



EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER'S SEASONAL NEWSLETTER, FALL 2003

<p align="center">To Home Rule, Or Not To Home Rule: That Should Be A Question for the People of DuPage County</p>	<p align="center">A Primer on Home Rule</p>
<p>DuPage County is taking steps to declare itself Home Rule—without asking the citizenry. On September 30th, the County Board’s Government Efficiency Committee approved a proposal by Chairman Schillerstrom to reorganize the structure of County government. How did your County Board representative vote? They didn’t. This top-down county reorganization was declared by an executive order by Chairman Schillerstrom, rather than being voted on by the County Board.</p> <p>Although the reorganization plan has been touted as a bid for greater governmental efficiency, it is also one of several key governmental changes pushing the county toward a self-declaration of Home Rule status. The recent reorganization transformed the county structure into an executive form of government, a structure that is required by Home Rule counties. The executive form of government makes more individuals and departments directly accountable to the Chairman, and maintains fewer checks and balances between the Chairman, the Board, and the residents of DuPage County.</p> <p>Red Flags</p> <p>The restructuring of county government is only one action over the last year that has quietly moved DuPage County toward a declaration of Home Rule. In January 2003, the County Board voted to change its Board Rules to name Chairman Schillerstrom the CEO of DuPage County. Accordingly, the Board gave the Chairman more power in decision-making and veto power. For example, instead of Chairman Schillerstrom being required to obtain “approval” from some key committees for important decisions, all that is necessary is committee “advisement.” Committee consent is no longer necessary on several important issues.</p> <p>In February, the Chairman requested that a County commission and a committee research the issue of Home Rule. The committee solicited input from diverse authorities on Home Rule and conducted public hearings. During a public comment period at one public hearing, a County Board member stated he thought DuPage County was already Home Rule. The committee has issued a report on the pros and cons of Home Rule, and the Development Committee is scheduled to issue a report to the County Board before the end of the year.</p> <p>Bring the Question of Home Rule to the People</p> <p>Home Rule is a contentious county issue that impacts every resident. The County Board should ask the people to vote in a county-wide referendum on home rule instead of bypassing the citizenry.</p>	<p>Non-Home Rule municipalities and counties in Illinois are limited by state statute and the state constitution in their ability to tax and regulate. Home Rule communities have the power to go beyond many of those limits. Home Rule communities have the power to regulate issues of public health, safety, morals and welfare, and to license, tax, and incur debt beyond statutory limits. Home Rule is a tool that provides municipalities and counties with greater flexibility in regulating local improvements, incurring debt, imposing new and higher taxes, and entering into intergovernmental agreements.</p> <p>Countywide Home Rule can be achieved in three ways.</p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>

**The Citizen Initiative Awards:
Nominate Someone Today!**

The Citizen Initiative Award was created to recognize citizens who act as a catalyst for more citizen participation in the democratic process. Recipients of this award have demonstrated significant and informed civic participation in their communities and have inspired others to build democracy by their example.

The Board of Directors of the Citizen Advocacy Center honors individuals and organizations with the Award every year. Nominations are accepted from and for citizens and groups within the communities served by the Center.

NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Any person or group can nominate as many people or organizations as they like, each with a separate nomination. Nominations are confidential and will be selected by the Center's Board of Directors. The Center reserves the right to publicize the recipients of the award.

Awards are given at the Center's annual Holiday Cheer party, December 2, 7:30 PM at the Center.

NOMINATION INFORMATION

To nominate a citizen or organization, please send or email the following information:

Nominee's name, address, phone number, email, references and phone numbers. Please explain and give examples of how this person or organization has demonstrated significant informed civic participation in the community and by example has inspired others to build democracy. Please include nominator's name, phone number or email so that a Board member may call if necessary.

PAST CITIZEN INTIATIVE AWARD WINNERS

An individual who organized her community in opposition to the creation of a tax increment financing district, a couple who created a non-profit watchdog group to oversee the fiscal spending of a park district, and individuals who successfully organized a county-wide peace and justice group.

**Holiday Cheer Party &
Citizen Initiative Awards**

SAVE THE DATE

Center Holiday Cheer Party

Tuesday, December 2nd

6:30 PM

Citizen Initiative Awards

7:30 PM

The Center's Holiday Cheer Party is our way of saying THANK YOU to all those who donate their time and money to support the work of the Center.

Appetizers and refreshments provided.

(Home Rule continued)

First, counties with a population in excess of one million are automatically considered Home Rule. Cook County is the only Home Rule county in Illinois to qualify by population. The second way is by a county-wide referendum, giving the voters a choice of whether or not to go Home Rule. The third option is for a county self-declaration of Home Rule. A self declaration can occur if the county has an executive form of government, and if the executive has the power to veto proposed legislation.

