

CAC 2020 Annual Report

The Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) is an award-winning, nonpartisan, nonprofit community legal organization. For more than 25 years, CAC has advanced our mission of building democracy by strengthening the citizenry's capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance. CAC is the only organization in Illinois that pursues its mission through a catalytic community lawyer model. A community lawyer protects the public's assets and promotes meaningful participation in the democratic process through results-oriented traditional and non-traditional lawyering strategies that include civic education, community organizing, public policy advocacy and research, coalition building, legal advocacy, and, only as a last resort, impact litigation. CAC provides all services for free and has been recognized numerous times from the local to the national level. CAC recently earned praise for our 25th Anniversary in 2019 through a bipartisan resolution of the Illinois House of Representatives, a DuPage County Resolution, and three local government proclamations, all commending CAC for the quality of its work, dedicated leadership, and high ethical standards.

CAC's model of building democracy connects community members working to resolve self-identified issues of public concern directly with systemic reforms within our democratic institutions. On a local level, CAC impacts the lives of those we interact with by illustrating how one person standing up and taking action can make a difference. On a larger scale, CAC strengthens the democratic fiber of institutions from the local to the state level by training hundreds of adults and students to harness their civic power, cultivate community leaders, and hold government bodies to high accountability and transparency standards.

As families and communities throughout Illinois confronted the extraordinary, and at times devastating, challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, CAC delivered first-rate community lawyering services to a resilient citizenry. 2020 has been a year like no other. However, despite unforeseen challenges, CAC had an outstanding year and discovered new ways of connecting with our constituency, thereby demonstrating the community lawyering model's effectiveness and adaptability.

Citizen Advocacy Center's four major initiatives in 2020 are:

- **Adapting Community Lawyering Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic**
- **Public Education and Capacity Building for the Public**
- **Government Accountability and the Development of Systemic Democratic Protocols**
- **Litigation and Issue Advocacy**

Adapting Community Lawyering Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

When it became clear that Illinois was headed for an imminent shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CAC transformed to meet our organization's and constituency's public health and safety needs. Like many nonprofits and businesses, CAC converted to remote operations in March 2020, which has continued all year.

As federal, state, and local governments took action to protect public health, CAC recognized the importance of constituents to be empowered to engage in the democratic process and monitor their government. CAC assured the public that community lawyers were available by email, phone, text, video conference, and as a last resort for those who could not access technology, by in-person appointments following strict COVID safe mandates and protocols. CAC answered questions about COVID restrictions as applied to open government laws, helped community members adapt strategies to organize virtually, used web-based forums to educate the public about issues such as new election laws that transformed voting, and published resources to help members of the public monitor their local government even if they could not attend meetings.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not stop CAC from facilitating our robust summer internship program. Normally, student interns invade CAC's physical office space, where they work on projects alongside community lawyers, discuss and debate issues amongst themselves, and work with members of the public, including those who are walk-ins. CAC transformed the experience to a remote program with interns taking on full summer of projects and community interactions, including two educational forums and our annual Democracy Night via Zoom as well as frequent formal Zoom meetings, conference calls, and a weekly Friday casual Zoom meetings to wind down the week and discuss current events.

CAC also aggressively monitored local governments and engaged in bold policy advocacy to ensure that as the Governor's office, the Illinois General Assembly, and local government bodies took quick action to adapt government operations to the pandemic, government entities balanced the need to conduct business safely against the need to preserve the rights of the public. CAC's voice consistently calls for accountability, transparency, and accessibility to build public trust, offering guidance, and virtually attending public meetings.

Public Education and Capacity Building

CAC's public education and capacity building initiative is multi-faceted. It serves four main purposes: first, to create life-long civically engaged members of society who have the skills, knowledge, confidence, and capacity to participate in the democratic process effectively; second, to create vibrant democratic communities; third, to identify trends in undemocratic government policies and practices across the region, which are identified by community lawyering services, and need dismantling; and lastly, to create a broad-based constituency that can mobilize when CAC seeks action to reform government institutions.

CAC roots its public education and capacity building efforts in helping people address self-identified issues of public concern. CAC provides resources and support as individuals and community groups learn how to apply various civic tools, laws, organizing skills, coalition building, and media networking to address their issue. Regardless of the subject matter or the viewpoint of those inquiring, once individuals experience success in being agents of change in the communities where they live, they understand that baseline civic skills are transferable to any issue of public concern, and their general civic engagement deepens and broadens. CAC's interaction with individuals and community groups renders CAC as a known hub for civic information, civic engagement, and civic networking.

I. Answering Public Inquiries and Cultivating Civic Leadership

CAC provides extensive *free* community lawyering services at the grassroots level to help individuals and community groups address self-identified issues of public concern. Community lawyer services include: technical assistance such as answering questions about the applicability of laws or ordinances or help with filing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests with local government entities or administrative appeals with the Attorney General Public Access Counselor; strategizing and organizing meetings with individuals and community groups; government meeting attendance by community lawyers to either provide support to community members in speaking out or giving public comment to question public officials to hold them accountable; media opportunities for community members through CAC's relationships with the press. CAC also identifies community leaders and helps them build leadership skills to become high capacity civic leaders who can engage effectively with individuals and communities and build overall civic engagement.

A. Examples of Inquiries Received in 2020

- Should a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) officer recuse themselves if the public body receives a FOIA request about the FOIA officer?
- Do you need to ask permission to record public meetings?
- Can a public body limit attendance at a public meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, before the Governor limits social gatherings?
- Can a public body require members of the public to submit FOIA requests only through the public body's web-based system?
- What should voters know about home rule when it is on the ballot?
- Did municipalities that put a merger question on the ballot for voters to approve fulfill all their legal obligations prior to placing the issue on the ballot?
- How can advocates gather signatures for a referendum during a pandemic?
- How can residents organize during the pandemic to oppose a development with many issues of concern identified in the land use application?

- Can the head of a public body force other elected officials to participate via Zoom and not via phone?

B. CAC's Service Area in 2020

CAC is located in Elmhurst, Illinois, a municipality that straddles Cook and DuPage County. Few nonprofit resources are available in the western and far western suburbs. CAC's primary service areas were in the following counties:

- Cook County
- DuPage County
- Kane County
- Lake County
- Will County

As the Chicagoland suburbs grow in diversity, CAC engages with diverse individuals and groups within and across communities with racial, economic, ideological, cultural, and generational divides. CAC also partners with dozens of community-based organizations, both ad hoc and formally organized, and because we provide services in dozens of municipalities throughout the greater Chicagoland area, CAC is uniquely positioned to identify undemocratic trends among government institutions and also act as a liaison between organizations, helping them to build relationships with each other and cultivate power by working together. Specific communities CAC has provided assistance include Alorton, Arlington Heights, Aurora, Blue Island, Buffalo Grove, Burr Ridge, Chicago, Elgin, Elmhurst, Forest Park, Geneva, Libertyville, Naperville, Peoria, St. Charles, Villa Park, West Chicago.

