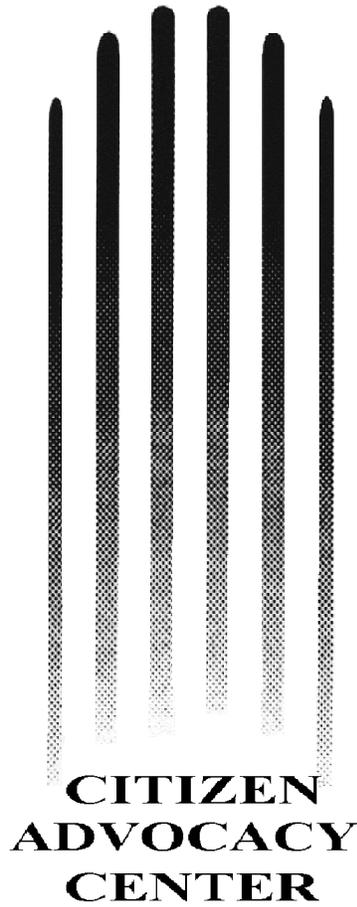


CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER

2012 ANNUAL REPORT



**THE CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER
IS DEDICATED
TO BUILDING DEMOCRACY
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
BY STRENGTHENING
THE CITIZENRY'S CAPACITIES,
RESOURCES AND INSTITUTIONS FOR
SELF-GOVERNANCE.**

CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER GOALS

- **To make government more accountable to the people by increasing democratic protocols and by developing and empowering the voice of citizens;**
- **To further the public understanding of civic tools and the skill of the citizenry in using these tools for societal problem solving;**
- **To promote individual and community efforts to resolve contemporary societal problems involving the rights of citizens, workers, shareholders, taxpayers, and consumers and the health, safety, and welfare of the communities we serve;**
- **To stimulate citizen awareness of and action on issues of public significance;**
- **To improve access to government-held information, access to the airwaves, access to the ballot, and access to the courts;and**
- **To advance justice by: 1) increasing the awareness of and commitment to community lawyering/advocacy; 2) by encouraging lawyers, professionals, and volunteers to build democracy at the local level; and 3) by replicating the work of the Center.**

Citizen Advocacy Center 2012 Annual Report

The Citizen Advocacy Center (Center) is an award-winning, non-profit, non-partisan, free community legal organization. Founded in 1994, the Center utilizes a community lawyering model to meet its 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. The Center is primarily a grassroots, community based organization, but due to our formula for civic engagement and public policy advocacy, efforts that start at the local level often result in statewide initiatives to dismantle anti-democratic barriers rooted in state law.

As we near our 20th anniversary, the Center is recognized as a leading public interest law office with an incomparable, results- oriented model. Our three major initiatives in 2012 were:

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

Public Education and Capacity Building

The Center is primarily a hub for civic information, civic engagement and civic networking whereby those interested in becoming involved in community affairs meet other advocates and create lasting civic relationships. In 2012, the Center worked with concerned members of the public to create active and vibrant democratic communities by building capacity to use civic tools, the law, community organizing and coalition building to affect change, regardless of the subject matter or the point of view of those making the inquiry.

Community Lawyering and Grassroots Assistance

The scope of the Center's grassroots work is extensive and includes communities throughout the greater Chicagoland area. The Center's focus on providing and ensuring access to the democratic process results in a diverse array of issues being addressed, ranging from ethics, government accountability, land use, tax increment financing, access to the ballot, social justice and more. Below is a sampling of our 2012 work in this area:

Public Inquiries:

- How does an individual put an item on the agenda for an Annual Township meeting?
- Can one public official simultaneously hold the position of mayor and county board member where the municipality is located in the county?
- Is a referendum to prohibit a public official from holding dual offices binding for a home rule unit of government?
- Do public bodies have to allow for public comment?
- What happens when a public body refuses to comply with a non-binding ruling of the Illinois Attorney General's office?
- If a township is eliminated by referendum, does that also remove the position of highway commissioner?
- When a public body proposes a tax increment financing budget for a new district, what level of detail is required?
- Is there a First Amendment issue related to free speech or right to association when a public body establishes rules of procedure for zoning hearings that affords greater rights to one class of citizens versus another?

