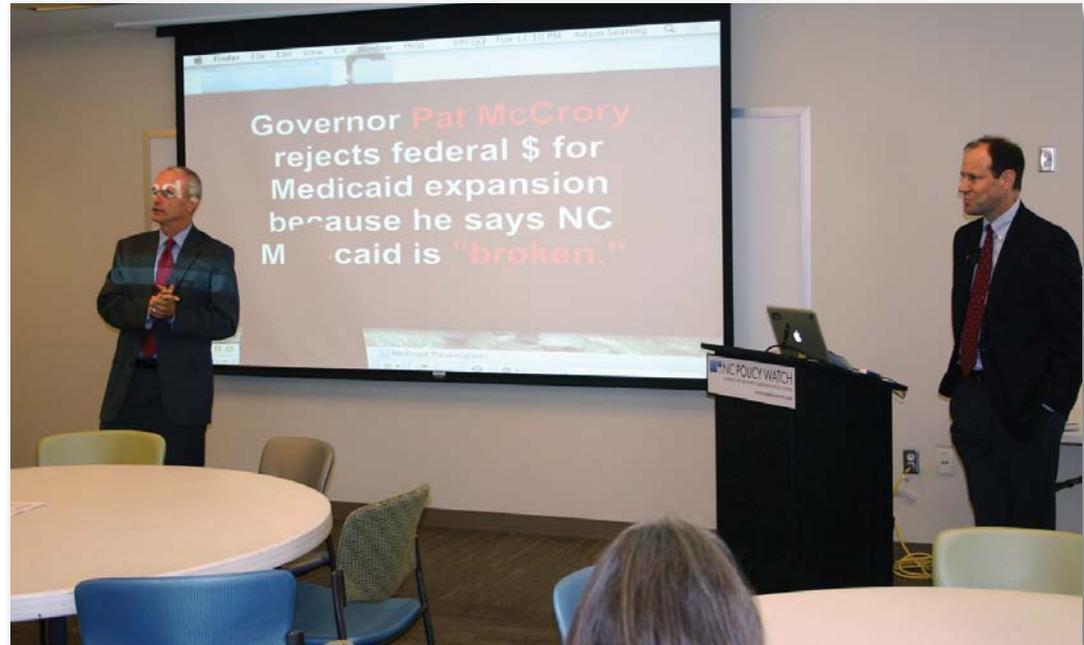


breaking important news stories and providing essential information to observers.

Visits to Policy Watch's website and social media reached eye-popping numbers last

year. By the end of 2013, NC Policy Watch's main site had 840,342 page views; the Progressive Pulse blog had a whopping 1,179,167 views. As of December 2013, the site had 6,166 fans on Facebook, and Policy Watch's crack team of analysts and reporters boast more than 13,000 followers between them.

There are good reasons that visits to Policy Watch are growing dramatically. NC Policy Watch was instrumental in covering the cuts to North Carolina's public schools



due to decisions made by the NC General Assembly during the 2013 legislative session. Through their "Tracking the Cuts: The Dismantling of Our Public Schools" series, education reporter Lindsay Wagner and the NCPW team kept a running tally of education funding cuts that local school districts faced at the onset of the 2013-14 academic year. Among the stories broken by Policy Watch investigative reporter Sarah Ovaska was "salarygate," revealing that former campaign staffers for Gov. McCrory working at the Dept. of Health and Human Services received huge pay raises during a deep budget crisis.

Besides the reporting, the reach of opinion pieces by Chris Fitzsimon and Rob Schofield is greater than ever. The Justice Center has tripled its presence on editorial pages since 2009, and columns from Policy Watch writers are one major reason why. In 2013, Policy Watch helped the Justice Center shatter the previous year's record for op-ed placements by more than 35 percent.

Add to this that NC Policy Watch hosted Crucial Conversation luncheons with such luminaries as Diane Ravitch, America's leading spokesperson for public education, and Ron Pollack, one of the nation's most knowledgeable experts on health care policy, and it's easy to see why so many people interested in social justice are paying close attention to NC Policy Watch.

## Tracking *the* Cuts

THE DISMANTLING OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Our Workers' Rights Project strives to enforce and expand policies that ensure safe workplaces, fair treatment, a living wage and a strong safety net in times of hardship. That work was never more important than in 2013.**

The Justice Center led a major campaign to prevent cuts to unemployment benefits for workers out of work



through no fault of their own and to prevent the loss of millions in federal funding for long term unemployment benefits for North Carolina workers. To educate the public, policymakers and the press about the critical role of the unemployment

insurance system, we undertook a multi-strategy effort, the Tar Heel Workers Campaign. Using modern tools like information graphics and social media—as well as classic tactics like lobbying—the project helped countless North Carolinians learn about and take action to prevent a devastating blow to our state's social safety net. Unfortunately, new legislation brought cuts to benefits and eligibility. The Justice Center is assessing and reporting the impact of the changes and continuing to fight for North Carolina's jobless workers.