CAC also fielded calls from the following counties; however services provided were far less:

- DeKalb County
- LaSalle County
- Peoria County
- Winnebago County

C. Community Lawyering Spotlight

1. Empowering Individual and Community Groups to Have a Voice in Community Development Issues

A local issue of public concern about which individuals and community groups contact CAC with increasing frequency is land use. CAC has identified that land use regulations, zoning laws, and local zoning ordinances are the new frontier of civic shut. Land use decisions have a daily impact on individuals' lives and have health consequences in some cases. Land use issues are time-consuming to address because they involve: differing municipal and county government interpretation of state laws affecting zoning issues, government creation of comprehensive land use plans for a community, lesser accountability by municipalities and counties who themselves set rules governing zoning hearings, and barriers to the engagement of community members when applications for a project or development are under consideration. CAC provides advocacy, strategy planning, technical assistance on the nuts and bolts of zoning and public hearings, litigation evaluation, best practices, and identification of systemic issues. Land use issues became especially problematic to address during the pandemic as restrictions imposed on

government meetings and holding a public hearing during the stay-at-home period are fraught with civic engagement barriers.

a. Advising Citizens to Reduce Barriers to Participation in a Public Hearing for a 1,400 Acre Proposed Development During the Stay-at-Home Period

CAC has worked with community members in Joliet who have opposed a large scale, controversial development for several years. As typical of large development projects, concerns involving community impact, zoning, annexations, and other complicated issues were present. Soon after the state announcement to stay-at-home for 30 days and beginning in mid-March, Joliet noticed a public hearing for the project on a date within the stay-at-home period in early April. Community members were not allowed to attend the public hearings in-person. CAC helped community members strategize how to urge the city to postpone the public hearing until the public could participate in person and remind the city of the State's recommendation that municipalities and counties should postpone public meetings unless critical. Regardless, Joliet held the virtual public hearing. CAC helped community members understand their legal rights and the current status of laws related to land use issues, public hearings, and zoning laws. CAC helped the community group optimize their capacity to participate in the virtual public hearing through speaker registration and public opposition to the four-minute per-speaker rule. CAC identified arguments for community members to advocate ensuring that the virtual public hearing was audible by everyone attending, including those watching at home, and make sure that people and exhibits could be easily seen by those watching from home. The project generated significant media coverage. A reporter covering the issue contacted CAC for commentary on the subpar nature of Joliet's public hearing practices compared to other municipalities' practices during the pandemic.

While this issue is on-going, CAC views this as a prime example of systemic undemocratic barriers associated with zoning laws. Currently, Illinois zoning laws and the correlating legal interpretation are very weak concerning citizen rights. Hence, the threshold for "what is legal" versus "what is right" is vastly different. Moreover, municipalities and counties have broad discretion in setting public hearing rules, resulting in a wide disparity among government bodies related to the value of citizen participation.

b. Advising West Chicago Residents to Ensure Environmental Justice in a Waste Transfer Station Application

CAC is engaged in an ongoing effort to help West Chicago residents understand their rights and opportunities for participation in addressing the municipality's attempt to approve a second waste transfer station in the community. West Chicago is the only majority Hispanic/Latinx municipality in DuPage County; it is also home to the only existing waste transfer station in DuPage County. The application for a second transfer station presents a clear environmental justice problem, compounded by the potential barriers to public transparency, democratic participation, and accountability as the process plays out during the current pandemic.

CAC is building coalitions between community members and organizations to inform the public about the application process, on how residents can influence their local elected officials, and about what to expect as the process continues through the pandemic. The coalition recently launched a set of bilingual informational flyers to reach community members. Additionally, CAC is providing technical assistance on relevant state laws, monitoring the local government response to the application, and helping community

leaders build transferable civic and legal skills that they may use in other areas of civic engagement. As the process unfolds, CAC will advocate for a fair and open process, encourage West Chicago to hold a hearing only when residents can safely and adequately participate, and ensure the municipality respects the community's due process rights.

2. Assisting Parents to Understand Their Right to Civic Engagement and Public Comment at School Board Meetings

CAC has received several complaints from parents about how school districts make decisions related to in-person or remote learning during the pandemic. Parents reported that elected officials were engaged in a broad range of civic shut out: refusing to engage in discussion with parents, failing to deliberate school district opening plans on the dais during public meetings; moving public comment to the end of school board meetings to avoid having to listen to public comment prior to taking a vote; and ignoring suggestions to collaborate with other school district superintendents where reopening plans included a higher degree of in-person learning.

CAC is helping parents make sure their voices are heard. CAC worked with parents to identify partners in the community with the clout to persuade their board presidents to be more responsive to community concerns, provided education about rights to civic engagement at school board meetings and talked with parents about being mindful of elected officials balancing public health responsibilities with the public's right of civic engagement. In one example, school boards are meeting without the public in attendance, which impacts how public bodies meet state law requirements mandating the opportunity for members of the public to give a public comment. In another case, the school board did not allow for direct public comment during meetings, but merely made the written public comments available on their website. This is a poor substitute for commenters who otherwise would be able to participate in a public meeting on the record before all their elected officials and others who watch the meeting. CAC advocated that while their practice met the letter of the law's requirements, it was a bare minimum and unacceptable. The school board could do better and, if not able to provide an opportunity for commenters to participate in the meeting directly, should read written public comments into the record during their regular business meetings during the time set aside on the agenda for public comment. The following week, the superintendent's office reported to CAC that they would begin reading public comments into the record during the time set aside for the public.

3. CAC Assistance to Railroad Safety Activists Results in a Senate Resolution

CAC provided technical assistance and information on navigating both the Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act to an individual working with community groups on the issue of transporting and storing hazardous materials that can negatively impact Illinois schools. Any school located within a 1-mile radius of a rail corridor can be negatively impacted by a spill, explosion, or fire. The individual was concerned with two schools located within the blast zone, Prospect and Wheeling High Schools, and she took action by writing State legislators with a proposed solution based on the public information she received. Senators Julie Morrison and Laura Murphy co-sponsored a Senate resolution written by the individual. The resolution urges local emergency response planning officials to partner with school districts to disseminate information about safety threats to the parents of attending students, faculty, staff, and schools at risk of being negatively impacted by storage facilities or the transport of such hazardous materials. It further urges local emergency response planning officials to include school districts in their region in the development and implementation of oil spill response plans specific to incidents involving

the storage and transport of hazardous materials, including petroleum oil and high hazard flammable trains (HHFTs).

4. Giving DuPage County Ethics Enforcement Some Teeth

Over the course of nearly three decades in DuPage County, CAC has pushed the DuPage County Board to be a leader and role model on ethics reform and accountability. CAC's landmark DuPage Procurement and Ethics study published in 2005, documenting the exponential increase of campaign contributions from vendors to public officials in DuPage County to DuPage County, spurred a major 2010 DuPage County's Ethics and Procurement Code. New provisions on campaign finance rules, transparency, and protecting whistleblowers put DuPage County ahead of state requirements, towards strong accountability, and into a position as a role model for the rest of the state. However, the new law fell short of CAC's strongest recommendations. Like the Illinois law governing local public bodies, the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act, the 2010 DuPage County law lacked a strong, independent investigatory authority, as well as strong provisions for enforcing the law. While Illinois laws often provide strong guidelines for ethical conduct, they prove only aspirational without adequate enforcement mechanisms - they lack teeth.

This year, CAC partnered with the DuPage Chapter of Represent Us, a national grassroots anti-corruption campaign, in order to ask and push DuPage County to again provide a model for the rest of the state. Our organizations partnered on a proposal for the appointment of the inspector general by an independent commission, enhanced guidance for the existing Ethics Commission, stringent new restrictions on nepotism and conflicts of interest, and a "cooling off" period before former employees and officials can lobby the county. In addition to organizing community partners around the issue, CAC co-hosted a forum on Fighting Corruption with Ethics Reform, with a community lawyer delivering a presentation and answering audience questions about effective ethics laws. Our efforts will continue in the months ahead as the Board welcomes several new members and Illinois officials continue to struggle to address corruption.

5. High School Students Successfully Lobby for Free Library Cards for Students in Unincorporated Areas

When a student who lives in an unincorporated area and in a trailer park tried to visit his local library to find new reading material during summer break, he was told he would have to pay hundreds of dollars in fees to check out a book. He and his classmates approached their Elk Grove High School teacher Jim Arey who taught their Sophomore Leadership Class. Mr. Arey turned to CAC in 2018 to obtain advice on conducting research and the legislative process. In 2020 they were successful in the passage of the "Cards 4 Kids Act," which extends library privileges to children residing outside of the municipality where their local library is located and waives the non-resident library card fee for every Illinois student who falls below the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Children residing outside of the municipality in which their local library is located and who meet the poverty income guideline will be able to access library services. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this law took on a special urgency to provide resources to underserved communities.