Communities Served:

- Belleville
- Broadview
- Caseyville
- Cicero
- City of Chicago
- Downers Grove
- Elgin
- Elmhurst
- Forest Park
- Island Lake
- Lake Zurich
- Lisle
- Maywood
- Naperville
- Niles
- Oak Brook
- Smithfield
- Villa Park
- Warrenville
- Wauconda Township
- Wayne County
- Wheaton

Community Forums:

In addition to answering public inquiries and community organizing, the following is a list of forums wherein the Center hosted, was a guest speaker, or participated:

- Lorman Continuing Legal Education Seminar; Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Act (Guest Speaker)
- Institute of Political and Government Affairs Symposium sponsored by Paul Simon Institution (Guest Speaker)
- CAC Community Forum: Activists Turned Public Officials (Hosted Forum)
- Northeastern Illinois Depository Librarians at Mount Prospect (Guest Speaker)
- National Freedom Of Information Coalition Conference (Attendee)
- Winfield Community Meeting Presentation (Guest Speaker)
- DuPage NAACP Community Presentation (Attendee and Award Recipient)
- DuPage Democrats Community Presentation (Guest Speaker)
- Elmhurst Kiwanis Club Community Presentation (Guest Speaker)
- Citizen Advocacy Center/Elmhurst College Political Corruption Forum (Guest Speaker)
- Citizen Bridges Legislative Fellow Forum (Hosted Forums, Spring and Fall)
- CAC *Citizens United* Community Forum (Hosted Forum)
- Maywood Community Presentation, Home Rule (Guest Speaker)
- Westmont Community Presentation, Home Rule (Guest Speaker)
- CAC Constitution Day Forum (Hosted Forum)
- “The Professors” on WYCC PBS Chicago; Conversation on Chicago Corruption (Guest Panelist)

Building Democracy: Examples of Community Lawyering Assistance

Brad Van Hoose fighting for transparency despite harassment and arrest

Brad Van Hoose lives in Southern Illinois in a small town of 4,200 people. He is a civic-minded individual who began to question a handicapped accessible fishing dock that overlooks a small lake in a public park. He made three separate Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests asking how much the dock cost, the origin of its funding, and the contractor. The village denied

his requests and labeled him a “recurrent requester.” The Center provided legal assistance to Brad Van Hoose with respect to filing his FOIA requests and filing a “request for review” with the Illinois Attorney General’s office. The Illinois Attorney General’s Office ruled in Mr. Van Hoose’s favor, and deemed he was entitled to the requested records and had been wrongly labeled a recurrent requester.

Shortly after the ruling, the powers that be took action to publically discredit Mr. Van Hoose. First, he became the subject of criminal investigation that portrayed him as allegedly threatening an individual associated with the village and sending harassing emails to village officials. Second, as part of the police investigation, the college where Mr. Van Hoose was a student at shared his personal student information with law enforcement officials without requiring a warrant. In response, Mr. Van Hoose shared with the college a news article and an unsigned, eight page letters purportedly from police officers from the department investigating him which listed complaints about the police chief. For this, Mr. Van Hoose was subsequently arrested and handcuffed in the school library for disorderly conduct. Third, the Village Attorney filed a “suspicious activity” report against Mr. Van Hoose for sitting on the grass on private property next to Village Hall. Mr. Van Hoose was cutting grass on the property and was taking a break in the 100 plus degree heat.

As part of the Center’s services, we conducted outreach to media outlets to counter the outrageous portrait being propagated of Mr. Van Hoose. Initially, none of the local media would cover Mr. Van Hoose’s side of the story because they believed the party line being delivered by the government entities. It was not until the Center recruited the Medill Watchdog Group to investigate and run an extensive story. After the Medill Watchdog article was released, the public opinion tide turned.

The treatment Mr. Van Hoose received, and the support he received by the Center, has only served to strengthen his resolve to continue being a government watchdog. He filed a FOIA request for the tape of his arrest and his subsequent detention, edited them, and posted a narrated video portraying his reasonable behavior and the law enforcement officials’ overreaction, available on YouTube.

Tamara Brenner advocating for prohibition of dual office holding

Ms. Brenner has been an Elmhurst government watchdog for just over three years. Ms. Brenner began to ask questions about the dual office compatibility when she learned that the current mayor, Pete DiCianni, intended to run for the DuPage County board seat where Elmhurst is located and hold both the mayoral and county seat simultaneously if he won. Ms. Brenner sought Center assistance on the viability of a home rule community using a binding referendum to prohibit dual office holding. Home rule is a specific legal status of some municipalities and counties in Illinois that allows the regulation, taxation, and spending beyond the limits of state statutes.

Ms. Brenner worked with Center community lawyers and legal interns to conduct legal research on the substance of the question, draft of the petition, and organize a campaign strategy. Ms. Brenner began a three point organizing campaign: doing outreach to others in the community who were also speaking out on this issue; lobbying city council members to place a city-initiated binding referendum on the ballot while also lobbying county board members to oppose dual office; and circulating her own binding petition to place on the ballot in the event that the city failed to place a referendum on the ballot. Ms. Brenner gave public comment at every City Council meeting to advocate her opposition to dual office and request that the City Council take action.

