

CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER
Building Democracy for the 21st Century



2014 Annual Report

Citizen Advocacy Center

2014 Annual Report

The Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) is an award-winning, non-profit, non-partisan, free community legal organization. In 2014, CAC marked 20 years of service and celebrated our vast array of achievements and the effectiveness of the community lawyering model to fulfill our mission of building democracy for the 21st century by strengthening the public'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 a grassroots, community-based legal organization whose formula for civic engagement results in systemic changes at local and state levels. Efforts that start at the local level often result in statewide initiatives that dismantle anti-democratic barriers that are rooted in state law.

Since its founding in 1994, CAC has evolved into a well-established and respected public interest institution that serves community interests with an incomparable, holistic, and results-oriented model.

Our three major initiatives in 2014 were:

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

Building Democracy for the 21st Century
Citizen Advocacy Center 2014 Annual Report

www.CitizenAdvocacyCenter.org

Public Education and Capacity Building

CAC is a hub for civic information, civic engagement, and civic networking where those interested in becoming involved in community affairs meet other advocates and create lasting civic relationships. CAC community lawyers address issues of public concern raised by community members. In the process, CAC community lawyers create active and vibrant democratic communities. Regardless of the subject matter or the viewpoint of the inquiry, CAC builds the capacity of concerned citizens to use civic tools, the law, organize community members, and build coalitions to affect systemic change.

Community Lawyering and Grassroots Assistance

CAC provides extensive community lawyering and technical legal assistance at the grassroots level in DuPage County, the other collar counties, and suburban Cook County. CAC also provides technical legal assistance throughout Illinois.

Sample of counties served in addition to DuPage County:

Boone	Kendall	McHenry	St. Clair
Cook	Lake	McLean	Winnebago
Kane	Madison	Sangamon	Will

Our focus ensures access to the democratic process and results in CAC addressing a diverse array of issues that range from ethics, government accountability, land use, tax increment financing, access to the ballot, social justice, and more. Below is a sampling of inquiries received from the public:

Public Inquiries:

- What are the requirements for an advisory referenda on the township agenda at the annual meeting?
- Is the police chief required to enforce municipal ordinances?
- At what point does a government body waive its right to withhold public records based on the FOIA “preliminary exemption” section
- Can a municipality repeal “home rule”? What can citizens do to repeal “home rule”?
- Can a member of the public be banned from a government meeting for three months based on a minor disruption during a public meeting?
- Can a school board prohibit a parent group from meeting on school premises because they lack 501(c)(3) status?
- Is a zoning commissioner disqualified, due to a conflict of interest, from voting on a redevelopment application when that person (1) is a former city council alderman who chaired the public body’s zoning committee, and (2) participated in discussions of the same project as an alderman?

- How can a citizen place a referendum on the ballot? What makes a referendum binding?
- Does the Open Meetings Act (OMA) apply to student groups at a state college or university?
- Can a board member tape a meeting for personal use, and is the tape subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)?
- What happens if election paperwork is challenged? What is an electoral board? Who sits on an electoral board?

Communities Served:

Aurora	Evanston	Naperville
Batavia	Forest Park	Orland Park
Bensenville	Geneva	Park Ridge
Berwyn	Glen Ellyn	Plainfield
Bloomington	Hanover Township	Schiller Park
Chicago	Hawthorn Woods	Tampico
Cicero	Lisle	Villa Park
Darien	Lombard	Wauconda Township
Downers Grove	Lyndon	Woodridge
Elgin	Maywood	Wheaton
Elmhurst	Milton Township	Winfield

Community Forums:

In addition to answering public inquiries and assisting citizens organize their community, the following is a sample of forums that CAC hosted, at which CAC was a guest speaker, or in which CAC participated:

- 4th Annual DuPage NAACP Career Fair (Booth) (5th year of CAC participation)
- Chicago Bar Association Administrative Law Committee (Guest Speaker)
- Chicago Headline Club FOIA Fest (Guest Speaker)
- Chicago Open Government Hack Night (Guest Speaker)
- Chicago Votes DemocracyCorps Training (Guest Speaker)
- Illinois Civic Education Task Force Public Hearing, City of Chicago (Presenter)
- Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, Spring Conference (Workshop Presentation)
- Immigrant Solidarity DuPage Forum on Latino Education (Guest Panelist)

- Lorman Continuing Legal Education Seminar: Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Act (Presenter)
- Smart Chicago Collaborative Chicago School of Data Days (Guest Speaker)
- Woodridge Public Library Current Events Group (Guest Speaker)

Building Democracy: Examples of Community Lawyering Assistance

Orland Park Public Library

Citizens contacted CAC with First Amendment and open government concerns regarding the Orland Park Public Library (OPPL) and their internet use and computer filters policies. OPPL created an extremely hostile environment for civic engagement by concerned community members. CAC worked directly with these concerned community members to help them become more forceful self-advocates. CAC also attended several OPPL Board meetings to advocate for policy reforms, assisted citizens with filing request for reviews to the Illinois Attorney General Public Access Counselor (PAC), and advocated for the OPPL to implement better public relations practices. The following are highlights of community lawyering assistance provided:

Successful PAC Appeal on Right to Speak

Repeated attempts were made by the OPPL Board to stifle the rights of citizens to speak and petition government, such as prohibiting a community leader from speaking on certain items during public comment. The concerned citizens contacted CAC, and community lawyers provided assistance in filing a request for review with the PAC. The citizens claimed the OPPL Board violated the Open Meetings Act (OMA) when they refused to allow public comment on the specific topic of pornography-viewing at the library or the library's unsecured computer network. The PAC agreed and was particularly critical of the board implementing ad hoc and arbitrary rules.

Successful Advocacy to Amend Anti-Democratic Policies

The OPPL Board overtly disregarded the PAC decision and continued to interrupt public comment speakers and refuse public comments on pornography-viewing or unsecured computer usage at the library. The OPPL Board claimed that the PAC had no authority over it because the determination letter was merely non-binding and advisory. The OPPL Board also tried to prohibit another community leader from videotaping open meetings. Citizens became fearful of removal from the meeting if they tried to videotape. Moreover, at a subsequent meeting, the OPPL Board proposed a public comment policy that included impermissible content-based restrictions on speech:

- “The Board may deny public comment by speaker(s) who have voiced the same concerns publicly at previous meetings”, and
- “Abusive, profane, harassing and/or repetitive comments and language and/or personal attacks will not be permitted and shall promptly be ruled out of order by the President or other presiding officer.”

The policy even had a provision that forbid the use of library electricity to videotape an open meeting, despite a specific provision in the OMA that allows for videotaping. Community members asked CAC to attend OPPL Board meetings. CAC empowered a community member to videotape the meeting, and the individual taped the meeting. At the meeting, CAC also commented on the unconstitutional provisions of the proposed policy. CAC educated the OPPL Board that the PAC's decision, while a "determination letter" and not a binding opinion, applied the same legal rationale as a binding decision and was therefore of the same substantive quality. In response, the OPPL amended their public comment policy and removed both of the non-compliant portions identified in the PAC's decision as well as the provision prohibiting the use of electricity at the library. CAC's efforts to combat this restrictive policy were successful and resulted in the passage of a public policy that complies with the First Amendment and the OMA.

