

DISABILITY RIGHTS



Shawna Parks, Sid Wolinsky, and Mary-Lee Kimber Smith

Disability Rights Advocates, Berkeley

Parks, Smith, and lead counsel Wolinsky filed a class action in 2011 on behalf of people with disabilities in Los Angeles. They pressed the novel argument that the city and county had violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other statutes through deficiencies in emergency notification and evacuation plans, shelters, and resettlement services.

In November 2011 the district court issued a detailed injunctive relief order mandating that city officials revise emergency plans; steps to implement the changes began in 2012. Last year Wolinsky and his team also negotiated a set-



tlement agreement with the county that similarly addresses the needs of disabled people in emergency planning. Their victory ensures that the estimated 800,000 people with disabilities in Los Angeles will be included in future disaster planning in the volatile area, where a state of emergency has been declared 24 times since 1980.

Already the groundbreaking order and comprehensive plan are being used as models for emergency preparedness programs in other jurisdictions around the country.