II. Community Forums

A. Events and Presentations

In addition to answering public inquiries and assisting citizens to organize their communities, CAC participated in numerous community forums in 2020. CAC community

lawyers were also scheduled to speak at additional events cancelled due to the Governor's Emergency Stay-at-Home Declaration. The following are a sample of forums wherein CAC hosted, was a guest speaker, or otherwise participated:

1. Hosted by the Citizen Advocacy Center

- Free and Fair Elections During the Pandemic (Zoom Webinar)
- Democracy Night Starring the Summer Interns (Zoom Webinar)
- Civic Advocacy and Mobilization During the Pandemic (Zoom Webinar)

2. Hosted by Others

- We the People State Finals (Judge)
- UIC Public Policy 100 (Presenter)
- FOIA Fest Panel Presentation, "Covering Inequality Using FOIAs" (Panelist)
- Teen Job Fair at York Community High School (Tabling)
- Democracy Schools Network Professional Development Conference (Presenter, Cancelled Due to COVID-19)
- Home Rule Forum at Westchester Library (Presenter, Cancelled Due to COVID-19)
- Courts Matter to Voting Rights (Zoom Webinar) (Moderator)
- LWV Roselle Bloomingdale Ballot Access Webinar Zoom Webinar) (Guest Speaker)
- International Day of Democracy, Convergence for Sustainability India (Zoom Webinar) (Keynote Speaker)
- Voter Registration Drive at Elmhurst College (Guest Speaker)
- Fight Corruption with Ethics Reform, Represent DuPage (Zoom Webinar) (Guest Speaker)
- UIC Public Policy 100 and Nonprofits class (Zoom Webinar) (Presenter)
- Courts Matter to the Climate and Environment (Zoom Webinar) (Moderator)
- Public Comment: Good for Democracy, Hinsdale School District 86 (Presenter)

3. Spotlight: Stimulating Civic Conversation on Bridging Political Divides: Screening of Purple America and Discussion (Zoom Webinar)

CAC is also a hub for civic engagement and our work focuses on giving everyone, regardless of political affiliation, the knowledge, skills and capacity to affect government decision-making. CAC is proud that our strict nonpartisan focus related to building democracy results in our constituency including people of all political stripes: Green, Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, Independent, and a constituency rich in a diversity of perspectives derived from differing cultural, religious, and geographic backgrounds. These multiple viewpoints uniquely position CAC to provide forums for individuals across political divides to meaningfully debate issues of public concern in a respectful manner.

CAC held a virtual convening of a nonpartisan film "Purple America." It presented different perspectives on the social safety net. It modeled healthy public debate on fault-line issues intending to repair the fracturing of relationships and revive the basic trust, recognition, and cooperation that embody a shared democracy. CAC led a guided discussion among attendees to elucidate techniques to bridge the divide across political differences.

B. Information Clearinghouse

1. Ensuring Access to Government During the Pandemic

CAC is a clearinghouse for information, and as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, questions from concerned citizens about government functioning such as can government bodies limit attendance and can they forgo reading written public comment into the record became prevalent. CAC was proactive in providing information to the public and government bodies about how to bridge maintaining safety during a public health crisis and open government by publishing a guide to educate the public and encourage public bodies to provide access to meetings through a live stream or public broadcast, even though the Open Meeting Act did not require public bodies to make their meetings available to remote viewers.

As the pandemic raged on, in a brief legislative session of the General Assembly, CAC preserved core provisions within the Open Meetings and Freedom of Information Act, such codifying mandatory audio or video recording of regular meetings of public bodies when they are meeting remotely.

As the pandemic continued, CAC preserved core provisions within the Open Meetings and Freedom of Information Act, persuading lawmakers to ensure transparency as the General Assembly passed a bill affecting local meetings. The law, which now allows remote meetings while preserving public access, initially included a provision that would temporarily suspend FOIA requirements. CAC reached out to the bill's sponsors, forwarding a previous CAC letter, signed by two dozen other organizations, to the governor and attorney general to oppose suspension of FOIA. Late on a Saturday evening, the senate approved an amendment removing the FOIA suspension, finally approving the new law before midnight.

2. Ensuring Access to the Ballot During the Pandemic

In the midst of the COVID pandemic the Illinois General Assembly convened an emergency session to pass an Election Omnibus bill that made numerous additions to electoral procedures just for the November election. CAC launched a public education campaign to help ensure voters exercise their rights safely during the pandemic. CAC education efforts included:

- Creating and widely distributing an educational brochure on newly implemented vote-by-mail procedures, how to cure a rejected ballot, and more.
- Participating in a National Conference on Citizenship initiative establishing the day before Election Day as Election Hero Day, to celebrate local election clerks, election office staff, poll workers, election judges, voters, and everyone who makes the election a success.
- Hosting a well-attended free zoom webinar on Free and Fair Elections during the Pandemic facilitated by our CAC high school interns that educated Illinois voters on automatic voter registration, early voting, voting by mail, in-person voting, and curbside voting.
- Answering public inquiries about the new election law.
- Being interviewed on a WDCB radio program to share information on the upcoming election

3. Ensuring Access to the Courts

CAC is a member of Courts Matter Illinois, which is a coalition of organizations and individuals in Illinois advocating for a fair and diverse federal judiciary filled with fair-minded constitutionalists. We are committed to ensuring that our federal courts work to the benefit of all Americans in keeping with the core constitutional values of liberty, equality and justice for all. In 2020, CAC and Courts Matter Illinois co-sponsored a well-attended,

free, six-webinar series held on Zoom to examine the role of the federal courts in several issues: immigration rights, voting rights, climate change and the environment, education, and reproductive rights. On these topics as well as others, federal courts play a crucial role in interpreting and giving meaning to fundamental legal protections and civil rights, which are crucial to achieve racial equity.

C. Free New & Updated Resources to the Public, Educators, and Journalists on Current Issues

1. Transparency During COVID-19

Immediately after the Governor's Emergency Order Declaration in March 2020, CAC published a fact sheet specifically outlining how the Emergency Order did, and did not impact the ability of the public to engage in the democratic process, specifically noting that transparency laws were still in effect and could be slightly altered in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

2. Pandemic Guide to Voting for November 3, 2020 General Election

The November 3 election would be like any other in modern history given the pandemic and CAC published an election guide that translated an emergency election omnibus bill that amended procedures affecting voter registration and voting. Several local community groups shared CAC's Guide to the November 3, 2020 General Election with their constituencies, including Sustain DuPage and a social activism group. CAC also circulated emails via social media platforms highlighting additional aspects of voting like ballot curing, voting in person after requesting an absentee ballot and more.

3. Easy Access to Illinois Public Access Counselor's Binding Opinions

The Illinois Public Access Counselor's office (PAC) of the Attorney General is the state agency charged with answering Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act inquiries from the public, the press, and government bodies. The PAC has the ability to issue binding and nonbinding options. CAC is the only entity in Illinois with a catalogue of the voluminous number of non-binding options on our website that the PAC currently only makes available via a FOIA request to their office.

In 2020, CAC expanded the project to include binding opinions, which the PAC's office issues only a handful of each year. While PAC opinions are posted on the AG's website, they are functionally impractical to utilize because they are posted in individual PDF files and searching through them is cumbersome and difficult to identify which opinions offer insight into a particular provision of the Open Meetings Act or Freedom of Information Act an individual is searching.

CAC compiled more than 12 dozen binding opinions into a searchable database that includes links to the PDF opinions, information on the subject matter and public body implicated in each. CAC heard from several individuals who thanked us for creating it.

4. Forthcoming Resources:

Citizen Guide on Public Hearings

Public hearings represent the most direct interaction many residents have with their local government and the decision making process. They can also be one of the most confusing, least accessible processes for community members trying to have a say in

issues like local land use, taxation, and governance. This problem is of course compounded by the introduction of virtual hearings during the current pandemic. This guide provides a general description of the public hearing process, outlines the laws governing many Illinois public hearings, and provides examples of the additional local rules residents may find in their municipalities. Additionally, the guide describes a controversial hearing over a massive development in Joliet right near the start of the pandemic, how residents struggled to address their elected officials, and remaining concerns with the process. Finally, the guide provides a list of best practices that municipalities should follow to ensure transparency and adequate public input during the pandemic and during normal times.

Citizen Guide on the Cards for Kids Act

This public resource informs Illinois residents about the new law benefiting children in unincorporated areas and why it will improve educational outcomes. It describes the problem in our previous law - tremendous fees for unincorporated residents at local libraries - and how the new law will allow children free access to their local libraries. The guide also describes how to determine eligibility for the program.

