

California ChangeLawyers Launches Next Gen Scholars Program for Fall 2026 California Law Students

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, January 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [California ChangeLawyers](#) is pleased to announce the launch of the [Next Gen Scholars Program](#) for the fall of 2026, a revamped initiative designed to support incoming law students who plan to practice in California and are committed to strengthening the state's justice system. The program combines direct financial assistance with cohort-based leadership development, reflecting a broadened approach to scholarship support intended to reduce barriers while helping future legal leaders build sustainable careers.

The Next Gen Scholars Program is structured as a multi-year pilot, with an inaugural cohort expected to run from 2026 through 2029. The program's purpose is to help launch the careers of vigilant changemakers who harness their power for good in California. Guided by the tagline "You Belong Here," the initiative is designed to provide both financial support and leadership development for a small cohort of scholars.

According to the organization, each Next Gen Scholar will receive \$50,000 in direct support, structured as \$15,000 per year for three years and a \$5,000 post-graduate stipend specifically designated for bar exam preparation. In addition to direct funding, scholars will participate in a curated cohort experience that includes leadership training, mentorship and career opportunities, access to wellness resources, and community support designed to help scholars navigate law school and early career transitions.

"The Next Gen Scholars Program will create lasting change not only in the lives of the scholars but also the communities they will serve," says Alexis Amezcua, Apple Senior Director and ChangeLawyers Board President. "It's a downpayment on the future of justice in California."

"The path to leadership in the legal profession should not be as hard as it is," states Christopher Punongbayan, Executive Director of California ChangeLawyers. "Today, far too many barriers, such as financial, structural, and practical, limit who rises to positions of power. The Next Gen Scholars Program is our answer: early, meaningful support for those committed to building a more just California."

Applications for the inaugural cohort are scheduled to open January 28, 2026, and an information webinar will be held the same day at noon to review program details and the

application process. After rounds of review, California ChangeLawyers expects to select a cohort of approximately five to ten scholars, with notifications and a public cohort announcement anticipated in June 2026.

Eligibility requirements include having applied to an accredited California law school for Fall 2026 admission, planning to practice law in California, and demonstrating financial need. Ideal applicants will also show a clear commitment to serving California communities, have overcome hardship, and bring a strong desire to use their legal training to advance justice across the state. Registration information for the webinar and application updates are available at:

<https://changelawyers.org/next-gen-scholars/>.

Additionally, California ChangeLawyers is inviting philanthropic and organizational partners to support the [Next Gen Scholars Program Fund](#). The organization is accepting tax-deductible contributions, including recurring gifts, to help sustain the fund throughout the duration of the program. California ChangeLawyers noted that the minimum corporate gift is \$10,000, while additional contribution levels are welcomed from individuals and organizations. Sponsors may also have opportunities to collaborate with California ChangeLawyers on scholar experiences such as panels, site visits, and events designed to deepen learning and strengthen cohort support.

Confirmed funders currently include The Anjan Choudhury Memorial Scholarship Fund, The Morrison Foerster Foundation, WilmerHale, PG&E, Airbnb, Wilson Sonsini Foundation, Morrison & Foerster LLP, and Pillsbury LLP.

For more than 35 years, California ChangeLawyers has invested in the next generation of lawyers, leaders, and changemakers through scholarships, fellowships, grantmaking, and advocacy work. The organization reports a network of more than 1,500 alumni across its scholarship and fellowship programming, and its work has focused on building a justice system that better reflects and serves California communities.

In 2025, California ChangeLawyers paused its usual scholarship application cycles while redesigning its approach to scholar support. Scholarship applications for the 2025 1L and 2026 3L cycles remain paused as the organization finalizes a reimaged model intended to deepen impact and better align programming with its long-term mission.

For more information about California ChangeLawyers, please visit www.changelawyers.org.

About California ChangeLawyers

California ChangeLawyers is a nonprofit community foundation whose mission is to build a better justice system for all Californians. Founded as the Foundation of the State Bar of California in 1990 and later becoming independent, the organization adopted the name California ChangeLawyers in 2018 to reflect its mission and expanded focus. California

ChangeLawyers advances a vision of a fully inclusive democracy led by vigilant changemakers who safeguard the humanity of all through scholarships, fellowships, grantmaking, and advocacy.

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