

CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER
Building Democracy for the 21st Century



2013 Annual Report

Citizen Advocacy Center 2013 Annual Report

The Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) is an award-winning, non-profit, non-partisan, free community legal organization. Founded in 1994, CAC utilizes a community lawyering model to meet its mission of building democracy for the 21st century by strengthening the citizenry's capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance.

A community lawyer protects the public's assets and promotes meaningful participation in the democratic process through traditional and non-traditional lawyering strategies that include community organizing, public policy research, coalition building, legal advocacy, civic education, and litigation. CAC is primarily a grassroots, community based organization, but due to our formula for civic engagement and public policy advocacy, efforts that start at the local level often result in statewide initiatives to dismantle anti-democratic barriers rooted in state law.

CAC will celebrate its 20-year anniversary in 2014. Over the course of our history CAC has evolved into a public interest law office with an incomparable, results-oriented model. Our three major initiatives in 2013 were:

- **Public Education and Capacity Building**
- **Government Accountability and the Development of Systemic Democratic Protocols**
- **Litigation and Issue Advocacy**

Public Education and Capacity Building

The Citizen Advocacy Center is primarily a hub for civic information, civic engagement, and civic networking whereby those interested in becoming involved in community affairs meet other advocates and create lasting civic relationships. In 2013, our community lawyers and law clerks worked with concerned members of the public to create active and vibrant democratic communities by building their capacity to use civic tools, the law, community organizing, and coalition building to affect change, regardless of the subject matter or the viewpoint of those making the inquiry.

Community Lawyering and Grassroots Assistance

The scope of CAC's grassroots work is extensive. While we are located in DuPage County, we provide community lawyering services throughout Chicago, the collar counties, (Lake, Kane, McHenry, Will, and west suburban Cook), and beyond. CAC's focus on providing and ensuring access to the democratic process results in a diverse array of issues being addressed, ranging from ethics, government accountability, access to the ballot, land use, tax increment financing, social justice issues, and more. Below are examples of our work in 2013:

Public Inquiries:

- Can a county mandate that individuals must be represented by a lawyer when appealing a property tax assessment?
- Can a public body that owns a parcel of property meet in executive session to discuss land use issues under the guise of also discussing financial issues associated with the land use?
- At what point does a government body waive its right to withhold public records based on the "preliminary draft" exception?
- Can a member of the public be banned from a government meeting for three months?
- What qualifies as a disruption during a public meeting?
- Is there a conflict of interest when a former public official is appointed to the zoning commission of the same public body and is asked to vote on projects as a commissioner that he or she had discussed and voted upon as a public official?
- When can a public body hold a special census to determine home rule status?
- When can a mayor appoint a vacancy for a trustee seat without the consent of the rest of the municipal board?

Communities Served:

Bloomington	East St. Louis	Roselle
Burr Ridge	Forest Park	Sterling
Cicero	Geneva	Villa Park
City of Chicago	Glenview	Wauconda Township
Crystal Lake	Hinsdale	Westmont
Downers Grove	Lake County	Woodridge
DuPage County	Lisle	Winfield
Elgin	Lyons	
Elmhurst	Plainfield	

Community Forums:

In addition to answering public inquiries and community organizing, the following is a sample of forums where CAC hosted, was a guest speaker, or participated in 2013:

- CAC Constitution Day Forum (Hosted Forum)
- The Legal Infrastructure of Public Participation (Moderator and Panelist)
- Lorman Continuing Legal Education Seminar; Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Act (Guest Speaker)
- Loyola Law School Community Lawyering & Civil Rights Class (Guest Speaker)
- Kent Law School American Constitution Society Forum on Government Transparency (Guest Speaker)
- Northeastern Illinois University (Guest Speaker)
- Downers Grove South High School Constitution Day (Panelist)
- Illinois Humanities Council Capitol Forum (Guest Speaker)
- We The People (Judge)
- Chicago Votes DemocracyCorps Training (Guest Speaker)
- DuPage NAACP Forum “Where Do We Go From Here? Turning Energy Into Action” (Panelist)
- 3rd Annual DuPage NAACP Career Fair (Hosted Booth - 3rd year of CAC participation)
- College of Complexes Free Speech Forum (Presenter)
- Democratic Club DuPage County (Guest Speaker)
- Hinsdale Unitarian Church “Transforming Yourself and Your Community: Living and Acting Your Values in the Public Sphere” (Guest Sermon)
- LWV La Grange Persons of Impact (Award Recipient)
- LWV Elmhurst *Citizens United & McCutcheon* Forum (Presenter)
- AAUW Naperville LWV Naperville Education Forum (Moderated Forum)

Building Democracy: Examples of Community Lawyering Assistance

Increasing Transparency at the Wheaton Park District

Recognizing the value of CAC's purpose, Wheaton Park District contacted CAC to ask for an assessment and reform recommendations related to how the agency provides information to the public. A community lawyer worked with the Wheaton Park District's executive director to facilitate an audit of government functions, and in a detailed manner, reviewed the ways in which the agency can improve public disclosure of information. The Wheaton Park District took a first step in improving operations through launching a "transparency portal" website. CAC was also asked to make a presentation to the Wheaton Park District Board regarding our evaluation. True to CAC's reputation for being independent, it was specifically noted during the presentation that we do not accept government funding and were not paid to conduct our review. Further, CAC's review of the Wheaton Park District website would not inhibit CAC from addressing future issues of public concern that may involve the Wheaton Park District.

CAC's collaboration with Wheaton Park District is an outstanding example of how CAC may work with a public body to improve democratic protocols.