D. Strengthening Local Journalism

In 2020 CAC was contacted by journalists every week from media outlets throughout Illinois. CAC interacts with individual journalists in the following manner:

1. **Technical Assistance.** Journalists contacted CAC for information regarding specific laws relating to an issue on which reporters are conducting background research for. For example, CAC provided assistance on issues such as TIF eligibility guidelines and conflicts of interest and identification of Attorney General FOIA and OMA determinations that assist reporters in honing their FOIA requests and exercising their OMA rights confidently.
2. **Media Source:** Dozens of reporters contacted CAC for community lawyer to provide a quote in stories addressing an undemocratic government activity, often as an alternative viewpoint to government officials, or to offer best practices commentary. The topics CAC was a media source on reflect a broad range of issues: ethics, FOIA, home rule, OMA, tax increment financing. Reporters wrote or hosted programs for the Daily Herald, the Chicago Tribune, WDCB, and local Patch outlets. (See Appendix A for CAC's earned media in 2020)
3. **Community Liaison:** A major component of citizen engagement is assisting activists to garner media attention to their issue. As part of CAC's services, community lawyers frequently introduce journalists to citizen activists.
4. **Journalists Education:** CAC also works to educate journalists on issues and policies impacting democracy, from access to the government and government-held information, to ballot access, to redistricting. Reporters contact CAC to understand their media access rights and other rights in conducting investigations.

5. Spotlight: CAC Improves Journalist Capacity

FOIA Fest is an annual event featuring a day-long series of panel discussions by leading journalists, academics, and advocates that is sponsored by the Chicago Headline Club, the largest journalism organization in Illinois. For eight years CAC community lawyers

have been key presenters. This year, a community lawyer joined a panel discussion on “Covering Inequality Using FOIAs” and on how to use FOIA to investigate and report on issues of race. CAC shared tips, strategies, and tools on how to effectively use FOIA while also acknowledging the hurdle that reporters are unlikely to obtain “race” data through a straightforward FOIA request because information on race is rarely accurate.

E. Youth Civic Education

CAC’s hands-on civic education program helps educators and youth transform their communities into “civic labs” and teach what it means to be a “good citizen” in practice through engaging youth at the local level on issues they care about. CAC’s vast library of free civics education lesson plans provide educators with many Illinois specific materials to advance civic engagement in the state. CAC also has a robust student internship program that is year-round and especially intensive in the summer months. By helping youth master universal civic skills and learn practical application of laws and policies affecting the democratic process, they develop a working knowledge of how to affect government decision-making and advocate for and help implement solutions to issues elevated in collaboration with their peers.

1. Student Internship Program

CAC has a robust internship program where youth are mentored by and work with community lawyers on substantive projects such as facilitating community forums; researching public policy issues; monitoring local governments; and updating CAC’s nearly four dozen Citizen Guides to reflect the current news, political realm, and society’s problems. Every year, CAC is privileged to work with next-generation leaders – young people who come to CAC as student interns - recommended by teachers or friends, or who find CAC because they are interested in public interest law, policy, and how local government works. 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 amended our summer internship program to account for COVID-19 precautions, facilitating the program remotely for the duration of its 10 weeks. CAC hosted twelve student interns from the following educational institutions, from high schools, colleges, and law schools:

- Northwestern Pritzker School of Law
- Loyola University Chicago School of Law
- Elmhurst University
- Brown University
- Naperville Central High School
- Waubonsie Valley High School

The culmination of the summer internship program is our annual “Democracy Night” where all student interns give a presentation about their internship experience and the issues they worked on, and field questions from the general public. In 2020, Democracy Night was held virtually and we were proud to have great showing with engaged attendees

Samples of questions asked of interns during Democracy Night:

- What have been the types of lawsuits filed against government entities against COVID measures and what were the outcomes?

- How did the Small Business Administration manage transparency for the Paycheck Protection Program?
- Do citizen-initiated referenda enjoy any procedural modifications because of COVID?
- How have public bodies managed public testimony during public hearings scheduled during the pandemic?
- What are the typical modifications made by public bodies to manage public participation and the right to speak at meetings during the pandemic, and what are the best practices local governments should follow for virtual meetings?
- How will Illinois residents vote in the November 2020 General Election?
- What do several court opinions and Attorney General opinions tell us about the little understood Unduly Burdensome exception to the Freedom of Information Act?
- How do legislatures across the nation legislate during the pandemic and as compared to Illinois?
- What is the Cards for Kids Act and how might individuals advocate for it?

Examples of Intern Projects (A full listing of intern projects are in Appendix B)

- Shreya Joshi & Kate Li, high school student interns facilitated Virtual Civic Engagement Forums on “Ensuring Free & Fair Elections in a Pandemic” that covered Illinois’ omnibus election bill and “Civic Advocacy & Mobilization” that covered civic advocacy and mobilization in light of recent social unrest
- Lucy Campbell, college student intern, focused on to land use issues and public hearings in the communities of Joliet, Woodridge, and Buffalo Grove; drafted a Citizen Guide on land use public hearings; and created best practices for ensuring transparency and public participation during public hearings, especially in light of COVID-19 and a transition to remote hearing.
- Afaaf Amatullah, college student intern, focused on transparency and accountability issues associated with the Small Businesses Loans Paycheck Protection Program by conducting extensive investigative research and navigating public databases. Afaaf drafted a memo highlighting grievances expressed by small business owners and media coalitions.
- Jackson Paller, legal intern, focused on ballot initiatives by working with community lawyers to develop a proposal for more comprehensive direct democracy opportunities and analyzed case law involving the burdens of petition gathering to place an item or candidate on the ballot during the various stay-at-home and social distancing orders associated with COVID-19. Jackson also drafted a model statute for digital petition signatures for municipal elections in 2021
- Victoria Coats, legal intern, analyzed litigation against Governor Pritzker’s COVID-19 emergency order and the ensuing scope of authority in times of emergency as applied to state government checks and balances.

Government Accountability and the Development of Systemic Democratic Protocols

CAC advances public policies that require accessibility, accountability and transparency from government institutions. CAC responds to citizen inquiries and in the process identifies undemocratic practices and policies that systematically impede citizen participation within the democratic process, often embedded in local ordinances or state law, and takes aggressive action to remove or reform barriers as well as offers recommendations to provide a platform from which change springs. Below is a sample of the government accountability issues addressed by CAC in 2020:

I. Holding Government to High Standards during the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020 saw legislative advancements virtually only on issues affected by the pandemic. CAC monitored bills in the General Assembly affecting civic engagement and good government reform, provided best practices to ensure, and spoke out to ensure government entities with respect to protecting the public's health as well as protected open government. CAC's activity on this front includes:

The Right to Public Access

When Governor Pritzker explicitly eased Open Meetings Act provisions in the Spring of 2020 to allow members of public bodies to attend meetings remotely, and conversely prevented the public from physically attending settings in most cases, many government bodies interpreted the order as a suspension of Illinois' transparency laws. CAC advocated that the Executive Order targeted only one limited provision within the Open Meetings Act and government bodies still had the responsibility to provide public access to government meetings and require opportunities for public comment. CAC talked with concerned citizens who contacted our office, published our rationale in an educational brochure, and educated government entities.

Best Practices for State Legislatures Meeting Remotely

Many states modified their legislative practices to meet remotely as a precautionary measure against transmission of COVID-19. The Illinois General Assembly has not, pointing to provisions of the Illinois Constitution and state law that require a physical location. CAC surveyed practices across the nation and published best practices for State Legislative transparency. In addition to common sense requirements such as details of appropriate social distancing and health and safety checks for all the press and the public entering the Capitol Building, significant examples include:

- **AGENDAS:** Legislatures should only put essential items on the agenda and must also allow flexibility with adjournment dates, recesses, and deadlines. Many states did this: see Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, etc.
- **MEDIA ACCESS:** Allow reporters to access the video conference call or in-person session. If the session is held in person and subject to gathering limits, allow at least one reporter. In Colorado, one reporter was allowed on the floor, and the rest could observe from the more removed second-floor viewing space.
- **PUBLIC TESTIMONY:** Allow for public testimony even when the public cannot attend the meeting as they normally would. In South Dakota, its veto day was held

remotely on March 30. The press release announcing the decision noted that testimony could be given through writing or in person, as long as one submitted to a health check when entering the building and waited to be invited into the chamber one-by-one.

