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

LOCAAL 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.

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.
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

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.

Allison Reif

Browning Clark
University of Hawaii

ACTIVIST IN TRAINING

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.

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Dion Cassata
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Dion Cassata
University of Illinois Law School
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

PO Box 420
238 N. York Rd.
Elmhurst, IL  60126
(630) 833-4080

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—America's workaday folks.