

# Litigating Bail Cases: Using Consumer Laws to Challenge Commercial Bail Industry Practices

July 23, 2020

Lawsuits across the country are challenging commercial bail systems. This webinar will discuss how consumer laws may be used to challenge abusive and unfair bail industry practices, as well as litigation strategies and obstacles.

Speakers:

Alex Kornya, Iowa Legal Aid

Ivy Wang, Southern Poverty Law Center

Ariel Nelson, Staff Attorney at the National Consumer Law Center



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## Driving with Debt: What Attorneys and Organizers Can Do to Address the Problem of Driver's License Suspensions for Court Debt

January 31, 2019

Most states suspend driver's licenses based on unpaid debts arising out of criminal proceedings or traffic tickets, and as a result millions of low-income people have lost their licenses simply because they cannot afford to pay fines and fees. This webinar will briefly address the harsh, perverse, and discriminatory impact of such policies before diving into what attorneys and local organizers can do to address this problem. We'll use efforts in Virginia and North Carolina as case studies, and will hear from advocates in Virginia engaged in impact litigation and legislative reform efforts that appear poised for success, as well as from an attorney and an organizer with North Carolina's innovative Second Chance Mobility Project, which pairs a drivers' license protection and restoration legal services delivery program with community engagement and organizing.

Speakers:

Angela Ciolfi, Legal Aid Justice Center

Daniel Bowes, North Carolina Justice Center

Dennis Gaddy, Community Success Initiative

Moderated by Samuel Brooke, Southern Poverty Law Center



Additional material: *Driven By Dollars* || Opinion granting preliminary injunction

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# Ensuring that People Are Not Jailed Due to Poverty: Reforming Policies and Representing Clients in Criminal Justice Debt Ability to Pay Proceedings.

May 22, 2018

The Constitution prohibits jailing defendants for non-payment of debts they cannot afford but too often courts fail to conduct adequate “ability to pay” proceedings and unrepresented individuals are sent to jail simply because they are too poor to pay a fee. This webinar discusses both effective representation of individuals in ability to pay proceedings and best practices for ability to pay determinations that advocates should promote in policy reform.

## Speakers:

Karly Jo Dixon, Texas Fair Defense Project

Sharon Brett, Criminal Justice Policy Program at Harvard Law School  
Brittany Stonesifer, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

**Moderator:** Abby Shafroth, NCLC



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# Affirmative Litigation of Criminal Justice Debt Abuses - Theory and Practice

March 16, 2018

Lawsuits are currently challenging harsh criminal justice debt collection practices, including “debtors prisons” and automatic license suspensions. This webinar discussed litigation strategies and challenges when pursuing affirmative claims against harsh criminal justice debt collection practices, and will encourage participants to incorporate consumer and constitutional law insights in their work.

**Presenters:** Claudia Wilner, National Center for Law and Economic Justice; Premal Dharia, Civil Rights Corps; Nusrat Choudhury, ACLU; Sara Zampierin, Southern Poverty Law Center

**Moderator:** Abby Shafroth, Attorney, National Consumer Law Center



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## Introduction to Harvard’s Criminal Justice Policy Program’s 50-State Criminal Justice Debt Law Web Tool

March 1, 2018

The National Consumer Law Center and the Criminal Justice Policy Program at Harvard Law Schools free webinar series on criminal justice debt continues this spring. Confronting Criminal Justice Debt focuses on the fines and fees imposed by the criminal justice system. This webinar series brings together leading attorneys, academics, and other advocates to identify problems with the current fine and fee practices, including their disproportionate impact on the poor and people of color, and to discuss litigation and policy solutions.

Advocates may use the Criminal Justice Policy Program at Harvard Law Schools new free web tool for researching and analyzing the laws regarding criminal justice debt in each of the 50 states. This webinar will provide an introduction to the web tool-the 50-State Criminal Justice Debt Reform Builder-and showcase ways to use it effectively for research and for work toward criminal justice debt policy reform.

Speaker: **Ranit Patel**, Criminal Justice Policy Program at Harvard Law School

Moderator: **Brian Highsmith**, National Consumer Law Center

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Confronting Criminal Justice Debt: A Guide for Policy Reform Definitions and Methodology

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# Using Bankruptcy Law to Aid Criminal Justice Debtors

October 17, 2017

For criminal justice debtors, bankruptcy can be a powerful tool. It can eliminate the obligation to repay certain criminal justice debts or provide an orderly mechanism for repaying certain debts that cannot be discharged. Bankruptcy can also open the door to relief, such as expungement, record sealing, or restoration of a drivers license, that may otherwise be unavailable due to outstanding criminal debt. This webinar provided an overview of the application of bankruptcy law to criminal justice debt.

