

# EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

SEASONAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER  
SUMMER 2001

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

All year long, but especially in the summer, student interns invade the Citizen Advocacy Center! With their assistance, the Center prints more brochures, hosts more workshops, and holds open the doors of government to more people. Interns come to the Center from schools across the country, including: The Public Interest Law Initiative, NAPIL, University of Illinois Law School, University of Hawai'i, DePaul University School of Law, Washington University School of Law and York High School. Special thanks to the interns: Dion Cassata, Browning Clark, Rebecca Gold, Catherine Hood, Matt Richards, and Allison Rieff

I worked on many projects at CAC but my main focus was the procurement project, one of the CAC's largest, ongoing projects. I investigated how procurement and ethical policies of government contracts operate at the county level. This involved analyzing the DuPage County Purchasing Ordinance and comparing procurement practices and procedures among Chicago-area counties, including Cook, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will. I also researched statutes and guidelines for obtaining goods and services at the state level, attended public bidding and hearings, and analyzed the extent of state control over local, or county level procedures.

While working on the procurement project, I also facilitated a brown bag lunch on President Bush's education proposal, "No Child Left Behind." The discussion focused on the proposal's testing provision and the President's call for increased accountability for both schools and teachers based on the results of standardized assessments. Community members with diverse backgrounds concluded that although schools must be accountable for students who are not performing at grade level, federal funding should not be awarded solely on the basis of standardized test results and a more comprehensive, personalized method of assessing student achievement is necessary. In addition to working with community members on intake questions such as county redistricting, property rights and the Open Meetings Act, I researched another hotly debated topic, campaign finance reform. Public Financing for Judicial Campaigns Act, IL House Bill 1704, sets forth requirements for Illinois Supreme Court Justice candidates in order to receive public funds and penalizes those candidates who violate the Act by either exceeding their private contribution limit or accepting private contributions after a certain date. In effect, the Act would not only set a total limit on how much

money would be spent on the financing of judicial campaigns, but also remedy the ethical dilemmas that result from judicial candidates accepting money from trial lawyers and other private contributors.

*Rebecca Gold*

*Washington University School of Law*

**ANNOUNCEMENT!**  
**VISIT THE Cac's NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE with current information on programs and projects!**

**FREE FALL SESSION  
CITIZEN TRAINING CORPS  
September 24, 2001 at 7:00 PM**

**NEW CLASS!  
PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY**

Clear your schedule to participate in this action based civic skills class. Become a smarter and a better informed community participant!

**Sept. 24th** Representatives at Every Level Of Government;

**Oct. 1st** Request Public Information;

**Oct. 8th** Basic Research Tools;

**Oct. 15th** Open Meeting Act;

**Oct. 22nd** Protect Your Privacy;

**Oct. 29th** Basic Debate Skills.

## project medley

CAC and the Public Interest Law Initiative gave me the opportunity to take my first steps into Chicago's public interest legal world. I worked on a variety of projects that ranged from attending conferences on food irradiation and a media workshop with Jim Hightower to participating in many local DuPage County government and community meetings to creating a new web site for the Center.

During the summer I vastly improved my legal research and statutory interpretation skills through researching many intake questions such as proper county record -keeping policies and specific exemptions under the Open Meetings Act. I educated citizens on ways they can become involved in their local government and had the opportunity to make numerous Freedom of Information Act requests and appeals on behalf of citizens who had been wrongly denied access to public information in addition to creating a brochure on the taxing powers of local government and updating many educational brochures.

The project that hit closest to home was a guide I created detailing how students can establish a loan repayment assistance program in their law school. A majority of law schools do not have loan assistance programs and enormous financial burdens deter many law students and lawyers from pursuing public interest law careers. This step-by-step guide for law students will be sent to every law school across the country encouraging students to organize and implement a program. Establishing a loan assistance program is the first step to making it possible for students with large loan accumulations to choose public interest law careers.

CAC's other summer interns were great to work with as well as CAC's staff. The staff was very supportive and provided guidance when necessary, but also allowed significant independence when working on projects.