Successful PAC Appeal on Convenient Meetings

CAC was again contacted when the OPPL Board scheduled a special board meeting on a holiday. Citizens monitoring the OPPL Board were outraged. CAC supported the citizens' claim that scheduling a special meeting on a holiday was in contravention of the law and assisted them in writing another successful PAC appeal. The PAC issued a determination letter agreeing that the actions that occurred at the special meeting held on a state holiday were void. The PAC rejected OPPL's argument that because other government bodies held an open meeting on a holiday, documenting an example, that it could too.

Empowering Community Members to Know and Use Their First Amendment Rights

Concerned community members petitioned outside the OPPL library to inform patrons of the library policy. Library staff members called the police to have the petitioners removed. When the police showed up, the community members conveyed their right to petition and the police officers agreed.

The overall manner in which the OPPL Board interacted with the public garnered national attention on NBC's *Saturday Night Live* "Weekend Update" that mocked the OPPL Board and administration. Additionally, librarians from Orland Park were featured speakers in a "Crisis Communications Workshop" where they discussed the civic situation in a video conference that aired to regional libraries (Reaching Across Illinois Library System, "RAILS"), purportedly to discuss how to avoid negative attention in the media, at which OPPL had failed. When the concerned citizens attempted to obtain documents from OPPL to show participation in this conference, the library responded that it had no records responsive to the request.

While change has come slowly at OPPL Board, the library ultimately examined its procedures for complaints about inappropriate internet use at the library. The change to the public comment policy systemically protects the democratic process for all who seek to participate in OPPL Board affairs. The civic education CAC provided to community members results in these citizens being forceful self-advocates who remain undeterred to contribute to the public debate. The citizens now understand their rights at government meetings, how to access government records, and their First Amendment rights.

Villa Park Village Board

CAC was contacted by concerned citizens with questions about government transparency and openness. The citizens attempted to use FOIA to obtain documents to understand the business of the village board and the relationship between the village board and the village manager. However, they did not receive adequate responses to their requests. The citizens were afraid to speak out during open meetings and had concerns about potential government backlash for questioning authority.

Building Citizen Capacity to Request Documents and Petition Government

CAC educated concerned citizens about their rights to obtain public documents through FOIA and assisted in properly wording FOIA requests. CAC taught the community group about their right to speak at open meetings and empowered citizens to speak out by role playing public comment. CAC also attended village board meetings with community members who worried about receiving government backlash for speaking. In addition, CAC also addressed the village board directly regarding poor FOIA practices. Now educated and empowered, these concerned citizens attend meetings regularly, speak out about issues of transparency, and ask questions about government funds.

Educating the Citizenry on Government Zoning Processes, Zoning Codes, and Scrutinizing Zoning Applications

A different group of concerned citizens contacted CAC regarding issues that included how to understand permissible zoning uses, how to read zoning documents and zoning ordinances, and the right to speak at zoning hearings. The specific issue of concern was whether the proximity of a medical marijuana dispensary to a child care center was in compliance with the zoning code. When citizens raised this concern at the public hearing, the petitioner responded by withdrawing the application for zoning approval.

When the application was re-submitted for a different location, a special use permit was required because it did not fall within the M1 industrial use zoning that the Illinois state statute requires for a medical marijuana dispensary. The citizen issue of concern was the accuracy of information presented in the zoning application. When citizen activists highlighted their specific concerns again at the zoning public hearing, the application was once again withdrawn. When a third application was filed, this time for a conditional use permit, the concerned citizens generally spoke out about their lack of faith in the process. CAC gave public comment to the village board, questioning adherence to proper procedures in totality. In a 3-3 vote, the medical marijuana dispensary failed.

Village of Lisle Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) Public Hearing Open Meetings Act Potential Violation

Concerned citizens contacted CAC about a proposed redevelopment plan before the Lisle Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC). The public hearing held by the PZC to determine compliance with zoning ordinances is *the only* formal opportunity for the public to actively participate, comment on and ask questions about local development projects. After the public hearing, the PZC makes project recommendations to the village board. Residents had substantive concerns of building height, parking, and property use. In addition they had procedural concerns regarding fairness and access to the democratic process at the public hearing.

CAC helped the residents evaluate:

- Recusal standards based on a commissioner announcing support for the project at a village board meeting;
- Ex parte communications by commissioners outside the public hearing with parties to the hearing;
- Rules for cross examination established to limit citizens' rights to ask questions to the proponents of the development;
- An onerous seven-day advanced registration mandate for citizens who do not have an automatic right to cross examination;
- Lack of definition for "unreasonable denial" for those who have denied their automatic right to cross examine;
- The waiver of rules requiring the developer to demonstrate the need for zoning variations;
- The appropriateness of village staff introducing new material to the proposed development after the public hearing without giving the public notice of new material or opportunity to comment;
- The lack of public comment at a regularly scheduled meeting; and
- The general lack of transparency surrounding the project.

In addition CAC filed a request for review with the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) on the OMA issues. The PAC is investigating the matter and will issue a determination in 2015.

City of Elmhurst Community Development

Since 2009 CAC has worked with community members and public officials to address a controversial public parking garage project. Elmhurst is an excellent example of CAC's impact, importance, and effectiveness when monitoring the government decision-making process. The historical highlights listed below put our 2014 successes in context:

- Successfully organized community members who advocated for the removal of a clause referencing a six story structure in the redevelopment contract. Residents wanted public debate on height and feared such a clause gave the appearance of a de-facto approval. (2009)
- Held the Elmhurst Zoning and Planning Commission (ZPC) accountable for an improperly noticed text amendment. The text amendment sought to increase maximum allowable building height in downtown (where the project was located) from four to six stories. After CAC and community members spoke out, the agenda item was removed. (2010)
- Assisted an Alderman in obtaining a successful PAC determination letter that stated public bodies may not discuss land use issues in executive session when convened under the acquisition and disposition of exemptions of the OMA (5 ILCS 120/2(c)(5) and 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(6)). The PAC requested immediate disclosure of two closed session tapes. (2012/2013)

- Organized community members to fill Elmhurst City Council chambers to demand the immediate release of the closed session tapes. After initially balking, the city released the tapes within 48 hours of the city council meeting, revealing several aldermen favorably discussing a six story building, a discussion yet to be had in public. (2013)
- The ZPC unanimously rejected the proposed project for six floors based on community testimony highlighting several issues of public concern. (2013)

In 2014, the following developments unfolded:

Open Discussion of Building Height for First Time:

When the city council addressed the why the ZPC denied the six story application, the city was forced to openly discuss the project for the first time due to the PAC determination.

Accessing Financial Documents:

Based on the open discussions, CAC helped a concerned citizen file a FOIA request for documentation to support financial projections of \$10.5 million to \$14.5 million. After initially not responding, the city denied the request based on the “pre-decisional records” exemption in the FOIA, claiming that the records were being used by the public body to help it form an opinion about whether to build four, five or six stories outside of public scrutiny.