Empowering residents in Plainfield

Plainfield Township Park District is a small unit of government located in the far west suburbs of Kane County. A concerned group of citizens began to pay close attention to Park District activities after a long-time executive director's contract was renegotiated in such a way as to allow a new executive director to immediately assume responsibility after a new Board was elected in April 2012. These concerned citizens named themselves "Park Truth" and began to attend meetings, ask questions, request government documents, and engage the media to have their viewpoint heard. In response to their civic engagement, the group experienced backlash for utilizing the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) to answer a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Open Meetings Act (OMA) question. When the PAC issued determination letters in favor of the Park District, the Park District took it as an opportunity to deter and belittle the citizens through a blog post that called those who sought assistance from the PAC "radicals."

CAC was contacted for assistance with community organizing and technical legal questions. In a packed community meeting attended by residents, a high school civics class, and members of the media, a CAC community lawyer gave public comment that held the district accountable for its anti-democratic behavior and called for removal of the offensive blog post. During the community lawyer's public comment the Park District's executive director and the board president played tic-tac-toe. Later in the meeting a member of the public was removed for allegedly "disruptive" behavior and received a *Notice of Trespass Warning* banning her from the property for 90 days.

The hostility to civic engagement was videotaped, posted online, reported on through news outlets and used as a teaching moment for the high school students in attendance. The

community's civic engagement has produced tangible results: (1) the Park District acquiesced and removed the blog post; (2) an increased number of concerned citizens have stood up to demand accountability for systemic reform of policies as well as treatment toward the removed citizen; and (3) CAC is working to quash the *Notice of Trespass*.

Capacity Building in Lake County with the Citizen Action Project

Lake County hosts a citizen group called the Citizen Action Project (CAP) which in 2008 published a white paper titled, "*Getting a Fair Hearing: Appealing Your Property Assessments in Lake County*." The paper highlighted questionable issues of transparency and fairness in the tax assessment and appeal process and was responsible for the passage of transparency legislation related to tax assessments.

CAP's second endeavor was an intensive research project that asked questions and analyzed the Board of Review appeal process. CAC provided legal research and technical legal assistance. After the analysis of the Board of Review appeal process was published, Lake County adopted a policy of mandating that property owners who appeal their property tax assessment to the Board of Review must be represented by a lawyer. Lay advocates would no longer be allowed to assist property owners at the hearings. There is no state statute that addresses this issue and CAP is committed to advocating for a more uniform experience for Lake County residents, rather than the different standards that now exist in each of the 18 townships.

Currently, CAP has turned its attention to seeking reform within Lake County by consolidating the assessment responsibilities of the townships into a county-wide office. CAC continues to provide legal research and community organizing outreach to help educate the public on fairness in taxation and reform possibilities.

Successful Administrative Appeals to the Illinois Attorney Public Access Counselor

The City of Elmhurst has pursued building a public parking garage since 2009, which has been a point of community controversy due to multiple procedural issues and substantive issues that include whether to build a four or six story structure. CAC was contacted by a sitting alderman to provide assistance regarding the appropriateness of City Council closed door discussions. The alderman questioned why a closed door discussion was necessary when the City had approved the project several years prior. The justification was based on the potential to build two additional floors, which would then be sold to the developer of the project. The alderman disagreed, boycotted a second closed door discussion on the project, and with the assistance of CAC filed a *Request for Review* with the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC).

CAC helped the alderman argue that the City's use of the exemption "the acquisition and disposition of real property" under the Open Meetings Act was inappropriate to justify closed door discussions because the City wholly owned the property in question and general discussion

about the disposition of property are not allowed. The PAC's review of the closed session tapes indicated that the City Council had only a conceptual discussion about the desirability to build six stories versus four stories and a general discussion about the sale price. The PAC stated that the closed door discussion had to be directly related to the setting of price, and in this case it was not. The PAC issued an advisory letter in which they requested the City to immediately release the two closed session tapes. After the City reviewed the letter, it was uncertain as to when, or even if, the tapes would be forthcoming. However, after significant community pressure to release the tapes, the Elmhurst City Council posted the audio of the closed session tapes on the City's website and subsequently discussed the project in public.

Citizen Initiative Awards

Since 1997 CAC has honored individuals and community groups who are organizing to make a difference in their community. They are average citizens who identified an issue of concern, and rather than assuming other people will take on the issue, they choose to get involved. CAC honored the following individuals and groups in 2013:

Cheryl Ealey-Cross, Maywood

In 2010, Mrs. Ealey-Cross and others filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for copies of routine public records, including credit card expenses and a line item budget. The Village initially claimed that some of the records did not exist. Mrs. Ealey-Cross and others filed a suit with pro bono assistance. Through the course of litigation they were successful in obtaining disclosure of public records showing expenses that raised more questions among taxpayers: expensive clothing, sporting event tickets, and skybox catering and cashier checks totaling more than \$400,000.

Twice a candidate for office, Mrs. Ealey-Cross successfully brought to light Village anti-democratic practices with respect to how the public body addresses FOIA requests, the lack of responsiveness to questions about financial practices, and flaws within Illinois' local electoral board process. In 2013, a newly elected mayor who won against a long-time incumbent mayor nominated Mrs. Ealey-Cross for a vacated trustee seat. Mrs. Ealey-Cross continues her fight for accountability now as a member of the Village Board.

Stan Zegel, Winfield

Mr. Zegel is a long-time community activist who cares deeply about the civic life of Winfield and has been involved in efforts such as organizing residents to require the Village of Winfield to hold a referendum before it can spend more than one million dollars on a new project in a single fiscal year, organizing a panel discussion of how to run for public office, monitoring local electoral boards for discrepancies in application of state laws and processes, initiating a successful referendum to change trustees of Winfield Fire Protection District to become elected instead of appointed and much more.