*Browning Clark  
University of Hawai'i*

## I'll Grant You That!

My summer projects at the Center involved creating a resource guide for non-profit organizations interested in seeking grant money and updating the CAC's Freedom of Information Act case library. Finding grant funding can be a daunting task for small, grassroots organizations, many of which routinely visit CAC for fundraising assistance. This basic guide to grant funding is a tool to help organizations sort through the tens of thousands of grant-offering organizations in the United States, both nationally and locally from federal, state, and local government, private companies and private foundations.

In researching this project, I was introduced to the various roles that lawyers may play in grant funding and administration. Lawyers are frequently involved with grant money transfer because approval and distribution of a grant is in essence a contract. Additionally, lawyers may be involved with the final contract approval process by making sure that all contract requirements are fulfilled before funds can be administered. Finally, because non-profits enjoy special tax considerations, lawyers are sometimes called upon to make sure that an organization is incorporated in a way that is cognizant of tax issues.

My second project involved updating the CAC Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) case decision library through researching and summarizing Illinois court decisions and the Illinois Compiled Statutes. The library is a resource for CAC attorneys as well as members of the public who have FOIA-related questions. Updating the library, in addition to small research projects, required varying degrees of legal research and used several resources: on-line computer legal research databases, the many resources at the DuPage County law library, and the CAC's library. This gave me the opportunity to hone my research skills, which will help in law school and my career.

I enjoyed my internship and am glad to have had the opportunity to work at a not-for-profit organization. The lawyers obviously believe in the mission of CAC and choose to work here because it is meaningful and interesting to them.

*Dion Cassata  
University of Illinois Law School*

## ACTIVIST IN TRAINING

When I began working at the CAC this summer I wasn't sure what to expect, as I had never done any type of legal work before. I first worked on a survey focusing on the quality of DuPage County municipal and township websites. I visited all municipal and township websites (those that existed) to see what information was available and to see if specific information such as agendas, minutes, public body representative contact information, and the ability to make Freedom of Information Act requests was present. A copy of this survey will be sent to the public bodies along with suggestions about what information the public bodies might add to help improve the civic knowledge of visitors.

The second project I worked on was a brochure to be used in the Citizen Training Corps about how legislation is passed through Congress. This took quite a bit of time to complete, but I found it interesting to learn exactly what steps a bill goes through on its way to becoming a law. Finally, before school began, I researched issues concerning privacy rights in Illinois. Although I was a volunteer this summer, I found working here far more rewarding than a paying job elsewhere would have been.

*Reif*

*Allison*

## SUBURBAN CIVIC FAIR AGENDA

**Organization Registration** 8:00 - 10:00

**Fair Open to Public FREE!  
& Table Talk** 10:00

**Table Talk & Panel One -  
Electoral Reform:** 11:00 - 12:15

A discussion on how to improve the Illinois electoral process.

- Ms. Cynthia Canary  
Illinois Campaign for Political Reform
- Mr. Andrew Spiegel  
Libertarian Party of Illinois
- Mr. Dan Johnson-Weinberger  
Midwest Democracy Center

**Table Talk & Panel Two -  
Justice?** 11:20 - 12:35

A discussion on racial profiling, police brutality, the drug war and for-profit prisons.

- Mr. Frank Jarrett  
DuPage County Chapter of NAACP
- Mr. Emile Schepers  
Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights
- Mr. Carlos Vega  
Prison Action Committee

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER** 1:00 - 1:45  
**JIM HIGHTOWER**

**Table Talk & Panel Three -  
Cyberspace** 2:30 - 3:45

A discussion on Internet communities, ICANN, privacy issues and marketing on the Internet.

- Panel sponsored by Computer Professionals for Social Justice.

**Table Talk & Panel Four -  
Transportation** 3:00 - 4:15

A discussion on congestion and the lack of public transportation in suburbia and suburban sprawl.

- Speakers to be announced.

## PUBLIC POLICY CONCERNS

My first project for the CAC was facilitating the O'Hare Evening Program. The central issues discussed concerning O'Hare expansion were quality of life problems for residents adjacent to flight paths and the stake of lucrative landing fees. Community members talked about Mayor Daley's potential loss of landing fees as motivation to expand O'Hare despite public outcry: a 737 may pay \$300 to land 128 passengers and a 747 may pay \$2,000 to land a full plane, all of which goes to the City of Chicago.