CAC assisted the citizen with a request for review to the PAC that stated: the city was contractually obligated to build the project since 2009; any financial information was factual in nature; the city council never deliberated the accuracy of the financial analysis; and the only policy decision under consideration was building height. In addition, the mayor cited the documents in open session, thereby waiving any exemption that might otherwise allow non-disclosure. The PAC ruled in favor of the citizen and required disclosure of the documents.

Right to Participate in Public Hearings

When the application was re-submitted, controversy followed at the ZPC hearing with respect to limiting public testimony in an arbitrary manner.

- A resident, while testifying, informed the ZPC that his testimony was lengthy and offered to wait until others testified because he had done extensive research. The chair rejected this proposal. During his testimony, the chair interrupted and commented that the testimony was “dragging on for some time period.” When the resident attempted to continue, another commissioner interrupted to ask if he was an architect or engineer and if he assumed that the ZPC did not know how to read the report. Eventually the interaction became more contentious, and the resident offered to submit the rest of his testimony in writing.
- The chilling effect of this interaction was clearly evidenced among the packed crowd. The next speaker started his testimony by admitting he was “a bit gun shy after the conversation that took place.”

- A third resident that testified also informed the ZPC that her testimony would be lengthy and offered to wait to the end. The chair also denied this request. During her testimony regarding parking calculations, height, and setbacks, a commissioner interrupted to ask if she was attempting to have the ZPC believe a different application report than what was before them. Another commissioner interrupted to ask if her testimony had been “peer-reviewed,” and yet another commissioner interrupted to ask if she was a “traffic engineer.” The final offense was a commissioner alleged the testimony was so informed it appeared to be “expert,” rather than “citizen.” Her contention was that the resident should not be allowed to provide this testimony. After some debate as to whether to let the individual to continue to speak, the hearing was continued to a later date.

The city was aware that CAC monitored their public hearing process for fairness and legality. Based on past experience, the city also knew that CAC would hold them accountable if public testimony was not allowed. When the ZPC reconvened the hearing, they allowed everyone to finish their testimony but requested those with longer testimony go at the end. After this hearing, the ZPC adopted new rules for public hearings that include a 5 minute time constraint on testimony.

Citizen Initiative Awards

Every year CAC honors those who organize in their community to make a difference. They are average citizens who identified systemic issues of concern and rather than assuming that others will take on the issue, chose to get involved and increase democratic participation in their community. CAC provided assistance to all but one recipient, who was nominated by a CAC Advisory Council member. The following individuals and groups were honored:

Park Truth, Plainfield (Will County)

Park Truth members contacted CAC for assistance when they discovered that a long-time executive director’s contract was bought out to create an opening for a new executive director. The citizens questioned the new executive director’s qualifications and the favor he had from recently elected park district commissioners. Residents highlighted fiscal concerns, government operation concerns, the lack of access to public records, and poor compliance with the OMA during the new executive director’s tenure. The park district was overtly hostile to community members. For example, the park district posted a piece on its website, attributed to the newly hired executive director, which vilified the residents who used the PAC office to mediate disputes related to the FOIA and OMA. They also called the citizens “radicals” for merely practicing basic civic engagement. CAC called for the park district board to remove the offensive blog post. At one meeting, the executive director and park district board president disruptively played tic-tac-toe during the CAC community lawyer’s public comment. Ironically, later in the meeting, the board president had a community member removed for allegedly engaging in disruptive behavior when she made a short sarcastic comment from the audience. She was also banned from attending future park district meetings at that location for three months.

The anti-democratic board generated significant discussion and publicity as the behavior was videotaped, posted online, and reported in news outlets. Additionally, high school students in attendance at the meeting for a civic engagement class discussed what they witnessed both in school and with their parents.

Park Truth continues to attend meetings, speak out, and request public records. The executive director resigned, the offensive blog was removed, the park district began an investigation into expenditures, and more. Additionally, Park Truth's advocacy resulted in state legislation that increased its Illinois park district board size by two members in an attempt to reduce the opportunity for a smaller majority to poorly dictate public policy.

Joan Metz, Indian Head Park (Cook County)

Ms. Metz routinely attended Indian Head Park Village Board meetings and wrote a blog that comprehensively reviewed public comments made to the village board. Often, the details of the meetings were omitted from village board meeting minutes. When the village board failed to televise meetings, Ms. Metz videotaped meetings and posted them to her blog and YouTube. At first, the village board attempted to implement barriers to Ms. Metz tapings. After realizing that she would not be deterred, the village began televising its board meetings.

Ms. Metz also monitored the village's finances. She questioned expenditures including a policy that allowed the village president to receive a salary for acting as the liquor commissioner and a supplemental health care policy for expense reimbursements in excess of \$60,000. Due to the attention Ms. Metz brought to these issues, the village board voted to eliminate both policies after the next election.

Batavia Rate-Payers for Fair Electricity, Batavia (Kane County)

Batavia Rate-Payers for Fair Electricity (BRPFE) called for accountability at the City of Batavia over fiscal concerns related to a power sales agreement with the Northern Illinois Municipal Power Agency for electricity from the Prairie State Energy Campus (PSEC). Residents' questions went unanswered as to what information PSEC provided to the city that led them to believe the agreement would protect rate-payers from volatile energy prices. What happened instead was soaring construction costs, increased debt, and unstable electric wholesale costs. BRPFE contacted CAC for general, technical legal, and educational assistance in understanding their rights.

Utilizing FOIA, BRPFE spent countless hours reviewing copious documents. The documents generated many concerns that included: the consultant's role in the decision-making process, a last minute change to the deadline for commitment to the project, and the impact of coal quality on the investment. BRPFE organized residents, collected over 1,000 petition signatures, and presented a petition to Batavia City Council. The petition called for an investigation into the city's power provider and demanded increased transparency around contractual terms. The city responded by officially requesting the Attorney General (Consumer Protection Division) investigate the contract to verify terms and disclosure fair to consumers.

Gerri Songer, Hawthorn Woods (Lake County)

Ms. Songer contacted CAC for assistance with advocacy for her issue. At the direction of the mayor, she was escorted from an open meeting by police while lawfully giving public comment for the first time. With the assistance of CAC, Ms. Songer continued to advocate about her right to seek documents and give public comment.

Ms. Songer began attending board meetings after she noticed an increased presence of trains at all hours behind her home. Ms. Songer questioned what the trains were carrying. Through public records, she learned the trains transported toxic, hazardous, and explosive substances. Her research shows that several trains were in accidents that created hazardous runoff. CAC attended a public meeting with Ms. Songer and spoke out about her right to speak. With the support of CAC, Ms. Songer is undeterred and continues to attend meetings, assert her rights, and speak out about the issue of public concern she identified.

