

From the Field: Los Angeles City Council Takes Key Step Forward on Providing ‘Right to Counsel’ for Tenants Facing Eviction

The Los Angeles City Council took a major step forward on August 17 in creating a “right to counsel” for tenants facing eviction. A motion instructing the city’s housing department to develop recommendations for a new eviction defense ordinance was adopted by a 13-0 vote. This proposal has been backed by a coalition of tenant rights organizations, community groups, and legal service agencies. The Council’s Housing Committee previously approved the proposal [unanimously on August 8](#).

The motion was sponsored by Councilmember Paul Koretz and Council President Herb Wesson. Both officials represent local districts that are experiencing widespread gentrification and tenant displacement. Countywide, more than 50,000 eviction proceedings are filed in Los Angeles each year. In the vast majority of cases, tenants must represent themselves while apartment owners retain their own attorneys.

Action by the Los Angeles City Council follows progress in other cities to create a right to counsel. In August 2017, New York City became the [first city in the nation](#) to provide eviction defense for tenants who could not afford their own legal representation. In June, San Francisco [voters approved Proposition F](#) creating a right to counsel in eviction cases. Other cities are considering similar policies. The motion in Los Angeles has been closely watched by housing advocates, with letters of support submitted by NLIHC and Matthew Desmond, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*.

“This is an important victory for tenants who are losing their homes,” said Inner City Law Center Director of Public Policy Jerry Jones. “There’s more work to be done to create an effective program, but Los Angeles has taken a big step toward a right to counsel.”

Read the LA City Council’s “Right to Counsel” motion at: <https://bit.ly/2LISY4d>

Read NLIHC’s letter of support for the motion at: <https://bit.ly/2o6NUrt>

Read Matthew Desmond’s letter of support for the motion at: <https://bit.ly/2NiIepn>

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