In 2012, Mr. Zegel resurrected the local community paper he originally founded in 2007, *The Winfield Register*, after his frustration with the lack of media coverage of a local election and Winfield politics. He was specifically concerned with the sparse amount of information flowing to the public that critically analyzed and questioned public policy issues. *The Winfield Register* questioned such local issues as video gaming and the contentious issues surrounding disbanding Winfield's police department. *The Winfield Register* also published, in their entirety, the released notes of then-trustee (now Mayor of Winfield) Erik Spande who questioned the appropriateness of twelve executive sessions over eleven months to discuss disbanding the Winfield Police Department. *The Winfield Register's* publication of Trustee Spande's notes helped stimulate community discussion, engagement, and advocacy.

Bob Mueller, Westmont

Mr. Mueller led the *Citizens for Westmont* to educate the residents about the various powers of municipal government and helped to make Westmont the fifth Illinois community, and the first in twenty-nine years, to remove "home rule" powers from the Village Board.

Most municipalities in Illinois operate under the provisions of "Dillon's Rule," a cornerstone of American municipal law that limits the power of municipalities to only actions specifically authorized by state law. "Home rule" is a powerful tool that, in general terms, reverses the Dillon's Rule principle and allows municipalities to tax, spend, and regulate beyond limits set in Illinois statutes without having to ask taxpayers for permission via a referendum. Once a municipality achieves home rule status, it is tremendously difficult to repeal due to the broad power it gives to municipal government. Home rule status can be achieved by referendum or automatically if a municipality reaches a population of twenty-five thousand. .

Westmont obtained home rule powers in 2009 after a special census and began passing controversial ordinances increasing regulation of private commercial and rental properties. The increased regulation resulted in increased rent costs for the half of the local population who lives in rental housing and brought in red light cameras, another controversial action. The 2010 Census indicated a population decrease, necessitating a Village sponsored referendum to retain home rule status.

Mr. Mueller helped residents hold Westmont accountable for the questionable use of home rule power and organized community members to wear highlighted t-shirts, pass out campaign buttons, and distribute flyers at the train station, door knob placards, outdoor display signs, and tri-fold informational brochures.

At the 2012 General Election, Westmont voters decided 51%-49% to abandon home rule and return to Dillon's Rule status, thus making all state laws applicable to the village governance.

Youth Civic Education Program – the “Civic Empowerment Zone”

The Civic Empowerment Zone is CAC’s hands-on civic education program that helps educators and youth transform their communities into “civic labs” and teaches what it means to be a “good citizen” in practice. CAC’s focus is on building civic skills, confidence, and knowledge through engaging youth at the local level on issues they care about. Students develop a working knowledge of how to affect government decision making by mastering universal civic skills and practical applications of the laws and policies involved in the democratic process. CAC engaged in the following activities in 2013:

Constitution Week

For the last four years, CAC has collaborated with area high schools to engage students in conversations about the Constitution and First Amendment rights. This year, CAC welcomed Kelly Hayes. Ms. Hayes describes herself as an anti-austerity focused activist and organizer and Non Violent Direct Action (NVDA) trainer. Ms. Hayes participated in the planning of the NATO protests in the spring of 2012, including the campaign against Rahm Emanuel’s “*Sit Down and Shut Up*” ordinance, which purportedly was designed to quell disruptions during the NATO and G8 Summit, and which would virtually abolish protest. Presently she is heavily involved in the battle for public education in Chicago, and advocates for the creation of a city wide series of non-violent protest trainings for student activists.

Ms. Hayes spoke to hundreds of students at area high schools including York High School in Elmhurst, Glenbard South High School in Glen Ellyn, Glenbard East High School in Lombard, and Waubonsie Valley High School in Aurora about utilizing her First Amendment freedoms to peaceably assemble and petition the government. Ms. Hayes shared her first-hand accounts of using her First Amendment freedoms and a CAC community lawyer provided the constitutional context for Ms. Hayes’ participation in the government decision making process. Teachers shared that the forums provided lively debate among students about the risks they would be willing to take for an issue important to them.

Civic Education Forums

Working with teachers, building a coalition focused on improving civic education, and sponsoring dynamic speakers are all part of CAC’s civic education program. Below is a sampling of the various forums CAC participated in with respect to our youth civic education program in 2013:

High Schools:

Downers Grove South (Guest Speaker)
Glenbard South High School (Constitution Week)
Glenbard East High School (Constitution Week)
Waubonsie Valley High School (Constitution Week)
York Community High School (Constitution Week)

Colleges/Universities:

Benedictine University (Task Force on Civic Education)
Chicago Kent School of Law (Guest Speaker)
Loyola University School of Law (Guest Speaker)
North Central College (Panelist)
Northeastern Illinois University (Guest Speaker)

Professional Development and Civic Education Programs:

CAC Constitution Week (Forum)
Capitol Forum/Illinois Humanities Council (Guest Speaker)
Constitutional Rights Foundation Professional Development Forum (Guest Speaker)
We The People (Judge)

Civic Education Policy Advocacy and Collaboration:

Illinois Civic Mission Coalition Revised Civic Blueprint (Author)
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition Policy Advocacy Workgroup (Member)

Student Internship Program

CAC has a highly developed internship program where high school, college and law students learn how to address issues of public concern, evaluate policy considerations, and engage in community organizing in a hands-on manner. We hosted interns and volunteers from the following institutions in 2013:

- Chicago-Kent Law School
- Michigan State University School of Law
- Northwestern University School of Law
- Ohio Northern University School of Law
- Mount Holyoke College
- North Central College
- Northeastern Illinois University
- University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana
- Community High School West Chicago
- Fenton High School
- Proviso Math & Science Academy
- York High School

Sample Summer Intern Projects:

Kelly O'Halloran, Northwestern School of Law, 1L

- **Illinois Election Law:** Briefed Illinois House Bill 2418, which included amendments to the Illinois Election Code. The most notable provision changed Lake County's election authority from a county clerk to a board of election commissioners and on-line voting registration.
- **Illinois High School Association:** Researched and wrote a memo on whether a private high school athletic organization that is highly integrated with the government is subject to FOIA requests.

