

EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER'S NEWSLETTER, SECOND EDITION, 2006

DuPage County Call to Action:

The Center has partnered with Dr. Darlene Ruscitti, the DuPage County Regional Superintendent of Schools; and the McCormick Tribune Foundation, to organize a DuPage County Civic Education Summit ("Summit"). The Summit will be modeled after the annual Congressional conference on civic education, of which Dr. Ruscitti is an Illinois delegation member. The Summit's mission is to "build enhanced collaborative community partnerships for sustained civic education and engagement."

While study after study laments youth apathy and the lack of youth civic engagement, the Summit is a venue to take action, implement reform, and address how society can combat barriers that prevent youth civic participation. The Summit will incorporate the philosophy of the Center's youth civic education program, which is:

- Civic engagement is a learned skill just like reading, math, science, and art.
- Civic skills must be practiced regularly in order to develop proficiency, confidence, and a greater understanding of how to harness civic power.
- Young people need civic mentors who live, work, and are involved in the community.

This landmark conference will launch a county-wide program to stimulate youth civic engagement, develop strategic plans for implementing civic engagement in school districts throughout DuPage County, and serve as a model for how to organize other civic conferences throughout the State. The primary focus of the Summit will be the convergence of delegations from DuPage County high schools and middle schools, (comprised of educators, students, government, and community leaders) that will participate in panel discussions and develop strategic civic action plans.

Mark your calendar! For more information about how to become involved, visit the Center website, www.citizenadvocacycenter.org.

Regional Summit on Civic Education

Friday, November 3rd

Keynote Address:

The Honorable Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow of the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Illinois.

Civic Project Networking:

Schools and community organizations from throughout DuPage County will feature their civic engagement programs.

Saturday, November 4th

Panel Discussions:

Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship

- Dr. Fred Drake, Professor, Illinois State University
- Ms. Irene Bahr, Illinois State Bar Association
- Mr. Sam Chaltain, First Amendment Center
- Mr. Tony Reyes, District 94 Board President

The Status of Civic Education: Making the Case for a DuPage County Movement

- Mr. Carl Brownell, Hinsdale Social Studies Chair
- Ms. Mary Ellen Daneels, West Chicago
- Ms. Terry Pastika, Citizen Advocacy Center
- Ms. Melissa Foerstel, Student, College of DuPage

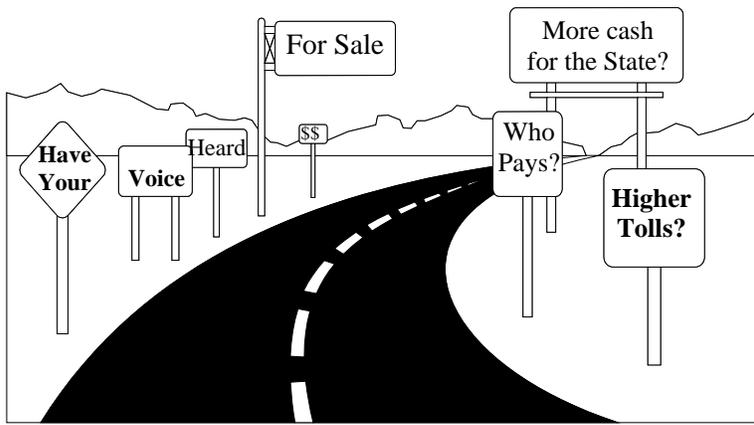
Emerging Trends in Civic Education

- Ms. Chris Slowick, League of Women Voters
- Mr. Jim Ryan, Former Illinois Attorney General
- Mr. Richard Hardy, Western Illinois University

Delegation Strategic Planning

Tollway Privatization

Can Public Accountability & Corporate Profit Be Balanced?



The Center has been monitoring public meetings and hearings related to privatization of the Illinois tollways. Recently, the State Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability (CGFA) approved a \$30,000 bid from Credit Suisse to evaluate and determine the potential monetary value of a public-private partnership (PPP) with the State regarding the lease of the Illinois State Toll Highway system. A PPP would consist of a long-term concession and lease agreement between the state and a private concessionaire to run and operate the Illinois toll road. Credit Suisse is scheduled to produce a fiscal report analyzing the Illinois toll roads by mid-July.

Privatizing the Tollway Public Hearings

Public hearings are underway! Two hearings have been held thus far, two have been scheduled, and more public hearings have been proposed. The first hearing, in Chicago, featured Representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation, national non-profit organizations who favor privatization, labor unions, and the Metropolitan Planning Council. The second hearing, in Joliet, centered on the theme of "Benefits of Privatization." Chicago Metropolitan 20/20, Will County Center for Economic Development, Midwest High Speed Rail Association, the Regional Planning Board, and the Regional Transportation Authority testified.

To date, only one average citizen has voiced his opinion. As of late-June, the public hearings have all been scheduled during the work day, when average citizens cannot attend. Additionally, other than the Joliet hearing, the public has had to travel to either downtown Chicago or Springfield.

While the Senate Appropriations II Committee, which has been holding the hearings, has stated that more hearings will be scheduled, firm dates have not been set.