Though the loss of vital benefits was the biggest fight of 2013, the Justice



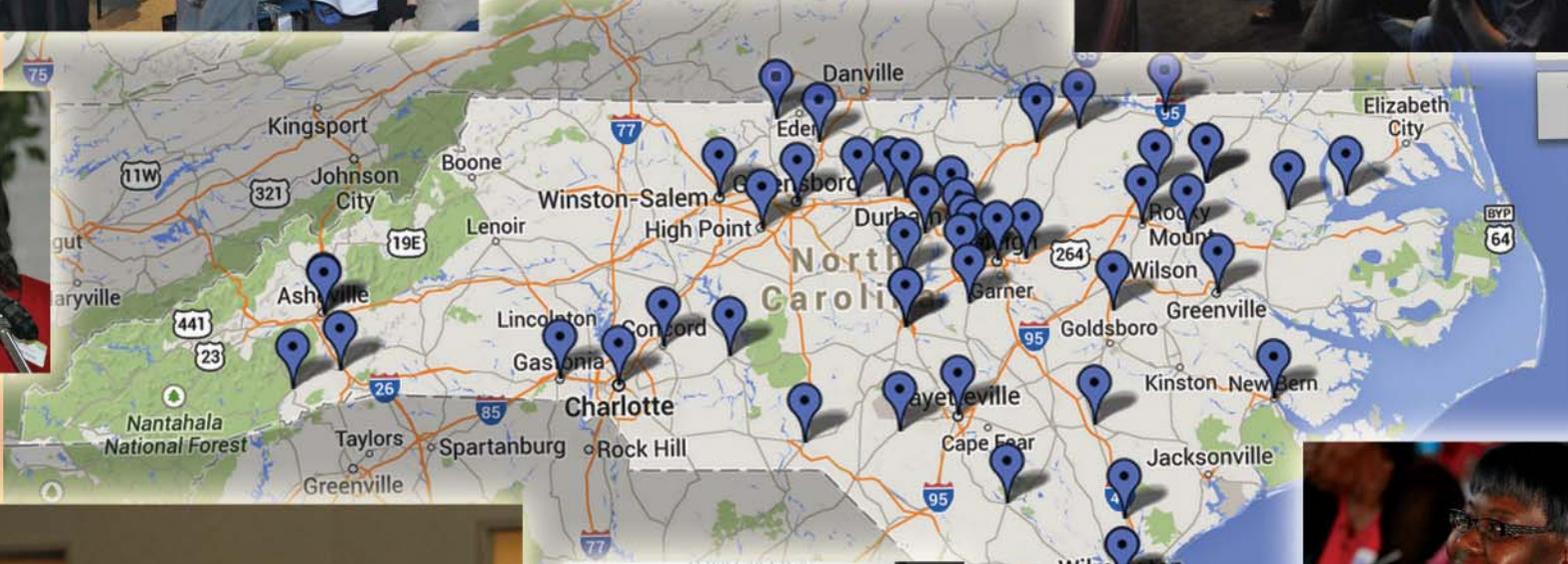
Center fought to improve the well-being of working families in other ways as well. Our Workers' Rights project hosted "Know Your Rights" trainings for over 160 workers on a variety of topics, and met with more than 250 farmworkers to provide information about their legal rights. The Justice Center also monitored legislation requiring mandatory drug testing for all Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients and applicants, which would have placed additional financial burdens on struggling families who receive assistance. In response to this legislation we produced a report outlining the constitutional issues raised and estimating the cost of implementing the proposal. Our work helped to ensure that the legislation ultimately passed required reasonable suspicion of drug use before a recipient could be subjected to testing. The Justice Center continues to closely monitor the implementation of this new law to ensure that it is fairly and lawfully applied.

The Justice Center's Workers' Rights project partnered with UNC Law School's Human Rights Clinic to interview workers from several industries in the Triangle about their experiences with wage theft. Our 2013 report, "Wage Theft: North Carolina's Hidden Crime Wave," highlighted this significant problem for low wage workers in the state.



Continuing their work to ensure that employers comply with minimum wage and overtime laws, Justice Center attorneys received final approval for settlement of a case brought on behalf of 200 seafood workers and distributed over \$200,000 to those workers. In 2013 we also filed suit against a landscaping company and large sweet potato and tobacco farms in eastern North Carolina to recover back wages for employees and former employees.

ENGAGEMENT



What Can I Do?

- Tell NC lawmakers that we should not reject federal money and block expanding Medicaid.
- Write a letter to the editor about the benefits of expanding Medicaid. Share your story.
- Tell at least five people about the health benefits exchanges and how expanding Medicaid would help the community.



During 2013, the Justice Center reached more than 25,000 people in communities throughout the state through direct outreach. As part of our civic engagement strategy, Justice Center staff made presentations in nearly 50 different communities across North Carolina, touching every region of the Old North State.

The Justice Center's Consumer & Housing Project works to protect North Carolina's consumers from abusive practices and ensure an adequate supply of safe and affordable housing for all communities. In 2013, the project used a combination of policy development, legislative advocacy, community education and litigation to accomplish its goals and objectives.