Ms. Songer, an educator at Elk Grove High School, took her newfound knowledge about the importance of civic engagement and advocacy further. Inspired by her experiences in civic participation, she founded an extracurricular group named “Students4Democracy” to teach high school students how to become participants in their democracy. She has integrated into the curriculum how to utilize public participation tools like FOIA and the right to speak at open meetings of public bodies. Many of these students are first generation Americans and have not previously been exposed to democratic participation. CAC attended a “Students4Democracy” meeting to teach students about democratic participation and public participation tools.

Civic Education

Voting Systems: What is Fair Representation?

The voting system an electorate uses impacts the democratic process as much as campaign finance regulation or voter registration. Illinois currently uses a “winner take all system,” but from 1870 - 1982, Illinois voters used cumulative voting to elect members of the Illinois House of Representatives. A 2000 study from the Institute of Government Affairs and Public Policy of the University of Illinois opined that the end of cumulative voting contributed to less competitive races in the Illinois House due to limiting candidate choice. Alternative voting systems, such as cumulative voting or instant runoff voting, has true power potential because of the ability to provide for more competitive races at both state and local levels.

CAC engaged in a public education, community organizing, and public policy project on alternative election systems in the western suburbs of Chicago. There has been significant population and diversity growth in the western suburbs. Yet the power structures remain largely homogeneous and unchanged. The project goals were to educate, train, and provide educational resources to community members on (1) how different election systems may impact constituent representation and (2) how various laws, such as home rule and binding referenda, can be used to change existing election

systems. CAC produced two brochures for citizens to explain home rule powers of municipalities and the possibility of implementing alternative election systems, and both were translated into Spanish. In addition, CAC worked with a total of eight community groups and held trainings for community leaders in Wheaton, Schiller Park, and Glen Ellyn.

Summer Speaker Series on the Intersection of Social Justice, Jurisprudence, and History*

CAC hosted a summer speaker series and brought in several speakers for brown bag lunch talks that were open to the public.

Consumer Advocacy: Do Corporations Own Us or Do We Have a Dog in the Fight?

Theresa Amato, public advocate, gave a presentation on corporate power and consumer advocacy. Ms. Amato is the founder of CAC and currently serves as the executive director of Citizen Works, an organization devoted to advancing justice by strengthening citizen participation in power. Ms. Amato discussed recent U.S. Supreme Court cases concerning the consumer rights that are lost in the fine print of standard form contracts such as cell phone bills and mortgages. She also commented on the growing role of corporations in our elections and current reform efforts underway.

During the War on Terror, What Does History Tell Us About Free Speech?

IIT-Kent College of Law Professor Steven J. Heyman reviewed the conflicts between First Amendment and national security through leading a discussion on the implications of a 2010 Supreme Court decision *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*. *Holder* was a 5-4 decision holding that humanitarian groups would be guilty of providing material aid to terrorism if they trained terrorist groups in nonviolent methods of dispute resolution, based on Congress's determination that any assistance to terrorist groups advanced terrorist aims.

The History and Current Context of Fair and Affordable Housing in DuPage County

Terence Leen, current CAC volunteer and former Elmhurst Alderman, discussed how in the 1960s many communities had provisions in real estate contracts that forbade the sale of homes to people of color. From 1968 - 1970 he was chairman of Elmhurst For Freedom of Residency Today (EFFORT), a community organization that formed to oppose these provisions.

Anne Houghtaling, Executive Director of HOPE Fair Housing Center in DuPage County discussed the history of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act, also known as the Fair Housing Act, and its implications in DuPage County. She also shared her experiences regarding routine litigation on local fair housing issues and spoke about conducting fair housing testing to end housing discrimination.

* This program was made possible in part by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council, which is supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois General Assembly.

Election Workshops - "Ballot Access"

CAC conducted two election workshops at the request of citizen groups to educate the public on how to become a candidate and demystify the process and timeline for filing nomination papers and signed petitions. These public forums were held at public libraries in Plainfield and Forest Park.

Youth Civic Education Program – the “Civic Empowerment Zone”

The Civic Empowerment Zone is a hands-on civic education program developed by CAC. The program focuses on building civic skills, knowledge, and confidence and teaches youth what it means to be an engaged citizen. CAC helps educators and youth transform their communities into “civic labs” by engaging youth about local issues they care about. We help them to master universal civic skills and learn practical application of laws and policies that affect the democratic process. Throughout this process, youth develop the knowledge and skills to affect government decision-making. In 2014, CAC engaged in the following activities:

Constitution Week

For the last five years, CAC collaborated with area high schools to engage students in understanding the Constitution and First Amendment rights through individual first-hand experiences. In 2014, CAC welcomed Qasim Rashid to inspire civic participation. Mr. Rashid, a human rights activist and attorney, authored *The Wrong Kind of Muslim*, an autobiographical journey into his heritage and religion as a vehicle into the history and ongoing phenomenon of faith-based persecution and target-killings in Pakistan, starting with a childhood bullying incident in Chicago.

Mr. Rashid spoke to hundreds of students at York High School in Elmhurst, Hinsdale Central High School, and Geneva High Community School about exercising his First Amendment freedoms and his insights into Pakistan and how its constitutional guarantee to freedom of expression compares with that in the U.S.

A CAC community lawyer attended the programs where students heard Mr. Rashid’s first-hand account to provide the constitutional context for Mr. Rashid’s championship of the Free Exercise Clause of our First Amendment guarantee of Freedom of Religion. Students were attentive and engaged. 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. Students expressed that they could relate to the presentation because Mr. Rashid couched the lessons he was sharing in the high school experience. Students also expressed that it was the first time that the abstract concepts behind the First Amendment were made clear through a concrete example with which they were able to identify.

Civic Education Forums

CAC works with teachers to improve civic education. This work includes building coalitions, sponsoring dynamic speakers, and participating in civic education and professional development activities. Below is a sampling of the youth civic education program in 2014:

High Schools:

Downers Grove South (Panelist)

York Community High School (Constitution Week)

Hinsdale Central High School (Constitution Week)

Geneva Community High School (Constitution Week)

Elk Grove Village High School, Students4Democracy Student Group (Guest Speaker)

Colleges/Universities:

The University of Chicago Law School (Guest Speaker)
Northeastern Illinois University (Guest Speaker)

Professional Development Programs:

Capitol Forum, Illinois Humanities Council (Guest Speaker)
CAC Constitution Week (Forum)
We The People (Judge)

Civic Education Policy Advocacy and Collaboration:

Illinois Task Force on Civic Education (Appointee)
NAACP sponsored Parent & Schools, Partners in a Child's Education (Roundtable)
DuPage County Regional Office of Education, Democracy Schools (Meeting)

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. CAC hosted interns and volunteers from the following institutions in 2014:

- The John Marshall Law School
- Maurer School of Law at Indiana University
- Northeastern Illinois University
- Proviso Math & Science Academy
- University of Dayton Law School
- University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana
- University of Iowa School of Law
- University of Michigan, School of Law
- Villanova University
- Wheaton North High School
- York Community High School

Examples of Intern Projects in 2014:

Christopher Annis, Rising Senior, Wheaton North High School

- Reviewed 400 page FOIA request response regarding DuPage County Board pay raise where a citizen questioned whether notice of the pay raise was proper
- Collaborated with the DuPage NAACP to collect data on the number of minority owners of companies contracted by local governments
- Wrote a blog post on Summer Speaker Series presentation by Steven Heyman on United States Supreme Court First Amendment opinions, including the recently decided *Hobby Lobby* opinion and the rights of closely held corporations.