Ms. Brenner's campaign generated significant community awareness and stimulated interest in the appropriate role of public officials. The mayor, once defiant in his commitment to hold both offices at the same time, held a press conference to state that he would resign as mayor if he won the county board seat. Undeterred, Ms. Brenner told the City Council that the Mayor's press conference was not enough, the City still needed to place its own binding referendum on the ballot. She also conveyed that if the City failed to do so, she was in the process of collecting signatures to place a citizen-initiated referendum on the ballot. Due to the public broadcast of City Council meetings, her frequent public comment at municipal meetings and her extensive canvassing of Elmhurst citizens to collect over 950 signatures, Ms. Brenner has developed a following. To the chagrin of the members, the Elmhurst City Council eventually voted to place the dual office referendum on the ballot, and Elmhurst voters passed the binding referendum by 77%.

Robert Tracy, Elmhurst, IL organizing around Citizens United case:

Mr. Robert Tracy asked for Center assistance in drafting an advisory referendum petition in Elmhurst on whether the City should declare that it is opposed to the determination that corporations are people deserving of full First Amendment free speech rights. When Mr. Tracy was circulating his petition and speaking with Elmhurst residents, he learned that most voters did not have enough information on the subject to sign in support of his question. He then decided to hold a public forum on the significance of the *Citizens United* case. The Center further assisted Mr. Tracy by referring him to persons knowledgeable on campaign finance regulation and reform issues. Mr. Tracy still found it difficult to procure a panel that met his requirements. The Center then suggested that the Center host a forum on the topic for the public and have a community lawyer speak to the issue. Mr. Robert Tracy co-sponsored the event as part of his Move to Amend activities. Lastly, the Center connected Mr. Tracy with other individuals in the region that were also pursuing similar questions at other government levels.

Citizen Initiative Awards

Every year the Center honors individuals and community groups who are organizing to make a difference in their community. These are average citizens who have identified an issue of concern, and rather than assuming that some other people will take on the issue, choose to get involved. In 2012, the Center honored the following individuals and groups:

John Barsotti, Villa Park, IL was recognized for holding his municipal government accountable for refusing to release public records. Mr. Barsotti simply wanted to inspect routine public records from his Village. When Villa Park refused his Freedom of Information Act request (FOIA) he filed a complaint with the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC). The PAC issued an advisory opinion stating that Mr. Barsotti was entitled to receive the records, but Villa Park did not comply with the Attorney General's request. Refusing to be deterred, Mr. Barsotti filed a pro se law suit against the Village seeking access to the records. Mr. Barsotti navigated the red tape of litigation; drafted legal documents, made court room appearances and argued his case before a judge. In September, 2012, Villa Park agreed to a settlement that involved inspection of the very records he requested in October 2011. While the Center did not represent Mr. Barsotti in litigation, we helped him identify legal arguments, demystified the legal jargon, and helped plan strategy.

Downers Grove Citizen Group of 63rd and Woodward, Downers Grove, IL was recognized for their outstanding efforts in organizing their neighbors to preserve their community's characteristics. After receiving legal notice that the Village of Downers Grove was reviewing a petition for the building of a Walgreens in their community, concerned citizens took action to investigate the proposal. They identified traffic, public safety, ordinance compliance issues, and non-adherence to the town's comprehensive plan and were successful in advocating for the Plan Commission to oppose the project by a vote of 6-1. The Village Board, however, favored the plan. The group sprang into action and for six months organized their community to circulate a petition resulting in more than 1,300 signatures opposing the plan, packed Village meetings to speak out, and lobbied Walgreens to withdraw their proposal. In the end, Walgreen withdrew their proposal. The Center worked with the community group in making FOIA requests, as well as establishing and executing an organizing strategy.

Erik Spande, Winfield, IL was recognized for his dedication to serving the public interest, even at the expense of censorship from his fellow public officials. Mr. Spande is a Village trustee in Winfield whose Board met in executive session several times to discuss the disbanding of the Winfield Police Department and the contracting of police services to the DuPage County Sheriff's Office. Trustee Spande opposed discussions in executive session due to them being on matters of significant public interest, and not falling under an appropriate exemption of the Open Meetings Act. Trustee Spande took several actions: he published he detailed notes from the closed session tapes in a local paper, spoke out against the closed door discussions, and read his notes from the closed session tape in open session. In response, the majority of the Village Board voted to censure and remove Trustee Spande from a Village Board meeting by police escort. For several months prior to Mr. Spande's disclosure, the Center worked with members of the Winfield community to help them speak out about the ongoing lack of accountability at the Village Board and organize for change.