II. Corporate Transparency

CAC assisted an individual who contacted a community lawyer for guidance in support of making Illinois company registration openly available to the public. Company registration information is an important public resource. A business or nonprofit entity's official and public legal status provides trust for investors, customers, and partners. The full list of active companies can be combined with other information resources to support public transparency, stop tax evasion and other malfeasance, create and test credit ratings, and facilitate electronic payments.

In the United States, company registration information is already legally public in every state, including Illinois. Leading states make company registration information available as open data: machine-readable, freely searchable, and downloadable in a few clicks. Other states, including Illinois, offer only a simple online search bar for one-by-one searches for each company's registration status. By some measures, however, Illinois was the least transparent state in the nation for company registrations. Not only did Illinois not publish company registrations as open data; Illinois threatened criminal prosecution against those who use software to automatically "scrape" this otherwise-public information.

CAC urged support of HB 5000 to make Illinois a leader in corporate transparency by modernizing its company registration publication process by joining with several of our good government allies in a letter of support for the bill, which garnered bipartisan cosponsorship before the pandemic ground the legislative session to a halt.

III. Mandated First Amendment and Open Meetings Act Training for School District 86

As part of a litigation settlement agreement between three community members and District 86, CAC provided mandated First Amendment and Open Meetings Act training. Community members sued District 86 for being abruptly shut down during public comment when they attempted to read a statement during their allotted public comment time that criticized school officials and objected to proposed curriculum changes in the Hinsdale Central High School science program. School Board members interrupted the speakers and in one case physically took the microphone from a speaker's hand, citing a vague policy of promoting civility and the misuse of an Open Meetings Act provision related to personnel issues and executive session. The school board violated the community members' speech rights.

Specifically noted as part of the litigation settlement with the School Board was that CAC Executive Director Maryam Judar provided a one hour First Amendment and Open Meetings Act training. The session included a question and answer session, which was live streamed and recorded. The presentation included information on constitutional restrictions on speech, unconstitutional restrictions on speech, unprotected speech, and various provisions of the Open Meetings Act, including the provision the School Board misapplied when shutting public commenters down. While the School Board asked CAC

to forward to them CAC's best practices for public comment rules and regulations of public bodies, other Board members focused on reciting a litany of offensive words which, if used during public comment would trigger a government body's authority to shut a person down during their public comment. Several Hinsdale residents contacted CAC to thank us for the excellent presentation.

Litigation and Issue Advocacy

I. CAC Successfully Combats Efforts to Delay Freedom of Information Responses

CAC led the effort to maintain access to information during the pandemic. CAC and two dozen media and good government groups from across Illinois signed a letter asking Illinois Governor Pritzker and Attorney General Raoul to resist efforts to weaken the Freedom of Information Act during the COVID-19 pandemic and urged them to oppose the Illinois Municipal League and Mayor Lori Lightfoot's campaign to suspend the statutory deadlines for responding to FOIA requests until after the governor's emergency order expires. CAC emphasized that the state must not forsake public trust by allowing public bodies to avoid their obligations under FOIA.

Signatories were the ACLU of Illinois, Better Government Association, Carmi Chronicle, Carterville Courier, CHANGE Illinois, Chicago Headline Club, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, The Chicago Reporter, Franklin County Gazette, Herrin Independent, Illinois College Press Association, Illinois Community College Journalism Association, Illinois PIRG, Illinois Press Association, League of Women Voters of Illinois, The Marion Star, McLeansboro Gazette, The Navigator and Journal-Register, Northern Illinois Newspaper Association, O'Fallon Weekly, Perry County Weekly-Press, Raise Your Hand, Reform for Illinois, Republic-Times, Southern Illinois Editorial Association, S&R Media, Swinford Publications.

Later, when the General Assembly convened in an emergency session to codify the Governor's Executive Orders, a bill was introduced to amend the Freedom of Information Act that would have allowed public bodies to forego the timeline to respond to requests for information. CAC took aggressive action by educating bill sponsors about the importance of FOIA during the pandemic keeping the Freedom of Information Act intact during the pandemic.

II. CAC Advocates for Increased Access to the Ballot

A. CAC Community Lawyers Ensure Ballot Access

CAC is working to change ballot access laws to make it easier to place referenda on the ballot, run for office, and survive objections to both, through our individual efforts and our participation in coalitions affecting elections. Illinois' ballot access process is one of the most onerous in the nation. Illinois has a particularly adversarial process just to get onto the ballot, and often it results in a lack of competitive elections, which undermines democracy and contributes to voter apathy. CAC educates the general public for free on how ordinary citizens can get on the ballot for candidacy for elected office or how to collect

valid petitions for placing referenda on the ballot. There is no other resource that offers this service for free.

B. CAC Pursues Improved Voter Choice through Improved Ballot Access

CAC works to reduce hindrances in the difficult legal and administrative process facing anyone who wants to run for office. Illinois has some of the most restrictive ballot access rules, the laws and regulations governing a candidate's path to running in an election, and CAC has continued to advance ballot access education to the public and policymakers. Voter choice is a foundational pillar of democracy. Unfortunately, Illinois voters often do not have a choice in local and state legislative elections. The 2018 midterm elections saw record turnout across the country and the highest midterm voter turnout in Illinois in nearly twenty years. Yet Illinois voters saw only a single candidate on the ballot in over two-thirds of Senate districts and nearly half of House districts. On average, in Illinois, only about one-third of municipal elections have more candidates than available positions; occasionally, there are not enough candidates to even fill all available seats.

CAC researched ballot access laws across the country to evaluate potential changes to Illinois law. Implementation of an electronic signature gathering system is a ballot access rule change that would eliminate most of the challenges to voter signatures and registration addresses. Signature gatherers could register voters on the spot, look up existing registrations, and confirm a voter through identification such as a driver's license number. Electronic signature gathering has vastly reduced challenges in the states and cities that have implemented it. With the help of CAC's research, Senator Heather Steans introduced a bill that would direct the State Board of Elections to implement a pilot program for electronic signatures and lower two of the most demanding signature requirements currently in existence. While the bill did not succeed, it started a conversation about a needed Illinois reform and established baseline criteria for how to reform the law. CAC worked with our coalition and legislative allies to advocate for this and other improvements and tear down barriers to entry into elections.

C. Ballot Access Education

CAC presented during a Zoom webinar on ballot access by individuals interested in local government candidacy, in a forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters Roselle-Bloomington. CAC is the only free legal resource for information on candidate nomination papers for people who are considering running for office and those who want to learn more about what is involved in running a campaign. CAC does not support any individual's candidacy for office but does support individuals' ability to run on the ballot.

Leadership and Staff

Staff

Maryam Judar, Executive Director/Community Lawyer
Ben Silver, Community Lawyer

Board of Directors

Myrrha Guzman, Esq., President
Porus Dadabhoy, Vice-President
Dr. Gordon Goodman, Secretary
Brian Conlon, Treasurer
Theresa Amato, Esq.
Dr. Constance Mixon
Dr. Claire Nader
Terry Pastika, Esq.
Josh Silverstein, Esq.
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Marcia De La Rosa	Naim Mansour	Susan Khalaieff
Cheryl Ealey-Cross	Mark Daniel, Esq.	
Bob Cordova	John Wasik	
Gerri Songer	Ellen Raymond, Esq.	

We would like to specifically recognize the following individuals for their outstanding dedication and substantial assistance to CAC:

Young Professionals Leadership Council

Bret Bender, Esq.	Aya Barnea, Esq.	Krystian Seebert
Sid Kincaid	Aubrey Lutz	Andrea Alvarez, Esq.