I also monitored the re-districting process of DuPage County. A state law required the County Board to reduce its number of members and separate the County Board from the Forest Preserve Commission after the 2000 census. I attended a public hearing with approximately 50-60 other people where minorities in the community lobbied the Board to adopt single member districts, 18 Board members from 18 districts rather than 3 members elected at large from six districts. Advocates argued that single districts would promote better County representation. The Board refused to adopt single member districts and rationalized the decision by stating there was no time to hold a public vote before the statutory redistricting deadline of July 1, 2001. I felt the Board avoided the issue of single districting and voted in favor of their own incumbency. I wrote a letter to the editor of several newspapers to this effect.

Thirdly, I worked on civic education by researching how the Illinois State Board of Educational Standards are adopted and enforced. The State Board is currently updating and revising state educational standards and are welcoming public input. CAC is in the process of compiling proposals to increase the standards of civic education.

Lastly, after participating in the Citizen Training Corps, the interns created a civics board game for middle school students with questions that focus on basic civic and governmental knowledge.

All four of my projects helped to re-introduce me to my passion for public interest law. I thank the Center for this opportunity.

*Catherine Hood*

## CITIZEN INITIATIVE AWARDS

The Citizen Initiative Awards will be presented on **October 13, 2001 at Wm. Rainey Harper Community College, Palatine, IL** and are created to recognize citizens who act as catalysts for more citizen participation in the democratic process. Recipients of this award have demonstrated significant and informed civic participation in their communities and by their example have inspired others to build democracy.

To nominate a citizen or organization, please send the nominee's name, address, phone number, fax/ E-mail and references with phone numbers to the Citizen Advocacy Center at P.O. Box 420, Elmhurst, IL, 60126. In addition, please give examples and attach documentation as needed. Please include your name and phone number.

**NOMINATION DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 5, 2001**

*Everyday Democracy* is a publication of the *Citizen Advocacy Center*, a non-profit, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) corporation. Submissions from citizen advocates in the western suburbs of Chicago are encouraged.

The *Center* is an educational and charitable organization dedicated to building democracy for the 21st century by strengthening the public's capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance.

If you are interested in more information, becoming a volunteer, or making a tax-deductible contribution to the *Center*, please feel free to contact or visit us.

## CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER

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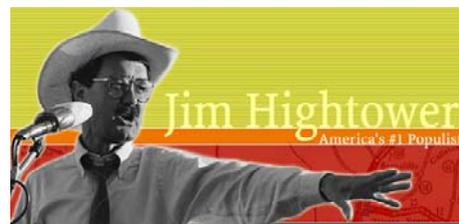
### THIRD ANNUAL CIVIC FAIR GET UP, GET OUT & GET ACTIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

**The Citizen Advocacy Center's Third Annual Suburban Civic Fair is Saturday, October 13, 2001 at Wm. Rainey Harper Community College in Palatine.** The FAIR is FREE to the general public and is an opportunity for people in Chicagoland and the suburbs to **Get Up, Get Out and Get Active in Your Community.** Visit the Suburban Civic Fair to learn of the countless community groups close to home that address every kind of cause or issue that inspire community activism and rejuvenate the spirit of individuals and organizations who are community activists.

This day-long event is jammed with activities featuring 50-100 nonprofit organizations, projects, associations, clubs or religious groups from DuPage and Cook County, stimulating panel discussions with community leaders on hot topics affecting Chicagoland and suburbia and a keynote address by, "America's #1 Populist", Jim Hightower.

Jim Hightower is a progressive populist political commentator heard on the radio and published nationwide. He has been an advocate for consumers, hometown businesses, working families, farmers, and minorities for more than 30 years. His new book, *If The Gods Had Meant Us To Vote, They Would Have Given Us Candidates*, comments on the state of politics in the new millennium, focusing on the presidential candidates, all beholden to the powers-that-be; the topics of interest to ordinary people which no candidate will discuss; and moving stories of citizens beginning to create a new politics with candidates beholden to the power-that-ought-to-be—

folks.



America's  
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