The year was dominated by a legislative battle to prevent payday lending from becoming legal again in North Carolina. Payday lending is an abusive and predatory practice that

leaves borrowers trapped in debt, paying loans with extraordinarily high fees and interest. Payday lending legislation was introduced early in the legislative session that would have authorized annual fees and interest near 400 percent. The Justice Center and its allies immediately responded with an intensive lobbying drive and an extensive media campaign. We helped to educate our grassroots supporters and other allies on the effects of the proposed law and supported their active opposition to the bill. After a long battle, we were successful in convincing a majority of legislators to oppose the legislation. As a result of these efforts, payday lending remains illegal in North Carolina.

At the same time, some out-of-state banks attempted to use federal banking laws to make payday loans in NC.

Thanks to a campaign by the Justice Center, other consumer advocates, and state leaders, Regions Bank dropped its harmful payday lending program in North Carolina.

Our successful efforts in 2013 to defeat efforts to bring payday lending back to North Carolina were just the latest in our longstanding campaign to protect consumers from these exploitive loans. In 2013, Justice Center attorneys paid the final settlement proceeds to victims of illegal payday loans recovered in three major class action lawsuits brought in 2004. Settlements in these cases also resulted in the payment of over \$1 million to the state's Indigent Defense and IOLTA programs to support the provision of legal representation for the poor. While fighting payday lending legislative battles, we also succeeded in maintaining important legal protections for tenants and homeowners. Our work stopped fraudulent real estate transactions and protected other important consumer protection laws that are routinely challenged in the General Assembly every session.



The project also saw progress on a major piece of housing litigation. The project, led by the Justice Center's Jack Holtzman, co-counseled a case regarding the discriminatory denial by Brunswick County of water and sewer services and discriminatory

zoning changes in an unincorporated African-American community. Finally, we settled a class action lawsuit on behalf of low income tenants. The lawsuit challenged illegal debt collection and late fee practices by the apartment complex. We secured over \$100,000 in damages for the tenants and an agreement by the defendants to cease the illegal practices in all of their North Carolina properties.

Ensuring that strong protections are in place for consumers and quality housing options exist for low wealth people in

North Carolina requires constant vigilance. 2013 brought many threats to these protections, but thanks to hard work by supporters, staff and volunteers we succeeded in defeating these threats.



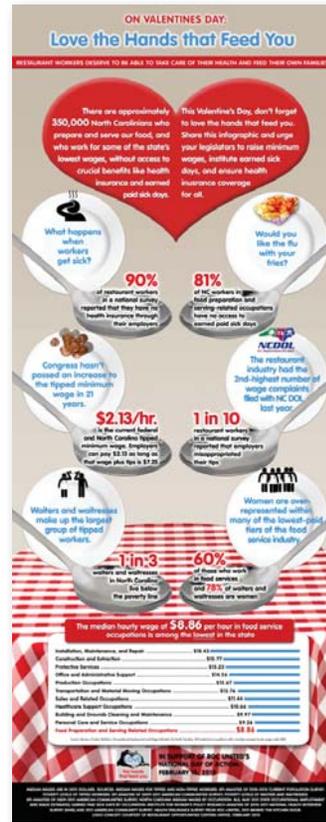


### Affordable Health Care:

The Health Access Coalition worked throughout 2013 with numerous partners to implement the Affordable Care Act, and fought to implement Medicaid expansion for low-income individuals. Although Medicaid has not yet been expanded, **North Carolina has the 5th highest ACA enrollment in the country**, an outcome that HAC helped bring about along with our great state and community partners.

### Consumer Campaign:

Regions Bank used federal banking law to offer payday loans that are illegal for any other lender to make in our state. These loans carried, on average, **an annual rate of 365 percent, including interest and fees**. After significant pressure from the state Attorney General's office and consumer advocates — including the Center for Responsible Lending and the Justice Center — Regions dropped its payday lending program for North Carolina.



### Fighting for Restaurant Workers:

The Workers' Rights Project created an infographic to support the **Restaurant Opportunity Center's National Day of Action**, which highlighted the working conditions of restaurant workers in our state. In response to the federal proposals to raise the minimum wage, the Justice Center released a brief detailing the potential impact of the proposals on families and the economy.

### Licenses for Immigrants:

Driver licenses are important for people to get to school, work, and to support their families. Justice Center staff members were actively involved in the fight to ensure that the state Department of



Transportation provided driver licenses to eligible individuals with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status. The **Department of Transportation decided to grant the licenses in February 2013**.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY



CHRISTINE BISCHOFF  
Staff Attorney, Education & Law



DANIEL BOWES  
Staff Attorney, Workers' Rights



CAROL BROOKE  
Director, Workers' Rights



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Assistant Director,  
Health Access Coalition



SUSAN DUNN  
Chief Financial Officer



MATT ELLINWOOD  
Policy Analyst, Education & Law



ELISE ELLIOTT  
Assistant Finance Director

## Legal Clinics for Immigrants:

Staff organized a massive community education and legal assistance effort to ensure that immigrants in North Carolina were able to obtain the benefits provided by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative. After **directly assisting more than 2100 young immigrants** to apply, and reaching thousands more through community education workshops, in March 2013 we wrapped up our own DACA legal clinics and began supervising the work of other nonprofits so they could continue supporting DACA applicants.