Hashim Arain

Interns

Michael Vaia Kate Li Jackson Paller
Afaaf Amutallah Lucy Campbell Emily Castanon
Shreya Joshi Victoria Coats

Volunteers

Hashim Arain Elizabeth O'Neill Michelle Smith

Donated Services

Business & Professional Consultants, Ltd., John Argo & Maggie Biel

Appendix A: CAC in the News 2020

Date	Headline	Byline	Outlet	Subject Area	URL
1/22	Bathroom battle brews in Elmhurst	David Giuliani	NBC Chicago	Zoning	https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/family-bathroom-battle-brews-in-elmhurst/2204966/
1/22	Bathroom battle comes to an end	David Giuliani	Elmhurst Patch	Zoning	https://patch.com/illinois/elmhurst/bathroom-battle-comes-end
2/12	Executive Service Corps of Chicago (ESC) and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation announce the Inaugural Leadership in Democracy Cohort	Press Release	Daily Herald	McCormick Leadership in Democracy Program	http://finance.dailyherald.com/dailyherald/news/read/39503382/Executive_Service_Corps_of_Chicago
2/13	Lyons Township won't say why teacher was warned	David Giuliani	LaGrange Patch	FOIA	https://patch.com/illinois/lagrange/lyons-township-memo-kept-secret
2/18	Aldermen relied on a study to approve \$1.3 billion for Sterling Bay's Lincoln Yards. Turns out that Sterling Bay hired the consultant who wrote it	Hal Dardick	Chicago Tribune	Tax Increment Financing	https://www.chicagotribune.com/investigations/ct-lincoln-yards-tif-report-sterling-bay-20200218-v56fevqkibffhfekl5r2zdxw6a-story.html
2/18	TIF consultant who created "city's report" on Lincoln Yards was actually hired by Sterling Bay	Brianna Kelly	The Real Deal	Tax Increment Financing	https://therealdeal.com/chicago/2020/02/18/tif-consultant-who-created-citys-report-on-lincoln-yards-was-actually-hired-by-sterling-bay/
2/28	Column: Would a red-light camera ban affect your town? It depends whether your community is home rule.	Ted Slowik	Daily Southtown	Home Rule/Red Light Cameras	https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/opinion/ct-sta-slowik-red-light-cameras-bill-st-0301-20200228-u5rtlcjsdbc5nfp26rbjru7v4-story.html

3/2	Lockport school district hired teacher who was arrested, fired from Markham job after bringing loaded gun to school	Zak Koeske	Daily Southtown	School District/Gun Regulations	https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/ct-sta-former-markham-teacher-rehired-st-0303-20200302-wyqad5y6cnheju3ce2isewtzi-story.html
3/12	Burr Ridge home rule: could taxes go up?	David Giuliani	Burr Ridge Patch	Home Rule	https://patch.com/illinois/burridge/burr-ridge-home-rule-could-taxes-go
3/15/	Aurora, Kane County agencies take unprecedented steps to try and curb spread of coronavirus in 'extraordinary times'	Sarah Freishtat	Aurora Beacon News	OMA/COVID-19 Crisis	https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/aurora-beacon-news/ct-abn-coronavirus-aurora-first-week-st-20200314-go6op2a7azconcvqng7bndi6zy-story.html
3/18	During coronavirus emergency, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot administration suspends fulfillment of public record requests / Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot reverses course, says administration will fulfill public's open records requests during ongoing coronavirus disruptions	Gregory Pratt	Chicago Tribune	FOIA/COVID-19 Crisis	https://www.chicagotribune.com/politics/ct-chicago-suspends-fulfilling-foia-requests-20200318-wfftqzyzrrdx5fgn2rgn65fu74-story.html?outputType=amp
4/6	Fair maps momentum grows	Rich Miller	Capitol Fax	Redistricting	https://capitolfax.com/2020/04/06/fair-maps-momentum-grows/
4/7	What the Gov: How are governments navigating open meetings in the coronavirus era?	Kiannah Sepeda-Miller	BGA	OMA/COVID-19 Crisis	https://www.bettergov.org/news/what-the-gov-how-are-governments-navigating-open-meetings-in-the-coronavirus-era/
4/10	Column: Groups condemn Joliet's plan to hold public hearing that people cannot attend in person	Ted Slowik	Daily Southtown	Public hearings/COVID-19 Crisis	https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/opinion/ct-sta-slowik-public-meetings-coronavirus-st-0410-20200409-sllartv6mvdlpjeuzmm6t7oqt4-story.html

4/16	Did Burr Ridge Mayor Overstep Power?	David Giuliani	Burr Ridge Patch	Municipal Code	https://patch.com/illinois/burridge/did-burr-ridge-mayor-overstep-power
4/21	A quid pro quo for Elmhurst condos?	David Giuliani	Elmhurst Patch	Ethics	https://patch.com/illinois/elmhurst/quid-pro-quo-elmhurst-condos
4/24	Illinois public interest and news organizations request that Governor Pritzker protect the Freedom of Information Act as essential to government business and operations	Press Release	CAC	FOIA/COVID-19 Crisis	https://www.citizenadvocacycenter.org/cac-blog
4/24	BGA joins Citizen Advocacy Center and others urging Pritzker and Raoul to support FOIA	Press Release	BGA	FOIA/COVID-19 Crisis	https://www.bettergov.org/news/bga-joins-citizen-advocacy-center-and-others-urging-pritzker-and-raoul-to-support-foia/
4/24	Illinois public interest and news organizations request that Governor Pritzker protect the Freedom of Information Act as essential to government business and operations	Press Release	Illinois Leaks Edgar County Watchdogs	FOIA/COVID-19 Crisis	https://edgarcountywatchdogs.com/2020/04/illinois-public-interest-and-news-organizations-request-that-governor-pritzker-protect-the-freedom-of-information-act-as-essential-to-government-business-and-operations/
4/29	Burr Ridge official accused of ethnic slurs again	David Giuliani	Elmhurst Patch	Ethics/racial equity	https://patch.com/illinois/burridge/burr-ridge-official-accused-ethnic-slurs-again
5/7/	Did Area Sewer Agency Break State Law?	David Giuliani	Burr Ridge Patch	OMA	https://patch.com/illinois/burridge/did-area-sewer-agency-break-state-law
5/29	Hinsdale Dist. 86 reaches settlement in Open Meetings Act lawsuit	Daily Herald Report	Daily Herald	First Amendment/OMA	https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20200529/hinsdale-dist-86-reaches-settlement-in-open-meetings-act-lawsuit

5/29	District 86 Settles Free Speech Lawsuit	David Giuliani	Hinsdale Clarendon Hills Patch	First Amendment/O MA	https://patch.com/illinois/hinsdale/district-86-settles-free-speech-lawsuit
6/1	Hinsdale High School District 86 settles First Amendment lawsuit	Kimberly Fornek	Hinsdale Doings	First Amendment/O MA	https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/hinsdale/ct-dhd-district-86-first-amendment-lawsuit-settled-tl-0604-20200601-rapodlq4jhili3iz23pa7jpr4-story.html
6/1	D86 settles suit over comments at meetings	Patricia Manson	Chicago Daily Law Bulletin	First Amendment/O MA	https://www.chicagolawbulletin.com/parents.-hinsdale-school-district-settle-public-comment-suit%2%a0-%c2%a0-20200601
7/15	D-86 official away from job when resignation accepted	David Giuliani	Hinsdale-Clarendon Hills Patch	School Districts	https://patch.com/illinois/hinsdale/d-86-official-away-job-when-resignation-accepted
7/16	Some Chicago School Councils tasked with voting on police in schools aren't following the rules	Yana Kunichoff and Pascal Sabino	Block Club Chicago	OMA/Local School Councils	https://blockclubchicago.org/2020/07/16/some-chicago-school-councils-tasked-with-voting-on-police-in-schools-arent-following-the-rules/
8/4	Letters: Relax signature requirements for spring local elections in light of COVID-19	LTE by Jackson Paller	Chicago Tribune	Ballot Access/COVID -19	https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/letters/ct-letters-vp-080520-20200804-yarotlobmfb6jaa24srxzrucce-story.html
8/27	Learn how to run for office at LWV webinar Sept. 1	Press release submitted by LWV Roselle/Bloomingtondale	Daily Herald	Ballot Access	https://www.google.com/url?rct=j&sa=t&url=https://www.dailyherald.com/submitted/20200814/learn-how-to-run-for-office-at-league-of-women-voters-webinar-sept-1&ct=ga&cd=CAEYACoUMTM5NTgzNTk4Mzq2Mjk3NDY2NTkyGmQ1NmIzYTAxYjYiYjQ2YmY6Y29tOmVuOIVT&usq=AFQjCNEWGIYPeFaRJtmEggjxq-wLK3yv6A
8/28	Burr Ridge officials want colleagues reprimanded	David Giuliani	Burr Ridge Patch	OMA	https://patch.com/illinois/burrridge/burr-ridge-official-wants-colleagues-reprimanded