Michael Chada, Rising Senior, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

- Compiled a catalog of over 50 surveys that have been facilitated by organizations throughout Illinois on government transparency to create an Illinois Transparency Library
- Drafted a memo outlining the different electoral boards within Illinois for a general guide to why and how electoral boards are formed
- Wrote blog posts on Summer Speaker Series presentations by Theresa Amato, Terry Leen, and Anne Houghtaling
- Attended the State Electoral Board hearing for YES! For Independent Maps to observe the objection to the validity of petition signatures
- Attended Oakbrook Terrace Zoning Hearing on a redevelopment issue for a restaurant

Cassie DeBolt, Rising 2L, University of Dayton School of Law

- Analyzed 23 library district budgets and compared to municipal budgets to determine if library tax levies exceeded municipal levies
- Researched and drafted a memo on the lobbying registration and reporting requirements for Illinois, Cook County, and the City of Chicago
- Researched and drafted a memo on the petition requirements for ballot access for an advisory referendum to dissolve a township
- Researched the process of removing a city manager for ethical issues and the process for adopting behavioral standards for appointed positions
- Submitted FOIA request to Villa Park regarding the IKE Water Grant Study

Alec Kramer, Rising Senior, York Community High School

- Surveyed municipalities about wireless radio fire alarms by contacting municipal clerks, fire chiefs, and fire marshals and compiled quarterly costs for businesses
- Worked in collaboration with the DuPage NAACP to research municipal records for companies awarded government bids, submitted FOIA requests to municipalities for bid information, identified major company stakeholders that were awarded bids, and created a spreadsheet on relevant data obtained to assess the percentage of minority and women-owned companies awarded contracts
- Wrote a draft letter on the history of American Constitution, Constitution Day, and CAC's Constitution Day speaker

Amie Leonard, Rising 3L, The John Marshall Law School

- Researched state and county efforts to consolidate local government
- Researched the First Amendment principle of separation of church and state and applied it to different scenarios in a Cook County suburb
- Gave public comment in Elmhurst on separation of church and state and wrote a letter to the editor on the same subject
- Researched changes in the rules concerning limited scope representation in the Illinois Supreme Court Rules of Professional Conduct

Abbey Moffitt, University of Iowa School of Law, Rising 3L

- Gave public comment on Geneva’s lack of a public comment policy and wrote a letter to editor thanking the city council for establishing its public comment policy
- Briefed provisions of HB 3796 and wrote a memo on the parameters of the “unduly burdensome” provision
- Researched Illinois’ anti-SLAPP statute, the Citizen Participation Act. SLAPP stands for “strategic lawsuits against public participation”
- Drafted a request for review explaining how 7(1)(m) and 7(1)(f) didn’t apply to the requested records (a training manual on home inspections)
- Wrote a FOIA request and submitted it to Villa Park

Krystian Seebert, Rising Junior, Villanova University

- Assisted high school students in analyzing data of contracts awarded by municipalities to females and minorities.
- Read through FOIA request response from Plainfield Park District respecting nepotism and unfair hiring practices
- Wrote blog post on Prof. Steven Heyman’s presentation on the Supreme Court of the United States’ treatment of the First Amendment
- Researched history of public financing in other jurisdictions and compiled a spreadsheet profiling each attempt at public campaign financing
- Attended meeting at Oak Park Campaign Finance Reform/Public Financing Forum

Georgia Smithee, Rising 3L, Maurer School of Law at Indiana University

- Wrote memo evaluating the DuPage County Ethics Ordinance
- Gave public comment analyzing Orland Park’s Library Board’s public comment policy
- Wrote memo analyzing and critiquing the conflict of interest issues for a Bloomington art-loan program and wrote a letter to the editor on the topic
- Assisted Immigrant Solidarity DuPage write petition asking for the DuPage County Regional Office of Education to form an exploratory board to address Latino concerns within schools
- Researched and wrote a memo outlining the process by which a citizen may introduce this referendum question for the ballot

Adam Walker, Rising 3L, University of Michigan School of Law

- Researched whether the Illinois State Tollway Highway Authority’s plans to acquire land in Bensenville for expansion of the Tri-State Tollway is an appropriate exercise of its power of eminent domain
- Audited deadline filing compliance of Economic Impact Statements of village trustees, city aldermen, and county board members throughout DuPage for compliance with the law’s deadline for filing
- Wrote a memo on the petitions standards for referendums and candidacy and created a Q&A document that translated the legal language into casual language

- Provided assistance to citizens seeking to submit petition on redistricting referendum and navigation of legal procedures
- Analyzed and entered data from Attorney General Public Access Counselor determination letters interpreting the Freedom of Information Act

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. These issues are embedded in local ordinances or state law, and either need to be removed or reformed. Below is a sample of the government accountability issues addressed by CAC in 2014:

Unconstitutional “Niceness” Policies

In 2008, CAC first reported on the trend of local government bodies stifling political speech through barring individuals from speaking at open government meetings by enacting public comment policies that attempt to regulate the decorum of individual speakers. CAC refers to such policies as “niceness” policies.

The OMA mandates that government bodies conduct open meetings in view of the public. However, the statute did not require government bodies to allow for public comment, except for school boards which were required through a provision in the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/10-6). As a direct result of CAC’s advocacy, an amendment was passed in 2011 that stated “[a]ny person shall be permitted an opportunity to address public officials under the rules established and recorded by the public body.” Since then, public bodies have been drafting public comment policies to comply. As government bodies began to codify how citizens may use their right to speak, concerned citizens began contacting CAC to question the legality of the proposed policies. Below is a sample of content-based restrictions brought to the attention of CAC by concerned citizens and against which CAC spoke:

Plainfield Township Park District: Proposed policy prohibited “personal remarks, the impugning of motives, and merely contentious statements.” The park district board never voted on the proposal. Since that time, there’s been a sea of change in the composition of the board.

Orland Park Library District: Proposed policy prohibited “abuse, profane, harassing and repetitive comments and language and personal attacks.” CAC spoke out and the board passed a policy without the impermissible provisions.

DuPage County Forest Preserve Board: The then-president announced from the dais at a regularly scheduled board meeting a new public comment policy that had not been published or put to a vote. After CAC spoke out, the new president made an announcement from the dais that all speakers are welcome on any subject matter.

City of Geneva: Had no regulations governing public comment but made ad hoc determinations. At the request of CAC, the city created a brochure “Welcome to a City of Geneva Public Meeting” which includes information on public comment that is presented in a welcoming manner: “New Business” items are intended . . . for the public to have the opportunity to speak to any item on the agenda or any other topics not on the agenda at any public meeting. Speakers do not have to ‘sign-in’ to be heard.”