## Highlighting Wage Theft:

The Workers' Rights project partnered with UNC Law School's Human Rights Clinic to interview workers from multiple industries in the Triangle about their experiences with wage theft, releasing a report **detailing the available information on wage theft in the state.**

MARCH

## Crucial Conversation with Diane Ravitch:

NC Policy Watch hosted a Crucial Conversation with Diane Ravitch, **America's leading spokesperson for public education.**



## A Win for Former Offenders:

In response to an article by Daniel Bowes and Bill Rowe and further efforts by the Second Chance Alliance, the NCGA **passed a law in April prohibiting licensing boards from automatically disqualifying individuals based on their criminal records.**

APRIL

## Second Chances:

The Second Chance Alliance, a statewide alliance of advocacy organizations, service providers, faith-based organizations, community leaders and directly-impacted and concerned citizens, rallied together to **promote policies that remove barriers to productive citizenship for individuals with criminal records.** Second Chance Lobby Day offers a chance to show legislators support for second chances.



## Great Tax Shift:

For 2013 Tax Day, as NC lawmakers considered reform proposals that would shift the tax load to low- and middle-income North Carolinians, Together NC used a campaign featuring Russell the Hound to **highlight the dangers of the Great Tax Shift.**



CHRIS FITZSIMON  
Director, NC Policy Watch



ALLAN FREYER  
Policy Analyst, Budget & Tax Center



RON GARCIA-FOGARTY  
Paralegal, Workers' Rights



MARIA GUERRERO  
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JULIA HAWES  
Communications Specialist



CLAYTON HENKEL  
Communications Coordinator,  
NC Policy Watch



CHRIS HILL  
Director, Education & Law



JACK HOLTZMAN  
Senior Attorney, Consumer & Housing



### Tax Reform Debate:

Tax reform affects every NC family, and Justice Center staff worked to ensure an informed discussion with national experts. NC State University's Institute for Emerging Issues, in partnership with the Budget & Tax Center and the Civitas Institute, **hosted a debate on tax reform** in North Carolina. During "Financing the Future: Debating State Tax Reform for North Carolina," Jared Bernstein from the Center on Budget & Policy Priorities and Elizabeth Malm from The Tax Foundation discussed the state's competing tax proposals.

MAY



### Backing Benefits:

On July 1, 2013, 170,000 North Carolinians who were unemployed through no fault of their own lost access to federal emergency benefits after state lawmakers chose to not extend benefits during the legislative session. The Workers' Rights Project

**undertook a multi-strategy effort, the Tar Heel Workers Campaign, to prevent the change,** and have since been closely monitoring the bill's effects.

### Crucial Conversation with Ron Pollack:

NC Policy Watch hosted **one of the nation's most knowledgeable experts on health care policy: Ron Pollack**, Executive Director of Families USA.



JUNE



### Fighting Poverty:

The Justice Center **co-sponsored a screening of the documentary film, American Winter, about poverty in the US.** Alexandra Sirota and Justice Center board member Gene Nichol joined a panel discussion at the event.



CEDRIC JOHNSON  
Policy Analyst, Budget & Tax Center



MELINDA LAWRENCE  
Executive Director



RICKY LEUNG  
New Media Director, NC Policy Watch



SUIJIN LI  
Administrative Assistant



ADAM LINKER  
Policy Analyst, Health Access Coalition



LUCY MARTINEZ  
Director of Operations & Human Resources



SHARON MCCLOSKEY  
Courts & Law Reporter, NC Policy Watch



CARLENE MCNULTY  
Director of Litigation



### Moral Monday:

In the final official Moral Monday event, progressives marched on Raleigh.

JULY

### Battling Against Regressive Taxes:

Experts from the Budget & Tax Center and partners shared analysis of the NC General Assembly's regressive tax plan and presented a petition — delivered to policymakers — signed by 7,000 North Carolinians who opposed the tax shift.

### Defeating Anti-Immigrant Bills:

The state House voted to convert HB 786, the so-called “Reclaim NC” act, almost entirely into a study bill. Immigration project staff efforts played a major role in defeating the original bill, which contained dangerous anti-immigrant provisions and limited driving permits offered to some undocumented immigrants. Justice Center staff led lobby days with community members and advocates at the legislature opposing the bill, and activated supporters to contact legislators, **generating approximately 24,000 emails to legislators from more than 600 supporters.**

AUGUST

### Tracking the Cuts:

NC Policy Watch was instrumental in covering the cuts to North Carolina’s public schools due to decisions made by the NC General Assembly during the 2013 legislative session. Through their “Tracking the Cuts: The Dismantling of Our Public Schools” series, education reporter **Lindsay Wagner and the NCPW team kept a running tally of education funding cuts** that local school districts faced at the onset of the 2013-14 academic year.