9/10	Democracy, Race, and Public Policy Webinar Series, with Maryam Judar	Press release by UIC	UIC College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs	Public Policy/Racial Equity	https://cuppa.uic.edu/events/democracy-race-and-public-policy-webinar-series-with-maryam-judar/
9/11	D-86 leader upset with public comments	David Giuliani	Hinsdale-Clarendon Hills Patch	OMA/Public Comment	https://patch.com/illinois/hinsdale/d-205-leader-upset-public-comments
10/11	Radio interview	Gary Zidek	WDCB	Election 2020	https://soundcloud.com/wdcbnews/wdcb-weekly-101120
10/16	Amazon's massive Chicago-area expansion was fueled by \$741 million from taxpayers	John Lippert/Natalie Moore	BGA/WBEZ	TIF	https://www.wbez.org/stories/amazons-massive-chicago-area-expansion-was-fueled-by-741-million-from-taxpayers/300fa829-1b71-4d9e-a2f4-1776e88d4cb3
10/28	Settlement mandates D-86 board undergo training	David Giuliani	Darien Patch	OMA/Public Comment	https://patch.com/illinois/darien-il/settlement-mandates-d-86-board-undergo-training
11/3	Must District 86 allow slurs and obscenities during meetings?	David Giuliani	Hinsdale-Clarendon Hills Patch	OMA/Public Comment	https://patch.com/illinois/darien-il/must-district-86-allow-slurs-obscenities-during-meetings
11/11	Hinsdale School District 86 Board gets freedom of speech lesson	Kimberly Fornek	Pioneer Press/Chicago Tribune	OMA/Public Comment	https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/hinsdale/ct-dhd-district-86-public-comments-first-amendment-1112-20201110-gaa6hkmw3zglfdt7kogomgwidystory.html
11/23	Did D-86 Board Follow Open Meetings Law?	David Giuliani	Hinsdale-Clarendon Hills Patch	OMA/Notice & Final Action	https://patch.com/illinois/hinsdale/did-d-86-board-follow-open-meetings-law
12/21	Did Lori Lightfoot bet on Chicago teachers strike? Email lays out scotch-and-cigars wager, but mayor and top aide deny bet.	Gregory Pratt	Chicago Tribune	Ethics/Conflict of Interest	https://www.chicagotribune.com/politics/ct-chicago-mayor-lori-lightfoot-ctu-strike-bet-20201202-6mvs5x2zyrhq5bzh6o4ji6uq6e-story.html

12/23	La Grange Library's Secrecy Over Firing Questioned	David Giuliani	La Grange Patch	OMA	https://patch.com/illinois/lagrange/la-grange-librarys-secrecy-over-firing-questioned
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Appendix B: Lists of 2020 Summer Interns' Projects

Shreya Joshi
Waubonsie Valley High School, Rising Junior

Virtual Civic Engagement Forums

- “Ensuring Free & Fair Elections in a Pandemic” Forum
 - Extensively researched the following topics: voter registration procedures, safe practices for voting in a pandemic, the impact of Covid-19 on 2020’s election season, the importance of secure elections, the logistics of conducting an accurate election in Covid-19, and relevant dates and deadlines related to the upcoming General Election
 - Designed digital programming/content and presented above information to a virtual audience
- “Civic Advocacy & Mobilization” Forum
 - Extensively researched the following topics: civic advocacy and mobilization in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, Freedom of Information Act, requesting usage of public spaces, grassroots organizing, legislative advocacy, organizing protests and large gatherings, and effectively utilizing social media
 - Designed digital programming/content to present the above information to a virtual audience

Citizen Guides

- Cards for Kids Act Citizen Guide
 - Researched the Cards for Kids Act, who it affects, and its relevance to libraries in Illinois and drafted a comprehensive resource on the new law
- Voting in Covid-19 Citizen Guide
 - Researched different voter registration procedures, safe practices for voting in a pandemic, the impact of Covid-19 on 2020’s election season, and relevant dates and deadlines related to the upcoming General Election and drafted a comprehensive resource outlining registration and voting procedures for Nov. 3

Meetings Attended

- Public meeting concerning DuPage County Board member’s Pete DiCianni’s resignation
- CHANGE Illinois’s Illinois Redistricting Collaborative Meeting

Kate Li
Naperville Central High School, Rising Senior

Voting During Covid-19

- Researched and created virtual presentation with slides on voting practices and procedures to prevent spread of COVID-19 for the November 3 Election, and outlined the Omnibus Election Bill provisions’ impacts on:
 - Voting by Mail
 - Early Voting
 - Curbside Voting
 - Ballot Collection
- Also presented on voter registration procedures including:
 - Automatic Voter Registration
 - Grace Period Registration

Civic Advocacy and Mobilization

- Created presentation on civic advocacy and mobilization during the pandemic, covering topics such as:

- Freedom of Information Act
- Open Meetings Act
- Media Bias
- State and Local Ballot Initiatives
- Participatory Budgeting
- Logistics and Impact of Calling/Emailing Representatives

Formation of Citizen Guides

- Drafted Citizen Guide to Voting During Covid-19
- Drafted Citizen Guide to the Cards for Kids Act
 - The Cards for Kids Act authorizes libraries to issue library cards and provide services to students who live under federal poverty guidelines in unincorporated areas for free

Lucy Campbell
Brown University, Rising Sophomore

Public Hearings

- Drafted a Citizen Guide on land use public hearings, including relevant Illinois statutes, court cases, and various municipal rules; and a list of suggested best practices for ensuring transparency and public participation during public hearings, especially in light of COVID-19 and a transition to remote hearings
- Researched recent, controversial land use examples: NorthPoint Development in Joliet, the proposed Prairie Ridge senior living home near Woodridge, and a Buffalo Grove TIF

State Legislatures during COVID-19*

- Compiled a spreadsheet tracking how each state legislature has responded to COVID-19: whether they have allowed for remote sessions and/or voting, the specific resolutions regarding those changes, and various notes describing each legislature's response
- Drafted a summary of those findings, including suggested best practices regarding remote legislating while protecting public participation

DuPage County: Public Meetings During COVID-19*

- Compiled a spreadsheet tracking public meeting practices for DuPage County's 38 municipalities (not including Chicago) and 9 townships: whether meetings are being held remotely and/or in-person, as well as provisions for public viewing and comment

Supreme Court Case Briefs

- Wrote case briefs for recent, significant Supreme Court decisions: *Dept. of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California* (regarding DACA's rescission), *Georgia v. Public.Resource.Org* (copyrighting state code annotations), and *Trump v. Mazars USA* and *Trump v. Vance* (subpoenas for the President's financial records)

Election Safety*

- Researched Chicago, Cook County, and the collar counties' plans for ensuring safety and voter participation during the November election, in response to COVID-19

PAC Binding Opinions

- Compiled a database of all binding opinions of the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor, including their descriptions, the public body implicated in the Request for Review, and whether the opinion deals with FOIA or the Open Meetings Act

*collaboration with Afaaf Amatullah

Afaaf Amatullah
Elmhurst University, Rising Senior

Small Businesses Loans:

- Researched extensively the issue of government transparency in the Paycheck Protection Program using news reports and several public databases, and reached out to Accountable.US in an effort to gather information on their data collection methodology, which relies on public filings and media reports
- Created a narrative on the lack of disclosure by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Small Business Administration, highlighting several areas of contention, including grievances expressed by small business owners and media coalitions through numerous civil lawsuits
- Submitted a letter to the *Chicago Tribune* discussing the effect of the lack of transparency on small businesses during a pandemic, largely focused on diminished public trust