- **Home Language Surveys:** Researched and wrote a memo on the Home Language Surveys that are used in schools to determine if a child should be tested for English proficiency and placed in a different class. Created a compliance fact sheet to help community organizers ensure that school districts are following state guidelines for bilingual education.
- **Good Governance Policy:** Researched election commission appointees' and vendors' campaign contributions to elected officials and researched election ethics in other states, counties, and cities to determine best practices. Drafted ethics policy with reform recommendations regarding political activity, conflict of interest and campaign contributions.

Alex Hicks, Michigan State School of Law, 2L

- **Alternative Elections in Home Rule Entities:** Wrote memo analyzing viability of adopting alternative election systems via referendum in home rule communities, and drafted sample petitions for binding referendum for adoption of alternative election systems.
- **Actual Notice for Property Owners Impacted by Text Amendment:** Briefed cases on precedent concerning when actual notice is required for text amendment versus constructive notice. Wrote memo concerning the application of heightened notice for text amendment zoning ordinance changes. Drafted and submitted a FOIA request to the City of Elmhurst concerning property owners in C-4 zone.
- **Lake Park Parental Banning:** Researched and drafted a memo regarding due process requirements for public high school due process as related to banning parents from school events.

Adrienne Kitchen, Chicago-Kent School of Law, 1L

- **Economic Development Corporations:** Drafted a memo about non-profit economic development entities and compliance with open government laws. Drafted a memo about the Federal FOIA laws, particularly the exemption which pertains to trade secrets and confidentiality. Researched best state practices for FOIA as pertaining to these issues.
- **Citizen Participation Act:** Drafted a brief on Illinois Citizen Participation Act case law setting precedent.
- **Open Government:** Drafted a memo regarding whether a mayor is required to FOIA the Village Clerk to obtain Village documents. Drafted a memo about whether a Village can limit public comment during regular board meetings to agenda items. Drafted a memo about limiting public comment to agenda items at board meetings.

- **Government Procedures and Governance:** Drafted a memo about the procedure, timeline, and eligibility requirements for a mayor to appoint a trustee for a vacancy and the procedure to appoint an attorney in a village, non-home rule form of government. Drafted a memo about the procedure and eligibility of a non-profit organization to organize and hold a raffle. Researched the procedure to dissolve a township.
- **Defamation:** Drafted a memo about defamation during public comment and if a candidate for office is considered a public person for defamation purposes.

Collin Kee, North Central College, Senior

- **Greece v. Galloway Presentation:** Prepared a PowerPoint presentation that explains the facts of the Establishment Clause and recent legislation.
- **Annexation and de-annexation:** Reviewed and updated current annexation and de-annexation statutes and codes for Illinois to update a Citizen Guide.
- **SLAPP and Anti-SLAPP research:** Researched the Illinois Citizen Participation Act and its Anti-SLAPP principles. Wrote CAC blog post on how the Citizen Participation Act can be used to protect those who are expressing their opinions.
- **HB 2428 (Civic Education assessment in Illinois):** Contacted local representatives who sponsored the bill. Read bill language to form questions for bill sponsors, Governor's Office, and Illinois State Board of Education. Vetted how non-legislative appointments would be achieved.
- **County and Township Open Meetings Act compliance:** Audited meeting agenda notice compliance of a representative sample of counties and townships within Illinois.
- **Illinois Counties' Board of Review:** Compiled information for every Illinois county regarding if Board of Review rules require representation by a lawyer at hearings.
- **Analysis of DuPage County TIF Districts:** Identified all DuPage County TIF districts and created graphics from released TIF reports for the respective communities.

Claire Caniff, Mount Holyoke College, Junior

- **Alternative Election Systems Brochure:** Researched, compiled, and designed brochure on alternate election systems in collaboration with fellow intern.
- **English Language Learners (ELL) Program:** Attended meetings, met with concerned citizens, and researched English Language Learners program implementation and requirements for an elementary school.

- **Municipal Open Meetings Act Compliance:** Checked web compliance of a 10% sample of Illinois municipalities to check compliance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.
- **Addison Street Zoning:** Attended meetings, reviewed government documents, and reviewed local zoning ordinance.