### Breaking News:

**NC Policy Watch broke “salarygate.”** Sarah Ovaska reported the news that former campaign staffers for

Gov. McCrory working at the Department of Health and Human Services received huge pay raises.

### Serving Immigrants:

The Justice Center’s Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project geared up for round two of our Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative work by **starting new partnerships with Latino-led organizations** in order to offer more community education events and more legal clinics. Project director Dani Moore discussed the issue on WUNC’s State of Things on August 20.

### Protecting Consumers:

Payday lending threatens consumers, and payday lending legislation was introduced early in the session in the Senate (SB 89) and later in the House (HB 875). The Consumer & Housing project immediately **attacked the payday lending bills with an intensive lobbying drive**, utilizing an extensive media strategy, as well as having our grass roots supporters and other allies drive calls to legislators. These bills did not pass—to date neither the Senate nor House version of the bills had a hearing in any committee.



TAZRA MITCHELL  
Policy Analyst, Budget & Tax Center



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DANI MOORE  
Director,  
Immigrant & Refugee Rights



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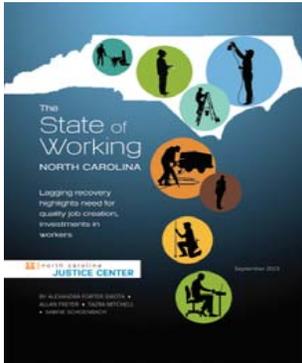
SARAH OVASKA  
Investigative Reporter,  
NC Policy Watch



DINEIRA PAULINO  
Paralegal,  
Immigrant & Refugee Rights



HARRY PAYNE  
Senior Counsel for Policy & Law,  
Workers' Rights



## Pro-Working Family Research:

The NC Justice Center’s State of Working North Carolina, published each year to provide an assessment of the economy with a focus on how workers are faring, showed that **the Tar Heel state continues to struggle to create jobs** and grow the economy in a way that will improve the lives of working families in the state.

## Health Care Expansion:

The Health Access Coalition’s Adam Linker spoke to a crowd about why NC wasn’t **expanding Medicaid to 500,000 low income North Carolinians.**



## Supporting Workers:

As part of the Justice Center’s efforts to support worker organizing campaigns, including NC Raise Up for fast food workers and the OUR Walmart campaign, Workers’ Rights project **staff provided Know Your Rights training across the state.** Project director Carol Brooke also spoke at press events and worker events.

## Medical Leave for Families:

Children, families, and North Carolina lawmakers came together for a festive birthday party to **celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Family Medical Leave Act** in an event organized by the Workers’ Rights Project.



## Immigration Reform:

Engaging the public is critical for fair immigration reform that keeps families together. The Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project **hosted 14 community education events in Fall 2013 to inform and engage community members** in the fight. In these events, we reached more than 800 people, primarily from directly affected communities, in Spanish and English.

## Protecting Investments:

The federal budget shutdown threatened jobs and benefits for myriad NC families. The Budget & Tax Center—alongside Congressman Bob Etheridge—**hosted a press briefing to urge Congress to end the government shutdown, raise the debt ceiling and pursue new revenue** as a core part of deficit reduction efforts. This new revenue would protect vital investments in families.

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER



DAN REARICK  
Staff Attorney,  
Immigrant & Refugee Rights



SEONAI RYO  
Senior Paralegal, Consumer & Housing



AL RIPLEY  
Director, Consumer & Housing



CLERMONT RIPLEY  
Staff Attorney, Workers’ Rights



JESSICA ROCHA  
Outreach Coordinator



BILL ROWE  
General Counsel  
& Director of Advocacy



SABINE SCHOENBACH  
Policy Analyst, Workers’ Rights



ROB SCHOFIELD  
Director of Policy & Research,  
NC Policy Watch

## Speak Out for Teachers:

The 2013-15 budget eliminated 9,306 education positions while expanding class sizes and inadequately providing students and teachers with the resources they deserve. Matt Ellinwood of the Education & Law Project, along with Public Schools First NC, teachers and parents spoke out at a press event on behalf of teachers and students.



## Housing Appeal Dismissed:

Led by the Justice Center's Jack Holtzman, we co-counseled a case regarding the **discriminatory denial by Brunswick County of water and sewer services to an unincorporated African-American community**. In December 2013, the court of appeals granted the Justice Center's motion to dismiss the defendant's appeal.



ELOY TUPAYACHI



## Home to Me:

The Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project released the **first video in the "Home to Me: Immigrant Stories from NC" series**, highlighting the lives of North Carolina immigrants and their families from across the state.

## Health Care for Immigrants:

In one of a series of events, IRRP **provided advice and information to immigrants** who wanted to learn whether they were eligible for a subsidized insurance premium under the federal Affordable Care Act. This one took place at Cone Health's Immigrant Health Access program in Greensboro.

## Voucher Lawsuit:

The Justice Center, NCAE and allies **filed a lawsuit in Wake County Superior Court on December 11 challenging the constitutionality of a school voucher law** that would send public money to private schools.