College of DuPage: Citizens questioned provisions that include: “Speakers shall be courteous and should not make statements that are personally disrespectful to members of the Board or other individuals. Foul, abusive, or inappropriate language, displays, actions or materials are prohibited.” CAC spoke out against this long-standing policy when COD watchdogs were intimidated to give public comment at open meetings. COD has not yet proposed amendments to the policy. CAC assisted a concerned citizen with a request for review to the PAC to question the legitimacy of these and other questionable provisions in COD’s policy.

Illinois Attorney General’s Public Access Counselor Determination Letters for FOIA and OMA

CAC collaborated with the Chicago Headline Club to launch a project to obtain all the determination letters bearing substantive analysis on Illinois open government laws and to make them available to the public in a usable format.

Illinois Attorney General’s Public Access Counselor (PAC) is an administrative agency that issues non-binding and binding determination rulings on complaints related to FOIA and OMA filed by members of the public and the press. CAC community lawyers assisted several individuals file successful complaints on issues such as violations of public notice, improper exceptions for public records, and application of the “recurrent requester” status.

While the PAC office reviews hundreds of complaints, the only rulings posted publicly are binding opinions. Far greater in number are non-binding determination letters, which are substantively identical in legal analysis to the binding opinions. Non-binding 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 to access a determination letter, an individual must know what s/he is looking for and submit a FOIA request.

With the assistance of the Illinois Attorney General’s Office, CAC has thus far received over 400 letters that are being analyzed and input into an easily searchable database. This will be an important tool for citizens seeking positive outcomes in social and economic justice through their

government monitoring efforts that includes utilizing Illinois open government laws and the rights they confer to the citizenry.

Audit of Illinois Public Bodies' Open Meetings Act Website Notice Compliance

CAC facilitated a statewide survey of public bodies' compliance with the OMA website notice requirements. The OMA requires all public bodies that have a full time staff member to post and maintain three key pieces of information on their websites: (1) notice of upcoming meetings, (2) notice of proposed agendas, and (3) approved meeting minutes. A random sampling of 20% of school districts, municipalities, counties, and townships for compliance found that local government websites fail to meet the posting requirements. Of the aggregate 756 public bodies that were surveyed, 385 had websites (51%). Of those 385 public bodies, 73% complied with posting notice, 57% complied with posting an agenda, and 48% complied with posting approved meeting minutes within the time constraints of the OMA. Further, compliance with the OMA's website posting provisions for those with at least one known full time staff member had a 77% compliance rate with posting notice, 64% with posting agendas, and 54% with posting approved meeting minutes.

The results of the survey clearly indicate that the statutory language needs to be strengthened. This will be a likely focus for advocacy efforts of the Illinois Press Association and CAC in the upcoming year.

Litigation and Issue Advocacy

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

Filing Administrative Request for Reviews with the Illinois Attorney General Public Access Counselor (PAC)

As described earlier in this report, CAC provides assistance to individuals and community groups by filing or helping to file Administrative Requests for Reviews with the PAC. CAC is proud of our strong track record in obtaining successful determinations. Examples of issues addressed in 2014:

- Violation of public notice requirements in the OMA
- Improper withholding of documents in FOIA
- Improper government use of the "recurrent requestor" provision of FOIA
- Violation of right to speak provision in OMA
- Improper topics discussed in closed session according to the OMA

Promoting Transparency in Government

CAC spearheaded a coalition that promoted greater openness and transparency in government. The coalition defended against erosions to state laws to ensure and protect access to the democratic process. Coalition members include the Chicago Headline Club, Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, Citizen Works, UIC Political Science Professor and Former Chicago Alderman Dick Simpson, American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, Illinois Policy Institute, Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, Better Government Association, Illinois PIRG, and the Illinois Attorney General's office.

HB 3796: Creation of "Voluminous Requestors" to Deter Use of Freedom of Information Act
Illinois substantively amended the FOIA in 2009, transforming it from one of the weakest in the country to one of the strongest. Unfortunately, multiple amendments have since passed to weaken the law. In 2014, the coalition battled over the creation of a new category of request labeled "voluminous." The intent behind the law was to curtail the alleged abuse of using the FOIA to harass a government body. However, no objective study or evidence was provided to substantiate the systemic problem. Moreover, the bill implemented a new fee structure that allows public bodies to charge as much as \$100 for electronic data. It also allows public bodies to not respond to FOIA requests if information is posted on the agency's website. The General Assembly introduced and passed the bill quickly in the final days of the spring legislative session.

CAC spearheaded a diverse coalition to advocate for a gubernatorial veto. The veto occurred the day the bill arrived on the Governor's desk. In anticipation of a legislative override vote, the coalition held a press conference. Further, CAC conducted several media interviews to educate legislators and mobilize our citizen base. The General Assembly reintroduced the bill with minimal public notice on the last day of the fall veto session. House members swiftly voted to override. The Senate had more discussion but the override still passed by three votes. Advocacy efforts forced legislators to address why they voted for the bill, creating a legislative record that will be crucial to open government advocates in the future.

SB 2799: Deterring Citizens from Holding Government Entities Accountable

During the final week of veto session, lawmakers introduced a bill that would have significantly curtailed a citizen's ability to win legal fees from a public body when it illegally withholds public documents. CAC and our coalition partners alerted our constituencies to contact their representatives. An overwhelmingly negative reaction from the public prevented the sponsor of the bill from calling it before the House Executive Committee, a necessary step which precedes a vote on the floor.

Task Force on Civic Education

With the support of the McCormick Foundation and in collaboration with former Attorney General Jim Ryan, who was then Distinguished Fellow at Benedictine University's Center for Civic Leadership, CAC helped 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 does not require a stand-alone civics or government course and Illinois also does not include social studies in its standardized testing. CAC and Mr. Ryan 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 Illinois General Assembly and Governor approved the creation of the Civic Education Task Force in 2013, the first of its kind in Illinois history. The mandate for the Task Force was to convene a diverse group of individuals to analyze the current state of civic education, identify best practices throughout the country, and make recommendations to the General Assembly to increase civic literacy. CAC Executive Director Maryam Judar was one of the nine non-legislative appointees to the Task Force due to her significant civic education experience and assistance in helping community groups use civic and legal tools to affect government policy decision-making.

In 2014, in addition to participation in the Task Force meetings, CAC pushed to ensure the Task Force would conduct public hearings throughout the state. Once established, the public hearings yielded significant public input. Four public hearings throughout the state resulted in dozens of individuals testifying in person and more than 250 written comments submitted via email. The Task Force included all the testimony in an addendum to the Task Force's preliminary May report. The addendum was delivered to the Illinois General Assembly at the end of 2014. The major recommendations of the Task Force are to:

- Require a civic education course in high school;
- Revise Illinois Social Studies Standards (currently in progress);
- Require a service learning project in middle and high schools;
- Align licensure and certification requirements for pre-service teachers with best practices;
- Involve students in the election process; and
- Extend the Task Force to gather public input through public hearings (completed).