Michael Hennessy, Wauconda Township, IL was recognized for his tenacity in utilizing his right to petition government. Mr. Hennessy has been following township politics for several years. In anticipation of the 2012 Annual Township meeting, Mr. Hennessy used his right to

petition under Illinois law to place an item on the Annual Township Meeting agenda. He wanted those in attendance at the Annual Township meeting to vote on whether to place on the ballot a question about Township employees contributing to their health insurance. Wauconda Township refused his petition. Undeterred, Mr. Hennessy took advantage of another provision in Illinois law which allows citizens to petition for a Special Annual Township Meeting. Submitting to public pressure, Wauconda Township gave in and held a Special Annual Township Meeting so that registered voters could decide whether a portion of the benefits received by the Township elected officials should be paid out of pocket by the elected officials (the status quo was that the elected officials costs are 100% paid). The Center worked with Mr. Hennessy to research state statutes to help his cause, called the township on his behalf, and provided additional technical assistance.

Kathy Gilroy, Villa Park, IL was recognized for her indefatigable advocacy efforts in monitoring nearly every Illinois Gaming Board, Racing Board, and Lottery Control Board meeting since 1996. She often speaks out during public comment about compliance and implementation of state gaming laws. She has forced the gaming board to be compliant with respect to posting information about assistance for gaming addictions, implementing public comment at gaming board when none was required by state law. With the advent of video gaming legislation, Ms. Gilroy has been to government meetings in more than 20 towns to voice her concerns about the impact of gaming on the citizenry and has worked with dozens of community groups to oppose gaming legislation. Ms. Gilroy has been ridiculed and mocked by gaming proponents but has continued to speak out for her beliefs, inspired by her personal experience in her rural hometown community as farmers lost their farms, profits, and personal relationships to gambling addiction. The Center has provided Ms. Gilroy with extensive assistance with respect to Freedom of Information Act requests and Open Meetings Act compliance issues.

Youth Civic Education Program – “Civic Empowerment Zone”

The Civic Empowerment Zone is the Center’s hands-on civic education program that helps educators and youth transform their communities into “civic labs” and teach what it means to be a “good citizen” in practice. We focus on building civic skills, confidence, and knowledge through engaging youth at the local level on issues they care about and developing a working knowledge of how to affect government decision making by mastering universal civic skills of practical applications of the laws and policies involved in the democratic process. In 2012, the Center engaged in the following activities:

Constitution Week 2012

For the last three years, the Center has collaborated with area high schools to engage students in conversations about the Constitution and First Amendment rights. This year, the Center welcomed a highly controversial youth speaker to talk with high school students about her experience championing a First Amendment principle while standing up for her beliefs. Jessica

Ahlquist is a high school student and an avowed atheist who successfully sued her public school in federal court for violating the principle of separation of church and state. As a consequence of her advocacy, Jessica was harassed, threatened, and finally assigned a police escort to secure her safety in school. It was important to the Center to bring a young person who, despite severe backlash, continued to stand up for her beliefs. She visited four high schools as well as facilitated a program at the Center, ultimately talking with more than 1,000 students about her experience.

The Center's Constitution Week was brought to the attention of the Illinois Family Institute (IFI). IFI is a state organization based in DuPage County and dedicated to "promoting marriage, family, life and liberty in the land of Lincoln." The IFI is also identified as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. IFI sent an action alert asking its supporters to register their protest by contacting the public schools Jessica was scheduled to visit. This action resulted in hundreds of emails and calls to the host schools stating it was inappropriate for a high school student to talk about Constitutional rights. The Center and the schools were accused of bringing in Jessica to convert students to atheism. The idea of bringing in Jessica was so controversial that an article written in one community stimulated a community wide discussion that generated more than 250 comments and resulted in intense media exposure. A significant portion of the comments came from the students who attended the forum. These comments addressed the lack of confidence adults have in youth and the failure of parents to provide the leeway for students to evaluate issues for themselves. Students also commented about what it means to stand up for one's values, what issues they would stand up for, and what actions they would be willing to take in pursuit of their goal.

In addition to the above, the Center was asked to document our experience in hosting a controversial speaker to talk with youth. The purpose of the work study paper is to provide a training guide for how schools can use controversial topics to teach civics, in addition to planning for how to prepare teachers and administrators to field questions from parents and the media.

From Egypt to Elmhurst: Building Democracy

In collaboration with a non-profit organization and a U.S. Department of State, the Center hosted a Legislative Fellow for three weeks. The individual (Asmaa Godaa) was from Egypt and was here to learn about how the Center builds democracy and works within and outside government institutions to achieve democratic reforms. She was also interested in how youth are integral to building democracy, and how some of the Center's methods might be implemented in Egypt.