## Policy Watch Views Explode:

The **Progressive Pulse blog cracked 1.1 million views**; NC Policy Watch's website reached more than 840,000 page views in 2013.

NOVEMBER

## Protecting Workers:

To protect seafood workers who allegedly faced multiple levels of unfair treatment, we settled a major lawsuit. Since November 2013, the Workers' Rights Project has **distributed over \$150,000 to more than 150 class members** as part of our settlement of class action litigation against Quality Crab Co., Inc.

## Action on SNAP:

Congress made deep cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in November—a time when **North Carolina had the fifth highest level of food insecurity in the nation**. In response, BTC worked with partners at food banks and other service providers to organize meetings with Senator Kay Hagan, hosted a press event, and released a brief on the issue of hunger in North Carolina.

DECEMBER



ADAM SEARING  
Director, Health Access Coalition



JEFF SHAW  
Director of Communications



ALEXANDRA F. SIROTA  
Director, Budget & Tax Center



ROCHELLE SPARKO  
Staff Attorney, Consumer & Housing



LINDSAY WAGNER  
Education Reporter, NC Policy Watch



MELISSA WIGGINS  
Senior Administrative Assistant



BILL WILSON  
Deputy Director



KATE WOOMER-DETERS  
Staff Attorney,  
Immigrant & Refugee Rights

## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

James Aaron	Annette Bingham	Lynsay Bush	Pat Cotham	Susan Eder	Karen Gottovi	Douglas	Kamira Jones	Bob Kucab
John Aberman	Faith Birmingham	Dorothy Butler	Nancy Cox`	Bob Edwards	Ross Grady	Henderson-James	Kenneth Jones	Tae Kunisawa
Allen Adams	Christine Bischoff	Pat Butler	Clark Cramer	Dan Edwards	Chris Graebe	Mary Hennessy	Ruthy Jones	Janis Kupersmidt
Jean Alexander	Tammy Black	Gregory Cain	Elizabeth Craven	William Edwards, Jr.	Susan Graebe	Stanley Henshaw	Sarah Jones	Jesse Kurtz Nicholl
Robin Allen	Reuben Blackwell	Hilton Cancel	Elizabeth Crawford	Robert Elliot	Megan Granda	Tom High	Treva Jones	Hoang Lam
Anne Allison	Jim Blaine	Charlotte Caplan	Gisele Crawford	Jennifer Epperson	R. Frank Gray	Donna Hoefer	Mary Braxton	Bill Lamb
Diane Amos	Dhamian Blue	Chris Carlson	Cynthia Crossen	Aimee Escueta	John Graybeal &	Carol Hoffman	Joseph	Robert Lamb
Shel Anderson	Lanier Blum	Dede Carney	Erin Crossfield	Mary Eubanks	Laurie Heise	Kathleen	Mary Joslin	Tom Lambeth
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The Justice Center's Education & Law Project seeks to promote, improve and reform public education, from pre-K to 12th grade, to ensure that all children benefit from a high quality education.

2013 was a flashpoint year for the defense of public education, and the Education & Law Project was proud to be on the frontlines. North Carolina's students, teachers and schools saw themselves under attack as never before. North Carolina's 2013-15 budget eliminated 9,306 education positions while swelling class sizes, and inadequately providing students and teachers with the resources they deserve. A controversial voucher provision passed by the legislature violated the state constitution's pledge that public funds would go exclusively to support public education, a move that threatened the foundations of our school system itself. The voucher program proposed to transfer millions of taxpayer money from public schools to unregulated private schools that are not required to meet even basic standards for curriculum, teacher certification, student safety, or non-discrimination.

The Justice Center sought to prevent enactment of this unconstitutional program, leading a public education effort that included producing research papers, bulletins for lawmakers and op-ed pieces showing why sending public



money to unaccountable private schools was a poor policy choice. Our staff spoke at press conferences, rallies and community events about the dangers of



slashing school budgets. When our efforts to stop the legislation failed, we joined with NCAE to challenge the program in court. Representing 25 plaintiffs from across the state, we filed a lawsuit in December 2013.



Despite a well-funded opposition supported by national groups, the Justice Center and its allies succeeded in convincing the court to issue a preliminary injunction halting the voucher program. The judge found that—as the Education & Law Project had shown through research, and Justice Center litigators had argued in court—a failure to halt the program could cause “irreparable harm.” The lawsuit is continuing, and 2014 promises to be an equally important year for the defense of public education in our state.

In 2013, the Justice Center provided expertise in all areas of poverty law, including consumer, housing, education, health, public benefits, immigration and immigrants' rights. The Justice Center also represents low-income clients in class actions and other impact cases in all the major areas of poverty law, including consumer, housing, public benefits, health, education, employment, tax fairness, public utilities, and migrant workers.