Janaki Thakkar, West Chicago Community High School, Senior

- **Zoning Notification Circles Spreadsheet:** Created a spreadsheet about zoning notification radius in municipalities in the counties of DuPage, Cook, Kane, and Lake.
- **FOIA request from Lisle:** Made FOIA request to Village of Lisle for expenses, elected officials attending the parade, and officials making up parade committee.
- **Timeline for Occupy/NATO/G8 protests:** Created timeline for Constitution Week 2013 about Occupy Movement in Chicago leading to its “Shut up and Sit Down” policy.
- **Letter to the editor:** Wrote a letter to the editor about the rising violence and insensitivity in society especially in the youth.
- **Blog entry for FOIA Case in Virginia:** Wrote a blog entry about the United States Supreme Court decision to allow Virginia to withhold information from citizens out-of-state.
- **Blog entry for Batavia High School teacher who defended students’ Fifth Amendment rights:** Wrote blog entry from a student perspective about the action of a teacher to inform students about the ability not to participate in a school survey on drug use.
- **Write up on comments made for Jessica Ahlquist speaking at York High School:** Created handout summarizing the opinions and arguments made in the comments section of a local online news article about CAC’s decision to let Jessica Ahlquist, a 17- year-old atheist who won a federal court case which mandated that her public high school remove a religious prayer from the auditorium wall.

Eric Patterson, York High School, Senior

- **Alternative Voting Systems:** Researched discrepancies between statewide voter preferences and how voters are represented. Researched alternative methods of voting, primarily cumulative voting, ranked voting (instant-runoff voting), and the district plus model. Designed an educational pamphlet.

- **School Board Open Meetings Act Compliance:** Researched compliance of a sampling of Illinois school boards with the OMA provision requiring a posted agenda on district websites 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- **Library Budgeting:** Requested the budgets of several library districts across Illinois. Conducted comparison among library budgets to establish a rough baseline, and what “norms” are across the state. Conducted comparison of tax levy amounts in comparison to the quality and amount of library services, whether libraries are cutting budgets for books or expanding them, and changes in the salaries of library personnel.

From Elmhurst to Egypt: International Issues in Democracy

In collaboration with a non-profit organization and the U.S. Department of State, CAC hosted a Legislative Fellow for three weeks. In turn, CAC community lawyer Maryam Judar traveled to Egypt and Morocco where she met government, non-profit, and religious leaders to discuss the changes Egypt and Morocco have seen since the Arab Spring and the strides made so far and the challenges that remain. For 20 years CAC has hosted democracy advocates from emerging democracies to share how we build democracy, engage the public, and hold government entities accountable. This is the first time a CAC community lawyer has traveled to learn what building democracy looks like in an emerging democracy. Among the benefits to CAC was the ability to contextualize the importance of democracy work for our constituents. Many people we provide assistance to convey concerns about speaking out. They fear that they are going to be publically ridiculed or belittled, which are far less serious consequences than what citizens of Egypt or Morocco face when fighting for basic democratic freedoms.

Upon return Ms. Judar spoke of her first-hand experiences and presented the major themes and challenges for Egypt in establishing a democracy at the 2013 events listed below.

- Citizen Bridges International Forum on Egypt and Morocco
- LWV Downers Grove Luncheon Presentation
- College of Complexes Free Speech Forum, Chicago
- Current Events Group at Indian Prairie Library
- Illinois Humanities Council Capitol Forum on Human Rights Issues
- CAC Forum on “From Elmhurst to Egypt: Building Democracy Across Oceans

Government Accountability and the Development of Systemic Democratic Protocols

CAC responds to citizen inquiries and monitors local governments for undemocratic practices and policies that systemically impede citizen participation within the democratic process. As a result, our community organizing work often addresses anti-democratic policy issues that need to either be removed or reformed. Below is a sample of the government accountability issues addressed by CAC in 2013:

Campaign Finance Task Force Hearing Testimony

CAC testified before the Task Force on Campaign Finance recommended Illinois create a strong disclosure system for contributions to independent political action committees, give the public useful information in searchable formats, as well as create meaningful consequences for unwanted behavior to ensure compliance with campaign finance law. CAC emphasized that the public needs reliable, quick information about who is giving and who is getting in the realm of campaign finance and stated its support in maintaining contribution limits in Illinois, which are under attack in state court due to *Citizens United*. Contribution limits are necessary to prevent quid pro quo obligations by elected officials to their campaign contributors. More importantly, these measures help level the playing field and ensure that those who become politically active in their communities do not feel defeated by the growing presence of money in politics but rather remain encouraged to keep their voice in the mix, become part of the debate, and perhaps even run for office.

Senate Bill 2 Hearing on the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

CAC testified before the Senate Committee against the bifurcation of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity into a private entity and a public one. Senate Bill 2 referred to the “public purpose of economic development in Illinois,” and yet the public would have been kept in the dark about the activities of the Illinois Business and Economic Development Corporation created therein. The corporation would have been assigned part of the work that is done by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, which is clearly a public body under Illinois Sunshine Laws. The corporation would have been established for the purpose of receiving and disbursing funds from public or private sources to be used to further the overall economic development and well-being of the State, but none of its activities would have been available to the public.

CAC emphasized the meaninglessness of provisions pledging compliance with the Open Meetings Act (OMA) when there is no enforcement mechanism to hold the corporation accountable. We also dismissed certain perceived advantages of a private entity, including that the current FOIA protects confidentiality, for example, providing an exception for trade secrets.

Our participation in this hearing was important not just for the substantive issue being addressed, but because it illustrated in a very public manner that we are able to work effectively with different groups of constituents, such as the various Chamber of Commerce organizations who also came out in opposition to the bill.

Litigation and Issue Advocacy

CAC community lawyers emphasize non-litigious approaches to using the law to strengthen the democratic process. Only as a last resort, and on behalf of select citizen causes, does CAC litigate to challenge abuses of power and to remove systemic barriers that impair citizen access to local government.