During her time with the Center, Asmaa visited with several leaders of the Muslim community in DuPage County as well as a public official on the DuPage County Board and an Elmhurst alderman. She also presented to three high schools about the Arab Spring, and how her organization and her country are working to build democracy. Prior to Asmaa's visit, community lawyer Maryam Judar worked with social study teachers to help them prepare their students. Student response was outstanding as most students were entirely unaware of the

human rights issues that are directly impacted by democracy and the volatile nature of a democratic revolution.

Civic Education Forums

Working with teachers, building a coalition focused on improving civic education, and sponsoring dynamic speakers are all integral to the Center's civic education program. Below is a list of the various forums the Center participated in with respect to our youth civic education program:

High Schools:

Waubonsie Valley High School (Guest Speaker)
Downers Grove South (Guest Speaker)
York Community High School (Constitution Week & Asmaa's Arab Spring Presentation)
Downers Grove North High School (Constitution Week)
Nequa Valley High School (Constitution Week)
Matea Valley High School (Voter Registration)
Bartlett High School (Asmaa's Arab Spring Presentation)

Civic Education Organizations Sponsoring High School Programs

Capitol Forum Planning/Illinois Humanities Council (Guest Speaker)
Constitutional Rights Foundation (Guest Speaker)

Colleges/Universities:

Benedictine University (Civic Education Program Planning)
Northeastern Illinois University (Guest Speaker)
Northwestern University Medill Watchdog Intern Meeting (Guest Speaker)
Columbia College School of Journalism NATO Presentation (Guest Speaker)
Loyola Law School NAACP Voting Disenfranchisement Panel NAACP (Guest Speaker)
DePaul Law School Panel on Voting Disenfranchisement (Guest Speaker)
Westwood College (Guest Speaker)

Professional Development Programs:

Professional Development Seminars for Teachers on Election Lesson Plans (Hosted Forum)
DuPage County Institute Day Social Studies Professional Development (Hosted Forum)

Civic Education Policy Advocacy and Collaboration

Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement Participatory Convening on Draft Study
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition Policy Advocacy Workgroup (Member)

Hands-on Civic Education Lesson Plans

The Center has an impressive library of hands-on lesson plans that build the capacity of teachers to impart civic knowledge. Most of the lesson plans were first developed in 2005. All of the lesson plans were comprehensively reviewed and updated in 2012.

Student Internship Program

The Center 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. In 2012 the Center hosted interns and volunteers from the following institutions:

- Case Western Reserve University School of Law
- DePaul University College of Law
- Harvard Law School
- New York University
- Northeastern University
- Proviso Math and Science Academy (High School)
- University of Idaho College of Law
- University of Iowa College of Law
- York High School

Below are the projects our summer legal and college interns worked on under the supervision of a community lawyer:

Michael Cannell, DePaul University College of Law, 1L

- **Elections, Chicago and the Collar Counties:** Conducted a survey of election authorities from Chicago, DuPage County, Lake County, McHenry County, and Will County regarding election administration procedures and recent voting data.
- **Township Meetings:** Legal research regarding township electors' ability to petition for a special annual township meeting.
- **Free Speech Rights:** Legal research and supervised client counseling on the right to circulate petitions in front of government buildings.
- **Legislative Analysis** of Senate Bill 3722, an omnibus election bill.
- **Robert's Rules of Order:** Reached procedural rules and supervised client counseling regarding the duties of an acting president.

Ryan Hatten, Harvard Law School, 1L

- **Economic Development Corporations:** Researched the activities and disclosure requirements of economic development corporations, public-private partnership economic development corporations, and economic development commissions.
- **Fiscal Sponsorship:** Researched fiscal sponsorship guidelines for a non 501(c)(3) entity.
- **First Amendment Forum Law and Facebook:** Researched law related to public forums created by a government sponsored Facebook page.
- **TIF Districting:** Reviewed law related to blight; conducted legislative research on several reform bills; assessed properties within Elmhurst's fourth proposed commercial district to determine percentage of property tax challenges; assessed percentage of Elmhurst's commercial property within proposed districts; and prepared memo on rights and responsibilities of the Joint Review Board.

- **Freedom of Information Act, Illinois:** Drafted and submitted a FOIA request to the City of Elmhurst regarding TIF information.

Christina Pao, Case Western Reserve University School of Law, 1L

- **Civic Education:** Researched and compiled civic education standards on a state by state basis for all 50 states at the high school and middle school level.
- **Challenging a Board's Violation of Its Own Standards:** Analyzed an ethics code violation, an Open Meetings Act violation, and taxpayer standing to bring lawsuits.
- **Home Rule Government's Ability to Alter State Laws through Implementation:** Researched provisions of an Illinois gambling statute to determine home rule municipality capacity to selectively apply exemptions laid out by the state
- **Constitutionality of Recording Communications Taking Place in Public:** Researched and analyzed the strict eavesdropping statutes in Illinois and how they apply to citizens recording citizens versus citizens recording police and other law enforcement officers, and looked at the case law in the cases that have challenged these laws thus far.
- **Dissolving a Non-Profit:** Researched the rules and guidelines for dissolving a 501 (c) (3) public charity according to Illinois and IRS law.