This year, the Justice Center served as lead counsel or co-counsel in 24 class actions, has served in an amicus capacity in six cases, and is litigating over 45 additional cases with potential broad impact. These cases directly impact hundreds of thousands of clients, and indirectly impact every resident of North Carolina. Some highlights of 2013 litigation include:

### Consumer/Housing:

- **Keeping People In Their Homes:** Representing homeowners in numerous foreclosure cases, we prevented foreclosure in more than ten cases. We reached settlements in several cases where our clients were awarded damages as well.
- **Challenging Deceitful Practices:** We settled a class action case, *Sweeney v. Investment Realty LLC*, challenging a landlord's deceptive "rent discount" policy that harmed renters. In October, Superior Court Judge Paul Ridgeway granted final approval to the settlement: the landlord agreed to end its deceptive practice, fully refund all affected tenants, and pay statutory damages to more than 116 class members. The total amount to be paid exceeds \$100,000.

### Education:

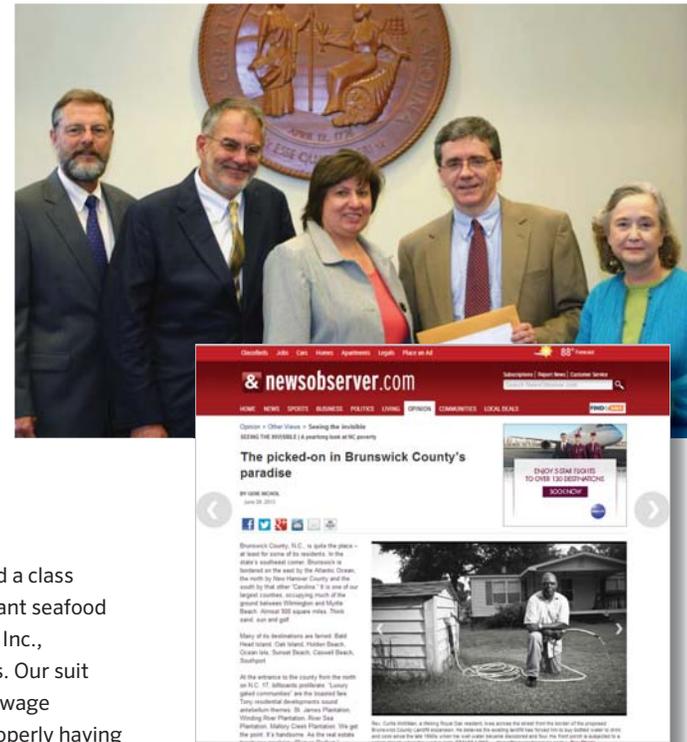
- **Fighting For Public Schools:** In December 2013, we filed a case in Wake County Superior Court to challenge the constitutionality of legislation passed during the 2013 NC legislative session that created "Opportunity Scholarships," or vouchers, which provide public funds for students to attend private schools.

### Worker's Rights:

- **Defending Migrant Workers:** We settled a class action filed on behalf of a group of migrant seafood workers, *Diaz, et al. v. Quality Crab Co., Inc.*, obtaining \$245,000 to the plaintiff class. Our suit alleged violations of labor law based on wage deductions without authorization, improperly having workers pay for visa and transportation costs, rent charges for inadequate housing, and paying an hourly wage less than the prevailing wage.
- **Fighting Unfair Practices:** We continued distribution of settlement funds in *Morales et. al. v. Townsends, Inc.*, a case filed on behalf of 860 workers at a large poultry plant. We alleged that our clients were fired without the required notice when the poultry plant shut down in order to change ownership. The employer also did not pay vacation pay to workers as required by law, committed unfair labor practices, and violated wage and hour law. The case was settled for \$200,000.

### Immigrants' Rights

- **Protecting Immigrants and Families:** We represented clients in myriad immigration cases,



including asylum, family-based, Violence Against Women Act cases and many more. In 2013, the project gave immigration advice and referral to 220 clients, obtaining an immigration benefit for 167 people.

### Public Benefits

- **Access to Food:** Our settlement negotiations with the North Carolina Department of Human Resources regarding the state's failure to process food stamps in a timely fashion led to a tentative agreement: the state agreed to hire temporary workers to address the backlog of cases, implement a system to allow counties to process food stamps when the computer is not working, and to provide us with statistics so we can ascertain ongoing progress to reduce the backlog.

The Justice Center's Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project (IRRP) believes everyone deserves fair treatment, regardless of race, ethnicity, or country of origin. We work to ensure that low-income immigrants have the legal representation necessary to navigate the complex and onerous immigration system; to protect immigrants and their families from abuses in the public and private sectors; and to advance public policies that improve the well-being of immigrant families and provide them with opportunities for economic security.



From the beginning of 2013, Justice Center staff members were actively involved in the fight to ensure

that the state Department of Transportation provided driver licenses to eligible individuals with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status.