Electoral Board Decisions FOIA and Analysis

Illinois has a decentralized process for administering elections that has resulted in access to the local ballot being controlled by a shadow government process. Objections to petitions for nomination or petitions for referendum are heard by ad hoc public bodies called Electoral Boards, quasi-judicial entities whose decisions are subject to judicial review. However, because of the costs associated with appealing a local electoral board ruling to circuit court, most candidates and ballot initiative advocates choose not to appeal. Thus the quest to get on the ballot often ends at the local electoral board level. At the municipal level the electoral boards are embedded with those who have an investment in the outcome. It includes three members: (1) the head of the board or council, whether chair or president, (2) the clerk of the village or city, and (3) the longest sitting member on the board or council.

CAC requested 20 years of electoral board decisions from every municipality in DuPage County and suburban Cook County as well as decisions at the county level from the DuPage County Election Commission. A review of the decisions that CAC was able to obtain yielded three major themes: (1) electoral boards routinely destroy documents, which results in a loss of the electoral board's precedent; (2) there is a lack of uniformity and consistency within a single electoral board on the same issue, and lack of uniformity and consistency between multiple electoral boards on the same issue; and (3) technical issues, which keep candidates off ballots, can be easily remedied without compromising the process.

CAC shared the results with public officials who expressed an interest in our research and published a law review article on our findings in the DePaul Law School *Journal for Social Justice* Spring Election Law edition, titled: "Challenges to Ballot Access and the Challenges Therein."

Task Force on Civic Education

CAC worked with former Attorney General Jim Ryan, now Distinguished Fellow at Benedictine University's Center for Civic Leadership to create a legislative proposal for a Task Force on Civic Education. Illinois has some of the weakest civic education requirements in the country. Illinois is one of ten states that do not require a stand-alone civics or government course and Illinois also does not include social studies in its standardized testing. CAC identified a task force as a crucial first step to reforming civic education and a nonpartisan manner in which to engage a broad cross section of people in the democratic process.

The Task Force legislation was sponsored in the Illinois House by Rep. Deborah Conroy and in the Senate by Thomas Cullerton and passed by a significant majority.

The Task Force will analyze the current state of civic education in Illinois, identify best practices throughout the country, and make recommendations to the General Assembly to increase civic literacy and the capacity of youth to be informed participants in our democracy. The Civic Education Task Force is supported by the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and CAC Executive Director Maryam Judar is one of the nine non-legislative appointees to this task force.

Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

For several years CAC has been a key member of the McCormick Foundation's Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC). ICMC is a partnership among schools, institutions, and non-profit organizations seeking to build student skills in the realm of civics. It provides a medley of professional development resources for educators and drives civic education policy reforms. Specifically, the involvement of CAC has been to spearhead the public policy workgroup to institutionalize civic education. As the only entity in the coalition that is a community law office involved with public policy, community organizing, and civic education, we bring a unique perspective to the issue of civic education. New to public policy advocacy, ICMC sought out CAC for our policy expertise and assistance as they work to build strong relationships to advocate for the reinstatement of civic education. CAC sits on the Transition Steering Committee for ICMC.

Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor

Illinois' Attorney General's Public Access Counselor is an administrative agency that processes Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Act complaints filed by members of the public and the press. The agency was given binding enforcement powers in 2009 and has received copious requests for assistance in its position as ombudsman to resolve open government issues without citizens needing to seek relief in court. CAC community lawyers assisted several individuals, including many of those referenced throughout this report, in filing successful complaints for review.

In reviewing complaints filed by the public, the Public Access Counselor issues either a determination letter that is non-binding or a binding opinion. Determination letters are substantively identical to binding opinions but the binding opinions are reviewable by a circuit court. Due to the limited resources of the Attorney General's office, only binding opinions are available on the government website, which total fewer than fifty. Conversely, there are hundreds if not thousands of determination letters that have been issued and are unavailable to view online.

Determination letters are of tremendous value to citizens, journalists, policymakers and public bodies because they reveal how the Attorney General's office interprets open government statutes. Currently an individual must know what he or she is looking for and submit a FOIA request to obtain a determination letter relative to a specific issue. Based on feedback from members of CAC's Advisory Council, we created a project that involves obtaining all the determination letters and making them available to the public in a usable format. CAC is doing this project in conjunction with the Chicago Headline Club. The project captures all relevant information regarding the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act from the determination letters and creates spreadsheets that will be searchable and useful for analysis.

Leadership and Staff

2013 Board of Directors:

President: Theresa Amato
Vice-President: Steve De La Rosa
Secretary: Gordon Goodman
Treasurer: Brian Conlon

Directors:

Porus Dadabhoy	Milt Honel (resigned December 2013)
Barbara Greenberg	Claire Nader
Patricia Hicks (resigned December 2013)	Josh Silverstein

2013 Advisory Council Members:

Cristobal Cavazos	Myrrha Guzman, Esq.	Ellen Raymond, Esq.
Marcia De La Rosa	Naim Mansour	Dave Segal
Cheryl Ealey	David Pezza, Esq.	MaryLynn Zajdel

2013 Staff:

CAC underwent a major staff transition on June 24, 2013. Long-time executive director Ms. Terry Pastika stepped down after thirteen years and CAC community lawyer for the last four years, Maryam Judar, was promoted to fill the position. Ms. Judar was approved by the CAC Board as the third executive director because of her demonstrated dedication to CAC's mission and passion for our community lawyering work. She is a strong advocate for those who seek to use CAC services and has a bold vision for how CAC can improve its delivery of community lawyering services to increase visibility, diversify our constituent base, and increase individual donor support.