Privatization of government services has recently become a nationwide trend for generating revenue. However, the potential impact to the public is significant. The following are issues of concern for the Center:

- Will tolls be raised and if so, what will be the increase?
- What will be the benefit to northwest suburban commuters who will generate 100% of the corporate profit?
- What assurances are there that the concessionaire will return the toll road system in at least the same condition as when leased?
- Will the leasing entity pay property tax?
- Will documents related to all contractors, as well as subcontractors, be accessible to the public?
- What safeguards will be put in place to maintain transparency in toll road operations?
- Who will be responsible for deciding whether or not an extension is built and where an extension is built?
- Where will the money received by the State be allocated?
- What will happen to the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority Board? and
- Since only a part of the tollway system is being currently reconstructed, what is going to happen with reconstructing the rest of the system?

General Assembly representatives need input from the public on privatizing the tollways. Now is the time to attend a public hearing or write your state legislator.

The following public hearings have been confirmed:

- Tuesday, August 15th, 1 PM, State Capitol, Springfield. Room 212.
- Wednesday, September 13th, 9:30 AM, James R. Thompson Center, 100 W. Randolph St., Chicago.

To learn more about how to get involved, keep informed, or learn who your representative is, call the Center at 630.833.4080.

Democracy Watch

Are public bodies charging too much for access to information?



The Center receives hundreds of calls a year from the public seeking answers to questions of public concern. Below is a current issue.

What can public bodies charge for making copies in

response to Freedom of Information Act Requests?

The Freedom of Information Act states that public bodies may charge *reasonable* fees to reimburse *actual costs* for reproducing public records. Public bodies may not charge for employee time to search and review the record. 5 ILCS 140/6 (a).

When the Center launched an investigation to learn what public bodies are charging for copy costs, we discovered vast discrepancies; some public bodies charged nothing for the first few pages while others charged \$2 per page. If commercial companies can cover costs and make a profit by charging less than \$.10 per copy, why are some public bodies charging significantly more?

With no published case law and no formal Attorney General opinion, citizens have turned to the Attorney General's Public Access Counselor, Ms. Terry Mutchler, for guidance. Ms. Mutchler has addressed excessive charge complaints in regard to the Village of Summit ("Summit") and the DuPage County Election Commission. ("Commission")

When a citizen from Summit asked for Ms. Mutchler's assistance in regards to a \$.25 per page charge, Ms. Mutchler investigated and responded by asking Summit to reexamine their fee structure to ensure that the costs represented the "actual cost of reproduction." Ms. Mutchler referenced that the Attorney General's office charges \$.15 per page in excess of 30 pages.

When another citizen contacted Ms. Mutchler to complain about the \$1 per page copy fees by the

Commission, Ms. Mutchler issued the same request. While Ms. Mutchler has not determined whether or not a particular fee associated with a particular public body is excessive, Ms. Mutchler was quoted in the Naperville Sun regarding the Commission's costs as saying, "I think a public body would be hard pressed to justify \$1 per page." Moreover, while the law is clear in not allowing public bodies to charge for employee time, the Commission's Executive Director was reported as stating that personnel time for the coping and research are included in the \$1 cost. (Naperville Sun, June 19, 2005)

Unfortunately, the Public Access Counselor lacks enforcement authority. However, the Public Access Counselor's letters asking public bodies to reevaluate their copy fees are helpful for citizens trying to understand FOIA. When charged a fee that a citizen feels is excessive, the citizen should ask the public body for a fee justification, and file a complaint with the Public Access Counselor. Filing a complaint with the Attorney General's office is a step towards helping the Attorney General build a case for why the Public Access Counselor needs enforcement capacity.



The Center has received a challenge from a funder: raise \$5,000 in contributions of \$250 or more, and the funder will match those contributions up to \$5,000.

Matching grants are an opportunity for Center supporters to have their contributions count for twice as much. If you are able to help the Center meet this challenge, your participation is appreciated! By donating to the Center, you are also helping to build democracy.

The Center would like to meet this goal by September 30, 2006. **For those supporters who have already helped the Center work towards this goal, Thank You!**

Donating to the Center is just one of the many ways to help. To become involved, call the Center today!

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, please feel free to contact or visit us.

**CITIZEN
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CENTER**

630-833-4080

238 N. York St.,

Elmhurst, IL 60126

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DEMOCRACY DAY: JULY 20TH



Every summer the Center hosts high school, college, and law students who want to learn about community organizing, advocacy, and civic empowerment.

This year the Center is proud to host four law students and three college students. For ten weeks during the summer, interns help community groups take action, facilitate community programs, teach people that their voice matters, research public policy issues, and learn how an average person can make an impact in the community.

Democracy Day is an opportunity for our interns to share their experiences working at the Center, and provides the public with an opportunity to learn about our innovative projects and programs.

Everyone is invited to attend!

**Celebrate Democracy Day with Center Summer Interns
Thursday, July 20th, 7 pm.
238 N. York Rd., Elmhurst**

**CAC Summer Interns
Are the Best!**