## Speakers:

**Tara Twomey**, Of Counsel, National Consumer Law Center

**Alex Kornya**, Assistant Litigation Director, Iowa Legal Aid



# The Advocacy Gap: Meeting the Urgent Need for Counsel to Represent Individuals in Criminal Debt Proceedings

October 10, 2017

Too often, individuals who owe criminal justice debt lack counsel who can help them navigate the system and avoid the severe penalties often imposed for nonpayment—from garnishment to suspension of a drivers license to incarceration. This webinar discussed the advocacy gap, ways in which civil attorneys could provide impactful representation, opportunities and limitations that civil legal aid-funded attorneys face, and legal and policy arguments for a right to counsel.

## Speakers:

**Robin Murphy**, Chief Counsel, Civil Programs, National Legal Aid & Defender Assoc. (NLADA)

**John Pollock**, Coordinator, National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, Staff Attorney, Public Justice Center

CONFRONTING CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEBT: A GUIDE FOR LITIGATION



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## Confronting Criminal Justice Debt: Introduction and Impact on Communities of Color

October 4, 2017

Americas justice system is increasingly financed by the imposition of heavy fines, fees, and costs on individuals accused of crimes and civil infractions. The costs are disproportionately born by the poor and people of color. This webinar will provide an overview of criminal justice debt as an urgent racial justice problem. It will outline key policy reforms and provide an overview of consumer, constitutional, and criminal litigation issues that arise with criminal justice debt.

## Speakers:

**Alexes Harris**, Professor of Sociology, University of Washington

**Thomas Harvey**, Executive Director/Co-Founder, ArchCity Defenders

**Mitali Nagrecha**, Director, Harvard University National Criminal Justice Debt Initiative

**Moderator: Abby Shafroth**, Staff Attorney, National Consumer Law Center



**Additional material:**

Confronting Criminal Justice Debt: A Guide for Litigation (NCLC)

[Confronting Criminal Justice Debt: A Guide for Policy Reform \(CJPP\)](#)

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# Debt and Democracy: How the Collection of Civil Fees and Fines Contributed to the Unrest in Ferguson

Jan 29, 2015

This webinar will discuss the levying and collection of unfair fees and fines by municipalities and their courts. According to The New York Times, unjust municipal fee and fine practices were one of the “simmering” issues underlying tensions in Ferguson, Missouri following the killing of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown by a Ferguson police officer. According to The Times, “Young black men in Ferguson and surrounding cities routinely find themselves passed from jail to jail as they are picked up on warrants for unpaid fines.” The webinar will present an overview of the causes and pervasiveness of the problem, and impact on the community, both in Missouri and around the nation. The webinar will also discuss steps to address the problem, including policy advocacy and litigation.

**Presenters:** Karin Martin, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice at CUNY) ; Thomas Harvey (Executive Director, Arch City); Odette Williamson (Staff Attorney, National Consumer Law Center) ; David Seligman (Staff Attorney, National Consumer Law Center) ; Charles Lowery, Jr. (Director, Fair Lending and Inclusion, NAACP Financial Freedom Center)

This webinar is part of a series on “Rebuilding Wealth and Economic Opportunity in Communities of Color” sponsored by NCLC’s initiative on Racial Justice & Equal Economic Opportunity.

Visit: <https://www.nclc.org/issues/racial-justice.html>.



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# **Fugitive Felons: Clark v. Astrue Implementation for SSI & Social Security and Similar Provisions in Other Benefit Programs**

Sep 25, 2013

Learn about the court ordered relief currently being provided in Clark v. Astrue to class members whose Social Security or SSI benefits were suspended because of an arrest warrant. This session will also review the so-called "fugitive felon" provisions in other public benefit programs such as VA and SNAP benefits as well as implications for Medicare.

Additional sponsorship for this Webinar is provided by a grant from the Administration on Aging/Administration for Community Living . This webinar is part of a series of National Elder Rights Training Project webinars for the National Legal Resource Center.



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