The transition garnered significant media coverage due to both the longevity of Ms. Pastika's term as executive director and CAC's evolution into a leading non-profit in Illinois. In addition to local print coverage, Ms. Pastika and Ms. Judar were interviewed on WDCB, (a DuPage County public radio station), and WBBM political editor and radio host Craig Dellimore dedicated a 30-minute show, "At Issue," to the transition and the future of CAC.

Ms. Carla Eisenberg, Office Manager

Ms. Andrea Alvarez, J.D., Law Clerk (Joined CAC in October)

Ms. Maryam Judar, Esq., Community Lawyer (January – June); Executive Director (July – present)

Ms. Terry Pastika, Esq., Executive Director (January – June); Senior Advisor (July – December)

Support, Contributions and Donations

While CAC has many volunteers, we would specifically like to recognize the following individuals for their outstanding dedication and substantial assistance:

John Argo

Gloria Backman

Tamara Brenner

Joan Davis

David Jackson

Terence Leen

Stan Zegel

Thank you to our 2013 Interns:

Claire Caniff

Kayam Haq

Alex Hicks

Collin Kee

Ebony Kennebrew

Adrienne Kitchen

Robbie Licata

Luke Maloney

Kelly O'Halloran

Eric Patterson

David Porreca

Andy Schlimmer

Brendan Sweeney

Janaki Thakkar

Gabrielle Trent

Financial support for CAC comes from individual donations and foundation grants.

Generous foundation support was provided by the following in 2013:

- McCormick Tribune Foundation
- The Joyce Foundation
- Shafeek Nader Trust for the Community Interest
- Crossroads Fund

Additional funds were received from:

- Individual Donations
- The Public Interest Law Initiative (summer intern scholarship)

Tax compliance services were donated by:

- Business & Professional Consultants, Ltd.

CAC complies with all record keeping and filing requirements mandated by state and federal law. Our corporate records are available for inspection at our office and are on file with the appropriate state agencies. CAC does not sell, rent, or share our mailing list with other groups.

**We welcome donations of time, energy, equipment and money.
Donations made to CAC are tax-deductible as provided by law.**

Contact Us

For further information, please contact us:

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Elmhurst, IL 60126

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Fax: (630) 833-4083
Email: CAC@CitizenAdvocacyCenter.org

Website: www.CitizenAdvocacyCenter.org
Facebook: http://bit.ly/CAC_on_Facebook
Twitter: http://bit.ly/CAC_on_Twitter

Appendix: Citizen Advocacy Center in the News 2013

Date	Title	Source	Subject
01/07/13	Downers Grove Citizen Group Recognized for Walgreen's Opposition	Downers Grove Patch	Citizen Initiative Awards
01/08/13	Making a difference in Forest Park politics	Forest Park Review	Citizen Initiative Awards
01/11/13	Villa Park's Kathy Gilroy honored for anti-gambling efforts	MySuburbanLife.com	Citizen Initiative Awards
01/24/13	Villa Park's John Barsotti honored for FOIA efforts	MySuburbanLife.com	Citizen Initiative Awards
03/16/13	Walgreens in Del Ray: 'I Don't Think Anything is Going to Stop This'	Del Ray Patch	Citizen Initiative Awards
04/11/13	Students at Capitol Forum tackle homelessness, human rights issues	Pantagraph.com	Civic Education
06/01/13	Demand Improved Civic Education: Letter to the Editor	Daily Herald	Civic Education
11/06/13	Great Content at CRFC's 24th Annual Conference	CRFC	Civic Education
07/20/13	Zimmerman verdict spurs town hall meeting at North Central	Naperville Sun	Community Organizing
07/24/13	Naperville town hall meeting tackles social justice issues	Chicago Tribune	Community Organizing
05/28/13	Senate wants 5-year plan from Illinois economic development arm	ChicagoTribune.com	Economic Development
04/04/13	Uncontested races likely mean status quo on local taxes	Daily Herald	Elections
04/18/13	Local election panels suffer setback	Chicago Tribune	Elections
09/20/13	National Voter Registration Day Radio Interview	WDCB Radio	Elections
09/23/13	Register to Vote, Speak Out On Hahn Street and, Of Course, It's Homecoming Week!	Elmhurst Patch	Elections

Date	Title	Source	Subject
09/23/13	National Voter Registration Day Radio Interview	Illinois Network News Radio	Elections
03/18/13	Under the Radar: Full-time salary, part-time hours	SaukValley.com	Ethics
08/03/13	Travel tab higher in Rock Falls than other cities	SaukValley.com	Ethics
08/28/13	DuPage County Board loosens cap on campaign contributions	Daily Herald	Ethics
11/16/13	Insiders get special access to event tickets	ChicagoTribune.com	Ethics
11/17/13	Who needs Ticketmaster when you've got clout? (Expanded article - front page above fold)	Chicago Tribune	Ethics
09/04/13	Towns pay a high price for power	Chicago Tribune	Government Monitoring
11/12/13	Education Funding in Illinois: A Roundtable Discussion	AAUW Naperville Area/LWV of Naperville	Government Monitoring
11/13/13	Resident booted from Plainfield meeting	Joliet Herald News	Government Monitoring
11/14/13	Peck Calls Citizens 'Radicals;' Resident Ejected from Park board Meeting	Plainfield Patch	Government Monitoring
12/05/13	Morley discusses first six months on the job	Elmhurst Independent	Government Monitoring
08/27/13	Letter: CAC Asking Mayor, Aldermen To Take Close Look at Addison Development	Elmhurst Patch	Government Monitoring/Zoning
05/02/13	CAC poses: When did City Hall first contemplate Addison Street Project?	Elmhurst Independent	Government Monitoring/Zoning
03/07/13	ZPC moves forward with public hearings, despite protests	Elmhurst Independent	Government Monitoring/Zoning
January	Professional Fellows State Department Letter (issued in December 2012)	U.S. Department of State	Legislative Fellows Exchange Program
January	Legislative Fellows Exchange Program for Morocco and Egypt	Citizen Bridges International Website	Legislative Fellows Exchange Program