State Legislators during COVID-19:

- Compiled information on statutes enacted in response to COVID-19 which increase flexibility in state legislature meetings across all 50 states

Illinois Counties Election Safety during COVID-19:

- Surveyed safety measures being taken for the upcoming 2020 presidential election in Illinois counties

DuPage County Meeting Safety during COVID-19:

- Examined the various ways in which DuPage municipalities and townships are safely administering public meetings that ensure continued civic participation

Case Briefs:

- Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California.
 - DACA rescindment by the Trump administration is in violation of the Administrative Procedure Act. Decided June 2020
- Georgia v. Public.Resource.Org, Inc.
 - The Official Code of Georgia Annotated is not copyrightable. Decided April 2020

Meetings Attended:

- Evanston Board of Ethics Hearing concerning 8th Ward Alderman Ann Rainey
- DuPage County Board Meeting which was followed by Peter DiCianni stepping down as chairman of the DuPage County Health & Human Services Committee

Jackson Paller
Loyola University Law School, Rising 2L

Ballot Initiatives

- Developed a proposal for a comprehensive direct democracy program that could be adopted by the State of Illinois, based on the ballot access protections currently given to ballot initiatives by the Illinois Constitution and state law
- Followed both federal and state cases where proponents of ballot initiatives sought ballot access relief due to the burden of COVID-19 and various stay-at-home and social distancing orders

Ballot Access: Electronic Petitioning

- Drafted a model statute that would allow for ballot access petition signatures to be collected digitally for municipal elections scheduled during the 2021 calendar year
- Wrote and submitted a letter to the editor arguing in support of electronic petitioning
- Reached out to state legislators to gain support for this statute

The “Unduly Burdensome” Exception to the Freedom of Information Act

- Wrote a memo detailing what court and Attorney General opinions have said about the often misunderstood “undue burden” exemption to disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act

Raffle Licensing, State Law and Local Ordinance

- Determined that state law only allows granting of raffle licenses to nonprofits and a municipality had violated this law by granting a license to a for-profit business

Open Meetings Act and Exception for Closed Meeting

- Determining whether the closing date for a sale of public property had been changed during a closed meeting, and if so whether that was a proper topic for a closed meeting under the Illinois Open Meetings Act

Eligibility to Run for and Hold Municipal Elected Office

- Analyzed state law to try to determine whether a law against conflicts of interest applies to TIF contracts, and if so whether that law prohibits an individual from being appointed to Elected Office

Meetings Attended:

- DuPage County Board Meeting
- Just Democracy Coalition Meeting
- Multiple Evanston City Council Meetings
- Hearing convened by Evanston Board of Ethics to hear a complaint against a sitting argument, and to rule on whether to entertain certain complaints against the Evanston Mayor

Victoria Coats Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, Rising 3L

Governor Pritzker COVID-19 Emergency Order Litigation

- Analyzed litigation against Governor Pritzker’s COVID-19 emergency order in state and federal courts including at the circuit / district, appellate, and Supreme Court levels
- Evaluated state government checks and balances issues related to Governor Pritzker’s executive order, such as scope of executive authority in times of emergency and police power
- Analyzed emergency order statutes at the state level such as the Illinois Emergency Management Act, and the Illinois Public Health Agency Act as well as federal statute as well as various phases in Pritzker’s order such as the Stafford Act; assessed relevant Illinois and federal constitutional provisions, particularly First and Fourteenth amendments
- Assessed impact litigation venue transfer strategies both among district courts and between state and federal court for both plaintiff and state
- Organized complaints by orientation of religious liberty, commerce, political, and miscellaneous municipal suits to assess impact litigation strategies

Open Meetings Act: Public Comment

- Researched whether the Village of Libertyville had instructed employees to violate the First Amendment during Black Lives Matter protests through requesting businesses remove signs and therefore violating their right to speech
- Submitted FOIA request and reviewed government documents, as well as attended Libertyville board meeting
- Reviewed whether Village of Libertyville instructional guidance requiring speakers to state name and address violated state law and the First and Fourteenth Amendments

Letters to the Editor: Elite Universities and Silencing of Minority Student Concerns

- Authored two letters to the editor regarding systemic racism in elite universities with micro- and macro-level scope
- Discussed issues of systemic bias and censoring of racial minority concerns nationwide including undergraduate, graduate, law, and business campuses; dean resignations nationwide due to complaints of management of minority student concerns in the 2019-2020 academic year; faculty discrimination and creation of hostile environments; and censoring of student free-speech

Meetings Attended:

- Village of Libertyville Board Meeting
- Just Democracy Voter Engagement Meeting
- Northwestern University, “Community, Not Cops- Divestment from Evanston and Chicago Police Department” meeting

Appendix C: Citizen Initiative Awards

Each year CAC gives out Citizen Initiative Awards to recognize local community activists who are catalysts for democratic participation and have used civic, legal, and community organizing tools to advocate for a self-identified issue of public concern often in the face of adversity. Below are descriptions of the activities of recent recipients:

The 2019 Citizen Initiative Award recipients were:

- The Pick Neighborhood, Elmhurst, for successfully organizing neighbors around a common cause.

Being located behind one of the busiest intersections in Elmhurst, the residents of the Pick Neighborhood are mindful of balancing the need for development and preserving their small subdivision's unique character. When residents learned of a proposed development to build a large gas station and convenience store on a lot adjacent to their neighborhood, they had environmental concerns that included potential noise, fumes, traffic, and impact on the Salt Creek. Working with a CAC community lawyer, residents dove into learning about zoning applications, requirements, public hearings, their rights at public hearings, and how to organize neighbors. The Pick Neighborhood packed the public hearing at the Elmhurst Planning and Zoning Commission and methodically presented their concerns. Their advocacy was successful as the proposed plan was rescinded. Residents in the Pick Neighborhood remain organized and are proactively working with the City of Elmhurst to plan for how to develop the vacant property.

- Save Lufkin Pool, Villa Park, for organizing to save a community resource, transforming a neighborhood issue into a community issue, and increasing government accountability.

When the Village Board voted to close Lufkin Pool in late 2017, surprised residents formed Save Lufkin Pool to hold the Village Board accountable for not being more proactive in obtaining meaningful public input prior to closing such a vital public space without a plan to replace it. The group advocated for a plan that would allow the pool to remain open while the Village built a long-term plan to serve residents. Save Lufkin Pool successfully transformed their neighborhood issue into a community-wide election issue that affected the Village Board's composition, organized neighbors to attend and speak out at Village meetings, and uncovered a failure of the Village to comply with bidding requirements. While the pool was ultimately demolished, Save Lufkin Pool organizers were successful in changing the civic landscape of their community to increase accountability and awareness in Villa Park.

- Stan Zoller, Lake Forest College, for his commitment to promoting the Freedom of the Press and the education of journalists from high school students to professionals.

Stan Zoller is an award-winning journalist with over four decades of experience, working as an educator of young journalists at the high school and college level for over 20 years. He serves on the board of the Chicago Headline Club, where he helps organize the annual FOIA Fest that brings journalists, watchdogs, students, and government officials together to discuss Freedom of Information Act and government transparency issues. Mr. Zoller previously served as Executive Director of the Illinois Journalism Education Association, helped develop and pass the Speech Rights of Student Journalists Act, an Illinois law that protects student journalists, and routinely alerts CAC to issues of concern related to student journalism.

- Represent DuPage, DuPage County, for advocating for improved ethics for the DuPage County Board.

Represent DuPage is a chapter of a national nonprofit, non-partisan organization focused on passing anti-corruption laws. Members of Represent DuPage have frequently spoken out at DuPage County Board meetings to promote best practices in appointments and elections. The organization is working to reform the DuPage County Board's ethics ordinance to ensure enforcement of ethics provisions, limit campaign contributions from county vendors, and protect the public from conflicts of interest and nepotism. In consultation with a CAC community lawyer, Represent DuPage developed an ethics proposal that includes appointment of the inspector general by an independent commission, enhanced guidance for the existing Ethics Commission, stringent new restrictions on nepotism and conflicts of interest, and a cooling off period before former employees and officials can lobby the county.