Elizabeth Polking, University of Iowa College of Law, 1L

- **Binding Referendum:** Researched whether a binding citizen initiated referendum for home rule municipality regarding prohibition of dual office is a change in terms/ manner of election; researched the timing effect of a municipality's binding referendum on a voter initiative referendum on the same subject matter, given the time restrictions in submission; drafted language and conveyed findings under supervision of community lawyer.
- **Procurement Policy Narrative and Executive Summary:** Drafted and filed FOIA requests to DuPage County and Will County Forest Preserve District's for copy of purchasing policies; conducted comparative analysis of Model Procurement Code, DuPage County Procurement Policy, DuPage Forest Preserve's Procurement Policy, and the Will County Procurement Policy; and drafted a memo on the differences between a newly revised Chicago ordinance regarding closed sealed bidding/proposals and the Model Procurement Code
- **Forest Preserve Issues:** Drafted a memo on the question of whether it is possible to dissolve a public entity by binding referendum; filed a FOIA request for documents regarding the DuPage Forest Preserve's procurement policies, as part of an investigation into the absence of safeguards that may have led to conflicts of interest in the hiring of contractors; made a FOIA request for Forest Preserve police reports based on a community activist who has been filing FOIA requests with the DuPage Forest Preserve and in close proximity to those filings observed Forest Preserve police walking the boundaries of her property with Forest Preserve officials.

Sarah Wyatt, University of Idaho College of Law, 2L

- **Residential Annexation:** Conducted research regarding the ways in which a group of unincorporated property owners may protest municipal pre-annexation agreements and conveyed information under supervision of a community lawyer.

- **Commercial Annexation and Land Use:** Analyzed municipal emails for communications regarding commercial development; conducted research regarding whether a municipality may develop a zoning plan for property that it does not yet own; helped a group of residents develop a plan to organize and effectively object to a planned development; and attended Village Council meetings regarding the village's response to neighbor objections.
- **Elections, DuPage & Cook Counties:** Analyzed objections to candidate petitions and their corresponding electoral board rulings; and drafted a report identifying issues related to the decentralized system of elections.
- **First Amendment:** Researched regarding First Amendment issues associated to public body refusing to sell advertising space in the municipal newsletter to a resident and drafted FOIA requests.

Claire Zajdel, New York University, Freshman

- **Citizen Guide to the Property Assessment Appeal Process:** Researched the DuPage County property assessment appeal process; interviewed DuPage County Board of Review members; and wrote completed guide aimed at helping property tax owners file an appeal while highlighting antidemocratic processes.
- **School District Redistricting Lesson Plan:** Investigated the many issues that affect how school districts redistrict and wrote a lesson plan.
- **Civic Education Fair Display:** Created a visual display to translate to students the Center's civic education initiatives. The display is used at civic education fairs and open houses to publicize the Center's education engagement.
- **Student Press Law:** Revised and finalized lesson plan on the rights of student journalists. Researched relevant cases issues surrounding student journalists.
- **Local Elections Research:** Researched regulations on how local elections are conducted; tallied uses of provisional ballots in local elections.

Journalism Training

In addition to open government trainings, the summer of 2012 proved to be bedrock of civic engagement. When the City of Chicago hosted the NATO Summit in May, collapsing economies worldwide and the Occupy movement prompted protestors from around the globe to descend on President Obama's hometown of Chicago to have their voices heard. Where normally the Center would have been educating protestors to know their First Amendment rights, this time we received several calls from media outlets asking our community lawyers to inform journalists about their First Amendment rights as members of the media covering the NATO Summit.

- Kent Law School Journalist Open Government Training (Guest Speaker)
- Chicago Headline Club NATO Summit, Reporters' First Amendment Training (Guest Speaker)
- Columbia College NATO Journalism Summit (Guest Speaker)

Government Accountability and the Development of Systemic Democratic Protocols

The Center 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 that need to either be removed or reformed. Below are examples is a sample of the government accountability issues addressed by the Center in 2012:

Property Tax Appeal: Demystification of the Property Tax Appeal Process and Identification of Systemic Barriers