Date	Title	Source	Subject
01/29/13	Elmhurst Organization Helps with Emerging Democracy in Egypt	WDCB Public Radio	Legislative Fellows Exchange Program
02/27/13	March First Tuesday: Civil Society in Egypt and Morocco	Citizen Bridges International Email newsletter	Legislative Fellows Exchange Program
03/05/13	Illinois' FOIA - should state's attorneys be exempt?	Chicago Reader	Open Government/FOIA
05/13/13	FOIA ruling's impact on Illinois uncertain	Chicago Daily Law Bulletin	Open Government/FOIA
05/15/13	Appeals for public information spike 22%	Daily Herald	Open Government/FOIA
01/16/13	Nepotism charge roils school	Chicago Tribune	Open Government/OMA
01/17/13	Prairie State College plagued by accusations of nepotism, secret ballot	chicagotribune.com	Open Government/OMA
02/13/13	School conference hotels, food, travel cost taxpayers \$277,086	Daily Herald	Open Government/OMA
02/28/13	Illinois attorney general's office: City of Elmhurst violated Open Meetings Act	Elmhurst Press	Open Government/OMA
03/03/13	Attorney General: Elmhurst violated Open Meetings Act	Chicago Tribune	Open Government/OMA
03/05/13	Minutes and Tapes of Closed Sessions Regarding Addison Avenue Project Made Public	Elmhurst Patch	Open Government/OMA
03/06/13	Elmhurst votes to air closed session minutes, recordings	Chicago Tribune	Open Government/OMA
03/07/13	IL AG says City violated open meetings act	Elmhurst Independent	Open Government/OMA
03/07/13	City Council rules to release minutes, audio from closed meetings	Elmhurst Independent	Open Government/OMA
03/07/13	Candidate weighs in on AG's opinion LTE	Elmhurst Independent	Open Government/OMA
03/08/13	Elmhurst City Council releases closed session minutes, recordings	Elmhurst Press	Open Government/OMA
03/13/13	Elmhurst mixed-use garage meets strong opposition	Chicago Tribune Triblocal	Open Government/OMA

Date	Title	Source	Subject
03/13/13	Elmhurst releases closed session minutes	Chicago Tribune Triblocal	Open Government/OMA
03/15/13	City Council audio recordings reveal uncertainty about closed meetings	Elmhurst Press	Open Government/OMA
03/15/13	City Council must continue transparency LTE	Elmhurst Press	Open Government/OMA
07/15/13	State office rules it can't review D-46 minutes	Northwest Herald	Open Government/OMA
08/28/13	New rule to attend CPS meetings draws complaints	Chicago Tribune	Open Government/OMA
12/20/13	Bloomington Alderman Alleges Open Meetings Act Violation	City Barbs; citybarbs.com	Open Government/OMA
January Issue	The Citizen Advocacy Center promotes Participation	Inside Counsel Magazine	Organization Profile
09/27/13	Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down: Thumbs Up on the Citizen Advocacy Center	Elmhurst Press/ MySuburbanLife.com	Organization Profile
09/23/13	Elmhurst nonprofit educates students during Constitution Week	Elmhurst Press/ MySuburbanLife.com	Organization Profile/ Constitution Week
07/19/13	NAACP, DuPage County Branch Looks to Community for Solutions, Hosts Forum: "Where Do We Go From Here?"	DuPage County NAACP	Press Release
08/16/13	La Grange League of Women Voters to present Impact Awards	Sun Times	Press Release
08/19/13	La Grange League of Women Voters hosts Person of Impact Award	MySuburbanLife.com	Press Release
09/18/13	Citizenship 101: Participation in Democracy	LOWV Downers Grove/Woodridge/Lisle	Press Release
11/04/13	Understanding the <i>Citizens United</i> Decision	League of Women Voters Elmhurst	Press Release
11/06/13	First Amendment and Campaign Finance Jurisprudence and Themes (same as above)	League of Women Voters Elmhurst	Press Release
05/16/13	Illinois General Assembly Creates Task Force on Civic Education	Robert F. McCormick Foundation	Press Release

Date	Title	Source	Subject
06/20/13	Citizen Advocacy Center names new executive director: community lawyer Maryam Judar	National Freedom of Information Coalition NFOIC	Press Release
06/26/13	Maryam Judar is New Head of Citizen Advocacy Center	The Winfield Register	Press Release
07/03/13	Citizen Advocacy Center names new executive director	DailyWhale.com	Press Release
10/14/13	Education Funding in Illinois: A Roundtable Discussion	AAUW Naperville Area/LWV of Naperville	Press Release
10/29/13	Education Funding in Illinois: A Roundtable Discussion	Daily Herald	Press Release
07/03/13	Citizen Advocacy Center names new executive director	Chicago Tribune	Press Release/Interview
07/10/13	Redistricting Reform Coalition Announces Campaign	Yes for Independent Maps	Redistricting
07/16/13	Fight Illinois Corruption: Say Yes to Independent Maps	Huff Post Chicago	Redistricting
03/11/13	Warrenville candidates weigh in on TIF proposal	Daily Herald	TIF
06/01/13	No Sunshine in the Forest	MedillWatchdog.org	Transparency
06/01/13	Trouble on the Board	MedillWatchdog.org	Transparency