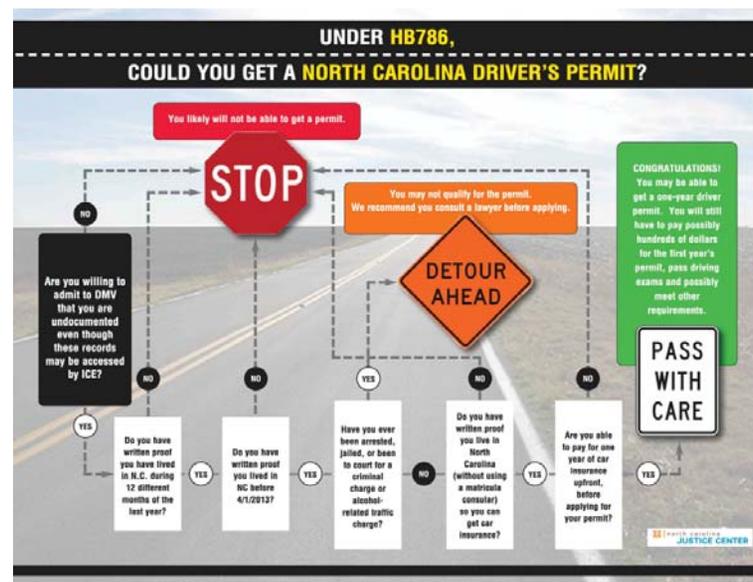
With the ACLU of North Carolina, we co-authored letters to the state Attorney General and Secretary of Transportation urging the granting of licenses to DACA youth and providing legal precedent that mandated the licenses be issued. Our advocacy also included public events and a petition drive. We provided information to the media and issued press statements on DACA youths' need and eligibility for driver licenses. We began to prepare for litigation, which was thankfully unnecessary when the Department of Transportation decided to grant the licenses in February 2013.

Unfortunately, some sought to exploit the need for

driver licenses by undocumented immigrants to serve an anti-immigrant agenda. They introduced the so-called "Reclaim NC act," which offered driver licenses for some undocumented immigrants but also included many Arizona-style provisions hostile to immigrants. The Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project worked for much of 2013 informing the public and the media about the potential effects of the proposed legislation. We proposed amendments to the bill, led lobby days with community members and advocates opposing the bill, and activated supporters to contact legislators, generating approximately 24,000 emails to lawmakers. The legislation did not pass and the Justice Center's efforts played a major role in defeating the bill.

IRRP continued its work fighting deportations and obtaining legal status for families. In 2013, IRRP obtained legal status for 79 clients in addition to our work with community partners on DACA legal clinics. We also supervised the work of Bureau of Immigration Appeals-accredited representatives who assisted hundreds more.

The project also worked towards common-sense and humane federal immigration reform, analyzing the Senate-passed comprehensive bill and holding 14 community education events in Fall 2013 to inform and engage community members—many of whom were not previously actively participating in the fight for fair immigration reform in Congress. Through these events, conducted in Spanish and English, we reached more than 800 people, primarily from directly affected communities.



Finally, in 2013 the project launched its "Home to Me: Immigrant Stories from NC" multimedia series, highlighting the lives of North Carolina immigrants and their families from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. Videos, audio pieces and written stories were released every month and allowed North Carolinians to hear directly from immigrants about their life experiences and how policies affect them.

The Health Access Coalition works to advance the well-being of North Carolina families and to ensure that they have access to the health care they need.



The Affordable Care Act is a critical step forward for health care in North Carolina and throughout the nation. Unfortunately, our state lawmakers chose not to expand Medicaid, a decision that harms both health outcomes and the economy in North Carolina. To promote public understanding and support for expanding Medicaid to include the nearly 500,000 people who would be eligible but are now without coverage, our Health Access Coalition staff took to the road in 2013 with our pro-Medicaid expansion, pro-health reform message. We spoke at 86

meetings all over North Carolina, reaching over 17,000 people. Across the state, people attending these events expressed their shock when HAC explained that because of the action of state policymakers, some people in the room wouldn't be getting health coverage under the Affordable Care Act because they were too poor.

The Justice Center also worked throughout 2013 with Enroll America, Legal Aid of NC, NC Community Health Center Association, Care Share Alliance and many other allies to help ensure that North Carolinians who could get coverage through the ACA benefit exchange—and tax credits to make that coverage affordable—enrolled.

North Carolina has the 5th highest ACA enrollment in the country—an outcome that our work helped bring about along with our great state and community partners.

We also worked in 2013 to protect the state's existing Medicaid program and the critical health care it provides to thousands of our neighbors. This work included pushing back against negative messaging that “Medicaid is broken,” providing data and analysis that effectively debunked this myth in communities and with reporters. In June, we held a “Crucial Conversation” event with one of the nation's most knowledgeable experts on health care policy, Ron Pollack, Executive Director of the Washington, DC-based research and advocacy organization, Families USA. As Pollack said, “Hardly a day goes by of late in which some politician doesn't allege that Medicaid, North Carolina's



health care program for poor people, is 'broken.' Yet despite its many imperfections, North Carolina Medicaid remains a model for the nation.”

Finally, we rallied public support to block one particularly



pernicious cut: the NC Senate passed a budget that slashed Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women. Justice Center staff worked extensively to educate NC policymakers about the longstanding bipartisan support for providing essential health care for pregnant women, the numbers of women affected, and the broad health benefits that result from extensively available prenatal care. Because of our work, this disastrous cut was not made.





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May 9, 2013

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