While Home Rule has many community benefits, such as providing flexibility to respond to local concerns, it also allows taxes to be raised beyond what is allowed by state statute. Home Rule also allows the county to bypass state law and local procurement ordinances regarding competitive bidding. For more information on Home Rule or County procurement, visit the Center's website at www.citizenadvocacycenter.org

TV Broadcasters and The Public Interest

Public Ownership of the Airwaves

Few people realize television licenses that broadcasters rely on to bring their programs to the public are owned by the public. The federal government, through the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), grants broadcasters free licenses to use the airwaves. In essence, broadcasters have been named “public trustees” of the airwaves. The only requirement broadcasters must meet to hold these limited and highly profitable resources is to provide programming that serves the public interest.

Undefined “Public Interest Standard”

The public interest standard has changed through the years depending on the composition of the FCC. From the 1940’s to the mid 1970’s, broadcasters had to have a reasonable mix of specific program areas defined by the FCC to serve the public interest.

Topics included:

- Opportunity for local self-expression
- Development of use of local talent
- Licensees editorialization
- Political Broadcast
- Weather and market reports
- Service to minority groups
- Entertainment
- Children
- Religious
- Educational
- Public Affairs
- Sports
- Agricultural
- News

Deregulation in the 1980’s and aggressive promotion of the “free market” economy led to broadcaster consolidation and a change in definition of the public interest standard. The FCC eliminated the requirement for specific programming in favor of self-monitoring by broadcasters. The idea is that through competition for viewers, broadcasters will develop appropriate public interest programming.

Impact on Local Programming

Most people receive local news from the television, but decades of deregulation and station consolidation has led to virtually nonexistent coverage of local campaigns, controversial issues, local news, and local talent. The absence of local coverage is glaring during local elections. Citizens fail to receive the information they need to make informed decisions about candidates because broadcasters fail to provide serious coverage of candidates and issues. When coverage is provided, it is mostly dedicated to horse-race contests or strategy stories. A 2000 national broadcast survey of mayoral, county, statewide, congressional races and the presidential race showed that the average amount of time devoted to serious broadcast coverage during news casts was 74 seconds per night! The result? Candidates must buy political ads to bring their message to the public, driving campaign costs out of control. A national 2002 broadcast study of political campaigns looked at 4850, 30 minute news programs in the nation’s 50 largest markets one month before elections and found:

- Only 1/3 of newscasts carried ANY campaign coverage while 2/3 carried political advertising;
- Political ad spending in the top 100 markets increased 20% since the 2000 elections to an incredible \$995 million; and
- Chicago candidates for public office spent more than \$68 million in ads, and ran more than 19,000 political commercials.

Public Response

Momentum is growing to bring accountability to broadcasters and to demand quality local broadcast coverage. More than three million people contacted Congress and the FCC to speak out against proposed FCC changes promoting further media consolidation. The swell of public opposition lead to a Senate vote to block FCC changes and national public hearings by FCC commissioners focused on bringing local coverage back to television and radio. Can a difference be made in the Chicagoland market? Absolutely. The Center is beginning a campaign to bring accountability to broadcasters in the Chicagoland area. Contact the Center to join a network of concerned citizen seeking serious local coverage by broadcasters.

Cumulative Voting and County Boards

New legislation passed by the Illinois General Assembly provides for cumulative voting rights in counties with multi-member districts.

Cumulative voting is not new to Illinois.

Illinois citizens used cumulative voting to elect Illinois House of Representatives when there were three-member representative districts from 1870-1980. A 1980 amendment abolished cumulative voting when the House of Representatives reduced in size to its current single-member districts.

What is Cumulative Voting?

Cumulative voting is a different way to cast votes for county board representatives with multi-district representatives. Under the current system, if three representative slots are open, every voter has three votes to cast, but can only cast one vote for position opening. With cumulative voting, a voter can cast all three of their votes any way they want: three votes for one candidate, two votes for one candidate, or one vote for three different candidates. For example in an election where three county board seats are open, this is the difference:

Current Voting System

Candidate A - √
Candidate B - √
Candidate C - √
Candidate D-

Cumulative Voting

Candidate A - √√√
Candidate B
Candidate C
Candidate D

The result? If voters do not find three separate candidates desirable, they do not have to disregard unused votes. Also, if one-third of the voters cast all three of their votes for a political minority candidate, that candidate can win a county board seat, leading to political diversity on county boards.

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.

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**CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECEIVES
NATIONAL PUBLIC INTEREST AWARD**

On October 9th, the Citizen Advocacy Center's Executive Director, Ms. Terry Pastika was recognized nationally as one of only three outstanding young activists to receive the new Public Interest Rising Star Award from OMB Watch, a Washington D.C. based public interest organization. Ms. Pastika was honored for her work as a community organizer and lawyer at the Center.

The Public Interest Rising Star Awards are designed to call attention to emerging leaders committed to the causes of social justice, government accountability, and citizen participation. The award recognizes the extraordinary impact that dedicated young people can make in the beginning of their careers, and the courage it takes to be committed to public interest work.

OMB Watch was founded in 1983 to lift the veil of secrecy shrouding the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which oversees regulation, the federal budget, information collection and dissemination, and much more. Over the years, the focus has shifted to a broader agenda of government accountability. The group is guided by the belief that improving access to governmental decision-makers and encouraging citizen participation will lead to a more just and equitable society.