Action related to reforming Illinois civic education standards has already begun with the Illinois Social Science Standards Revision Task Force which convened to assess Illinois Social Study Standards. The goal of the Revision Task Force is to draft proposed revisions by June 2015.

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 civic skills for students. It drives civic education policy reforms and provides a medley of professional development resources for educators. CAC spearheaded the public policy workgroup tasked with helping to institutionalize civic education. CAC is the only entity in the coalition that is a community law office involved with public policy, community organizing, and civic education. CAC provides a unique perspective to the issue of civic education and helps ICMC build capacity to advocate for the reinstatement of civic education. CAC is also a member of the ICMC Transition Steering Committee.

Elections

CAC endorsed two election reform efforts in 2014. The first reform effort was *Yes! for Independent Maps*, a citizen initiative campaign which sought to amend the Illinois redistricting process. Our community lawyer and legal interns monitored the State Electoral Board Hearing when the signature petitions collected during the campaign were challenged. The second reform effort affects voter registration. First, CAC endorsed the Same Day Registration Bill promoted by Cook County Clerk David Orr's Office. CAC also signed a coalition letter to the State Board of Education that outlined proper implementation of online voter registration.

CAC Celebrates 20th Anniversary

CAC celebrated 20 years of building democracy in 2014 with a banquet dinner that included guest speakers Craig Dellimore, WBBM Political Editor; Theresa Amato, CAC Founder; and Dr. Claire Nader, President of The Shafeek Nader Trust Fund for the Community Interest. A diverse group attended the 20th Anniversary Celebration: community activists from throughout Chicagoland, representatives from various political affiliations, public officials, journalists, non-profit organization colleagues, educators, former interns, former and current CAC Board members, and former and current staff.

Illinois House of Representatives Resolution

In recognition of our 20th Anniversary, CAC was pleased to receive a resolution passed by the House of Representatives. The resolution recognized and honored the community lawyering work that CAC performs. Deputy Minority Leader Patricia R. "Patti" Bellock offered the resolution. H.R. 1278 included the following highlights about CAC:

- Provides free civic resource materials to all interested members of the public;
- Answers legal questions on matters of public concern;
- Promotes individual and community efforts to resolve local problems;
- Offers training workshops in the use of civic engagement tools such as the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act;
- Litigates on behalf of select citizen causes to sustain access to justice;
- Monitors local government to ensure accountability and deter abuse of power;
- Establishment of the Civic Empowerment Zone, CAC's youth civic education program;
- Works with journalists on FOIA, OMA, and First Amendment issues; and
- Launched the Midwest Open Government Project, a comprehensive study of FOIA and OMA statutes in Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota.

Leadership and Staff

Board of Directors

President: Theresa Amato, Esq.
Vice-President: Steve De La Rosa
Secretary: Gordon Goodman
Treasurer: Brian Conlon
Directors: Porus Dadabhoy
Barbara Greenberg, Esq. (resigned)
Claire Nader
Terry Pastika, Esq.
Josh Silverstein, Esq.

Advisory Council Members

Tamara Brenner	Cheryl Ealey-Cross	David Pezza, Esq.
Cristobal Cavazos	Myrrha Guzman, Esq.	Ellen Raymond, Esq.
Marcia De La Rosa	Naim Mansour	Dave Segel
		MaryLynn Zajdel

Staff

Ms. Maryam Judar, Esq., Executive Director
Ms. Andrea Alvarez, Esq., Community Lawyer
Ms. Carla Eisenberg, Office Manager

Support, Contributions and Donations

We specifically recognize the following individuals for their substantial volunteer assistance:

John Argo	Gretchen Haynes	Terence Leen
Arthur Biladeau	David Jackson	Tony Pacini
Laurel Bowen	Joe Jovanovich	Dave Porreca
Don Dionesotes	Julian Jovanovich	Cora Weisenberger
Margaret Fuller	Sarah Klaper	Stan Zegel
Barbara Greenberg	Liesel Kossman	

Thank you to our 2014 Interns:

Chris Annis	Emani Johnson	Abbey Moffitt
Reese Budinger	Alec Kramer	Mark Prandini
Mike Chada	Justin Kudilil	Ise Sanchez
Cassie DeBolt	Amie Leonard	Georgia Smithee
Alex Diaz	Briahna McCray	Adam Walker

Generous foundation support was provided by the following in 2014:

- Chicago Headline Club Foundation
- Crossroads Fund
- Illinois Humanities Council
- Illinois Press Foundation
- Robert R. McCormick Foundation
- The Shafeek Nader Trust for the Community Interest

Additional funds were received from:

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

Tax compliance services 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.

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

Contact Us

Citizen Advocacy Center
182 N. York St.
Elmhurst, IL 60126
Phone: (630) 833-4080
Fax: (630) 833-4083

Email: CAC@CitizenAdvocacyCenter.org
Facebook: http://bit.ly/CAC_on_Facebook
Twitter: [@advocacycenter1](https://twitter.com/advocacycenter1)

Appendix: Citizen Advocacy Center in the News 2014

Date	Title	Source	Subject
11/29/14	Plainfield group that monitored park district honored for citizen advocacy	The Enterprise; Bugle Newspapers	Citizen Initiative Awards
11/25/14	Plainfield Park Truth Group Wins Citizen Initiative Award	Plainfield Patch	Citizen Initiative Awards
01/09/14	Resident honored for efforts to educate community	mysuburbanlife.com	Citizen Initiative Awards
11/20/14	Local Citizens Receive Award for Community Activism	Trib Local/TriCities	Citizen Initiative Awards
03/18/14	Civic Education crucial to improve our politics	Daily Herald	Civic Education
10/13/14	State seeks input on revamping social studies standards	Daily Herald	Civic Education
12/01/14	State group pushing to overhaul civics education	Chicago Tribune; chicagotribune.com	Civic Education
12/09/14	LTE: COD's taxpayer-subsidized dining	Daily Herald	Elections, Ballot access
08/24/14	Are Illinois' Ballot Access Requirements Unfair?	WDCB 90.9 Public Radio	Elections, Ballot access
08/25/14	Group offers advice on how to get on the ballot	The Herald News	Elections, Ballot access
10/31/14	Candidate how-to workshop at Forest Park Library	Forest Park Review	Elections, Ballot access
11/18/14	Newbie candidates learn the ropes at library workshop	Forest Park Review	Elections, Ballot access
11/19/14	LTE: Plenty of voters, but too few candidates	Daily Herald	Elections, Ballot access
04/06/14	Flower shop deal not divulged on ethics forms	Chicago Tribune; chicagotribune.com	Ethics
12/08/14	Pizza man's clout wins big dough in Tinley Park	Chicago Tribune	Ethics
11/21/14	DuPage judge dismisses Winfield trustee's lawsuit	Daily Herald	First Amendment
12/03/14	Winfield trustee's lawsuit against newspaper dismissed	mysuburbanlife.com	First Amendment
07/24/14	Aldermen should speak during public forum, CAC says	The Elmhurst Independent	First Amendment
12/03/14	Newspaper Court Fight Tests Legal Strategy	Illinois News Online	First Amendment
01/06/14	Letter: Park District Board, Director Make Silencing the Public a New Year's Resolution	Plainfield Patch	First Amendment, OMA, Public Comment