Property tax assessments are a complex process by which a township assessor uses an undefined, undisclosed formula to determine the value of commercial and residential property. Property tax assessments are a significant event for property owners because property valuation determines the share of taxes to be paid by each owner. Illinois does allow for property tax assessments to be contested by any property owner but it can be a complex and intimidating process due to the anti-democratic barriers inherent in the appeal process. Issues abound ranging from the township not being required to share the specific comparable properties from which they derive their assessments to flimsy recusal standards for Board members. The Center produced a comprehensive citizen guide to property assessment and appeals in DuPage County that outlines the process and highlights the anti-democratic barriers that must be reformed both through internal procedures and state law. The *Citizen Advocacy's Center's Guide to Property Assessments and Appeals for Residential Properties in DuPage County* can be found on our website www.citizenadvocacycenter.org

DuPage Forest Preserve Procurement Policy

The DuPage County Forest Preserve is one of only two independent forest preserves in the State of Illinois. Initially under the umbrella of DuPage County, the Forest Preserve separated from the County in the early 1990s, under the theory that it was unlikely that one entity could fulfill two conflicting purposes: the preservation of open space and the promotion of economic development. In the last five years the DuPage County Forest Preserve has been the subject of harsh criticism related to operational issues, procurement, ethics, and general government accountability. The Center facilitated a comprehensive comparative analysis of the DuPage County Forest Preserve's Procurement and Ethics ordinance, using as a basis the recently revised DuPage County Procurement and Ethics Code, the American Bar Association's Model Procurement Ordinance, and the Will County Forest Preserve Procurement Code. Our assessment indicated that the Forest Preserve's Procurement Code is severely outdated and needs revisions to its bidding procedures, as well as to prohibit stringing and cost plus contracts.

Tax Increment Financing

The City of Elmhurst created its fourth tax increment financing district in 2012. The Center closely monitored the process and identified numerous deficiencies. Our community lawyers and volunteers held the City accountable for failure to answer simple questions related to justification of the budget, the inclusion of specific parcels of property, and the expedited timing of the process. We engaged the press by educating them about the purpose and goals of a tax increment financing district, wrote letters to the editor, [posted information on our website](#), and hung a large poster in our storefront window airing our concerns. Positive results of the Center's efforts include working with affected taxing bodies of the Elmhurst School Board and Park Board, stimulating public dialogue on tax increment financing districts, and helping dissuade the City of Elmhurst from implementing two additional tax increment financing districts.

Electoral Board Decisions FOIA and Analysis

Funded by a grant from The Joyce Foundation, the Center implemented a project examining the impact of Illinois' decentralized process for administering elections. Objections to petitions for nomination or petitions for referendum are heard by ad hoc public bodies called Electoral Boards, quasi-judicial entities whose decisions are subject to judicial review. At the municipal level the electoral board includes three members: (1) the head of the board or council, whether Chair or President, (2) the clerk of the village or city, and (3) the longest sitting member on the board or council. The Center requested the previous 20 years of electoral board decisions from every municipality in DuPage County and suburban Cook County. We also requested decisions at the County level from the DuPage County Election Commission which has an electoral board that hears objection to candidates for county elected offices.

The Center's preliminary analysis lead to several conclusions: (1) public bodies are systematically destroying electoral decisions and therefore most local electoral boards fail to have historical documentation of previous decisions; (2) the decentralized nature of the State Board of Elections results in local electoral boards ruling inconsistently as to what objections result in individuals and questions being removed from the ballot, and is exacerbated by shallow recusal standards that put into question the fairness of the process; and (3) barriers to the ballot based on technical errors that do not evidence fraud or implicate the integrity of the election process could be easily remedied to allow access to the ballot. The Center will be completing this project in 2013. Watch for our results!

Litigation and Issue Advocacy

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

The Goals of Democracy and Those of Economic Development

As more public bodies turn to private/public partnerships to stimulate economic development, the Center has observed that public bodies are restricting public access to the democratic process. Additionally, due to Illinois' definition of "public body," entities that are funded by government and work on behalf of government are exempt from state open government laws if they are incorporated as non-profit entities. Center community lawyers have been following this issue closely. In 2012 we wrote a [comprehensive law review article](#) titled "The Goals of Democracy and Those of Economic Development: Bridging the Two While Valuing Public Participation" that was published in the May issue of *DCBA Brief*, the Journal of the DuPage County Bar Association. The article provides a comparative analysis of the definition of entities covered in public record request acts among the 50 states, and reports on how other states evaluate whether non-governmental entities which engage in traditional governmental activity are subject to open government statutes. The article has been praised by practitioners and state government officials as a highly informative resource in examining Illinois' own definition of public body. The article is posted on the Citizen Advocacy Center website at www.citizenadvocacycenter.org

Building the Illinois Civic Coalition

For several years the Center 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 student skills in the realm of civics. It provides a medley of professional development resources for educators and drives civic education policy reforms. Specifically, the involvement of the Center has been to spearhead the public policy workgroup to institutionalize civic education. Public policy advocacy is a new area for the ICMC and the Center is proud to assist ICMC in convening and building strong relationships to advocate for the reinstitution of civic education.

