



Oakland City Attorney's Office

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Oakland's Neighborhood Law Corps wins award for "Making Democracy Work"

Oakland, CA – The Neighborhood Law Corps – the City of Oakland's community law unit – has received this year's [Making Democracy Work Award](#) from the League of Women Voters Oakland.

The League of Women Voters Oakland gives the Making Democracy Work Award every year to one individual and one organization that "in the League tradition, (have) helped to make Oakland strong, vibrant and fair."

The Neighborhood Law Corps – often described as "Legal Aid meets the Peace Corps" – is a unit in the City Attorney's Office focused on protecting consumers, abating public nuisances and removing sources of crime in Oakland neighborhoods. The NLC hires highly qualified attorneys out of law school who could be making more money in the private sector, but choose to dedicate two years to improving the quality of life for Oakland citizens at a salary equal to that of a first year teacher.

"This is the first local award that the Law Corps has received, and it's long overdue," said Frank Rose, an East Oakland community leader and a founder of the East Oakland Boxing Association who co-nominated the NLC for this year's award. "The Law Corps has been out here doing what they do, and they do an outstanding job. The people of East Oakland look forward to working with them in years to come."

Started in 2002 by City Attorney John Russo, the Neighborhood Law Corps has improved or shut down dozens of nuisance liquor stores. NLC attorneys have worked with Oakland police and neighbors to close drug houses and prosecute businesses that act as havens for prostitution, including child prostitution.

The NLC has forced slumlords across the city to clean up their properties, and in recent years, the NLC has played a major role in the city's effort to protect tenants in foreclosed buildings. NLC attorneys have intervened in numerous cases to stop illegal evictions and prevent water and power shut-offs in foreclosed homes. Last year, the NLC sued major banks and local real estate agents to stop a spree of wrongful evictions – most of the defendants have agreed to the NLC's settlement terms. In recent months, the NLC also sued a local company for ripping off and defrauding immigrant families seeking legal residency in the U.S.

The Neighborhood Law Corps has won other honors, including the prestigious Gold Award for Municipal Excellence from the National League of Cities in 2006. The award announced April 28 at the League of Women Voters' annual All City Luncheon is the first local award received by the program.

The NLC attorneys are: David Hall (West and North Oakland), Jesse Newmark (Central Oakland) and Tivonna Stern (East Oakland).

"It is a profound honor to win this award from one of Oakland's most respected organizations," City Attorney Russo said Friday.

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