Date	Title	Source	Subject
01/09/14	Park Board's new public comment policy draws First Amendment criticism	The Enterprise; Bugle Newspapers	First Amendment, OMA, Public Comment
01/15/14	Plainfield Park District changes public comment policy	Chicago Tribune; chicagotribune.com	First Amendment, OMA, Public Comment
10/17/14	COD Board schooled on Public Comment requirements	Illinois Leaks - edgarcountywatchdogs.com	First Amendment, OMA, Public Comment
07/22/14	Alvarez Comes to Town Bringing Hope for Basic Freedoms	Down With the Gates Blog	First Amendment, OMA, Public Comment
06/26/14	Citizen Advocacy Center raises issue of separation of church, state	The Elmhurst Independent	First Amendment, Public Comment
04/24/14	Finance group against referendum on Addison parking deck	The Elmhurst Independent	Government Monitoring
05/01/14	City Council's final vote: Addison deck will be six stories	The Elmhurst Independent	Government Monitoring
06/03/14	Geneva residents seek probe into Prairie State Energy Campus	Kane County Chronicle	Government Monitoring
03/20/14	Elmhurst aldermen request Addison Parking Deck referendum	Elmhurst Suburban Life; mysuburbanlife.com	Government Monitoring
03/27/14	Should residents vote on parking bond referendum?	The Elmhurst Independent	Government Monitoring
10/03/14	Change to Elmhurst's downtown zoning code considered	Elmhurst Suburban Life; mysuburbanlife.com	Government Monitoring, Zoning
04/03/14	DPZ committee split between five, six stories for Addison Deck	The Elmhurst Independent	Government Monitoring, Zoning
06/27/14	FOIA restriction has watchdogs worried	Northwest Herald	Legislation, FOIA
06/30/14	Illinois Government Transparency Advocates Urge Against Veto Override of 'Bad' FOIA Bill	Progress Illinois	Legislation, FOIA
06/30/14	BGA Backs Gov.'s FOIA Bill Veto At Press Conference	think tank: official blog of the BGA Gov't Policy Team	Legislation, FOIA
07/03/14	Government watchdogs hope legislators will forgo override of HB 3796 Veto	The Elmhurst Independent	Legislation, FOIA
07/04/14	FOIA Bill Vetoes, Watchdogs Pleas	Alton Daily News	Legislation, FOIA
07/09/14	Gov. vetoes Freedom of Information Bill, citizen watchdogs wary of fees for seeing government documents	News-Star: News of Rogers Park, Edgewater, Uptown & Andersonville	Legislation, FOIA

Date	Title	Source	Subject
07/10/14	Government watchdogs hope legislators will forgo override of HB 3796 Veto	Addison Independent	Legislation, FOIA
11/27/14	LTE Agency urges calling senators to oppose FOIA bill	Elmhurst Independent	Legislation, FOIA
12/01/14	Reformers blast new FOIA bill	Capitol Fax	Legislation, FOIA
12/01/14	Editorial: Lawmakers, stop chipping away at open government	Daily Herald	Legislation, FOIA
12/02/14	FOIA Firestorm Sparked	WUIS.org 91.9	Legislation, FOIA
12/02/14	Illinois shouldn't dilute public access law	herald-review.com	Legislation, FOIA
12/03/14	Illinois FOIA Under Attack (Again)	The Beachwood Reporter	Legislation, FOIA
12/03/14	Illinois lawmakers want to dismantle Freedom of Information Act	Chicago Tribune	Legislation, FOIA
11/21/14	CAC calls for action to block override attempt of HB3796	Chicago Headline Club Blog	Legislation, FOIA
12/05/14	Rosemont passes law to keep Garth Brooks concert details secret	Chicago Tribune	Open Government, FOIA
12/05/14	Tow fund documents not found	SaukValley.com	Open Government, FOIA
12/07/14	Chicago suburb keeps secrets about its Garth Brooks deal	The Trentonian	Open Government, FOIA
10/29/14	Griffin: Carpentersville is 'violating' state law, attorney general says	Daily Herald	Open Government, FOIA
03/22/14	Open government survey: Can we see your budget?	SaukValley.com	Open Government, FOIA
05/13/14	LTE: Awareness of FOIA process stronger than ever	Daily Herald	Open Government, FOIA
05/21/14	LTE: Tax dollars well spent	Kane County Chronicle	Open Government, FOIA
06/05/14	Viewpoint: When all is said and done, FOIAs are just part of doing business	FOIA Illinois	Open Government, FOIA
06/09/14	Watchdog: Grayslake breaks records law	mysuburbanlife.com	Open Government, FOIA
01/31/14	Letter: Another Perspective on FOIA	Elmhurst Suburban Life; mysuburbanlife.com	Open Government, FOIA
01/07/14	AG Counselor: Elmhurst Violated Law by Not Disclosing Parking Deck Cost Analysis	Elmhurst Patch	Open Government, FOIA
01/08/14	City of Elmhurst Says It Acts in An 'Open and Transparent Manner'	Elmhurst Patch	Open Government, FOIA

Date	Title	Source	Subject
01/08/14	City of Elmhurst found in violation of FOIA	Elmhurst Suburban Life; mysuburbanlife.com	Open Government, FOIA
01/16/14	City faces FOIA violation filed with IL AG	The Elmhurst Independent	Open Government, FOIA
05/08/14	Here's what's going on at Villa Park Village Hall...	The Villa Park Independent	Open Government, FOIA, Public Comment
02/24/14	Winfield to release tapes of secret talks to cut police department	Chicago Tribune; chicagotribune.com	Open Government, OMA
12/03/14	Audit finds Illinois public bodies routinely fail to post required information online	The Rock River Times	Open Government, OMA
09/11/14	The Citizen Advocacy Center Celebrates 20 years of Building Democracy	WDCB 90.9 Public Radio	Organization Profile
03/26/14	Biss and Gabel Host Community Forum on Food, Farms and Hunger	Evanston RoundTable	Press Release
03/10/14	Citizens eye Evanston food programs to shape state practices	Evanston Review; evanston.suntimes.com	Public Participation
08/18/14	Advice for Activists and Local Governments	WDBR 103.7 FM	Public Participation
08/19/14	Advocacy group offers advice for local government activists	WLDS.com	Public Participation
08/20/14	Communicating with Local Governments Discussed	Alton Daily News; WBGZ Radio	Public Participation
02/02/14	Belleville Housing Department wants to purge records	Belleville News Democrat	Public Records
10/06/14	Clash Between Chicago State U. and Its Faculty Leaders Redefine Hardball	handbill.us/The Avenue - UW Blog	Public Records
04/09/14	Illinois receives 'B+' in annual report on transparency of government spending	The Rock River Times	Transparency
08/13/14	State agency is ignoring salary database law	Daily Herald	Transparency
05/21/14	Legislation could close Medinah golf course tax loophole	Daily Herald	Transparency