Transparency Conference

The Center, McCormick Foundation, and the Better Government Association jointly convened a meeting with more than 20 advocacy groups, academia, social and traditional media, and civic groups to identify common areas of interest which include access to government records, government meeting, procurement policies, campaign finance, budgeting and more. The coalition has created four workgroups: State open government; State campaign finance/ethics reform; City of Chicago open government and privatization; and general sharing.

Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor

Illinois' Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) is an administrative agency that processes Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Act complaints filed by members of the public and the press. Center community lawyers assisted several individuals, including many of those referenced throughout this report, in filing successful complaints for review. The Center has assisted individuals with complaints that include violation of public notice, improper exemption for public records, and categorization of recurrent requestors.

Leadership and Staff

2012 Board of Directors:

President: Theresa Amato, Esq.
Vice-President: Steve De La Rosa
Secretary: Gordon Goodman
Treasurer: Brian Conlon

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Cheryl Ealey David Pezza, Esq. MaryLynn Zajdel

2012 Staff:

Ms. Carla Eisenberg, Office Manager
Ms. Maryam Judar, Esq., Community Lawyer
Ms. Terry Pastika, Esq., Executive Director/Community Lawyer

Support, Contributions and Donations

The Citizen Advocacy Center is funded 100% by private foundation grants and individual donations. To ensure our independence, we do not accept money from corporations, government entities or public officials. Generous foundation support was provided by:

Crossroads Fund (General Operations)
The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation (General Operations)
The Joyce Foundation (Election/Redistricting Reform)
The McCormick Foundation (Civic Education/Transparency Coalition)
The Shafeek Nader Trust for the Community Interest (General Operations)

Additional Revenues were received from:

Individual donations
The Public Interest Law Initiative for a summer intern scholarship

Tax compliance services are donated by:

Maggie Biel, CPA and the accounting firm of Business & Professional Consultants, Ltd.

While the Center has dozens of volunteers, we recognize the following individuals for their outstanding dedication and substantial assistance to the Center in 2012:

Ala Alkhatib
Pat Akita
Gloria Backman
Tamara Brenner

Mark Daniel, Esq.
Don Dionesotes
Rashida Issa
David Jackson

Joe Jovanovich
Terence Leen
Gerry Miller

Thank you to our 2012 Interns:

Michael Cannell
Evan Carroll
Brandi Green
Ryan Hatten

Ewelina Krupa
Joel Manjankal
Christie Pao
Elizabeth Polking

Sarah Wyatt
Claire Zajdel

The Center 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.

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

For further information about the Center, please contact us at:

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Website: citizenadvocacycenter.org
Facebook: http://bit.ly/CAC_on_Facebook

Citizen Advocacy Center in the News

Date	Title	Source	Subject
7/27/2012	Niles Term Limit Referendum Petitions Filed	Journal & Topics Reporter	Ballot Referendum
7/30/2012	1000 Niles Voters Call For Term Limits	Niles-Morton Grove Patch	Ballot Referendum
8/14/2012	Island Lake referendum effort could be derailed by fraud allegations	Daily Herald	Ballot Referendum
8/15/2012	LTE Wauconda Township may get vote on benefits	Daily Herald	Ballot Referendum
8/16/2012	Niles resident's term-limit petition rejected	Niles Herald Spectator (Chicago Sun Times)	Ballot Referendum
8/18/2012	Wauconda Township officials don't get it	Daily Herald	Ballot Referendum
8/15/2012	Elmhurst panel to discuss expanding role of money and corporations in politics	mysuburbanlife.com Elmhurst Press	CAC Forum
9/6/2012	Non-Partisan Group offers Forum on Campaign Finance Laws	WDCB Public Radio from College of DuPage	CAC Forum
10/1/2012	Halloween Came Early at Forum on Illinois Corruption	Huffington Post Chicago www.huffingtonpost.com	CAC Forum
10/2/2012	Corruption Author Calls for Greater Suburban Oversight	Elmhurst Patch	CAC Forum
5/28/2012	Ill. Reformers want time to fix Super PAC limits	WJCB	Campaign Finance Reform
3/19/2012	LTE Civic education vital for our youth	Daily Herald	Civic Education
9/26/2012	Voter Registration Deadline Approaching	WDCB Public Radio from College of DuPage	Civic Participation
9/16/2012	Constitution Week at York, Waubonsie, and Downers Grove North High Schools	Illinois Family Institute Website	Constitution Week
9/17/2012	Constitution Week Speaker	American Humanist Society Facebook page	Constitution Week
9/17/2012	The Law That Governs Government Day	Christian Gunslinger 3 blog www.christiangunslinger2.blogspot.com	Constitution Week
9/17/2012	Action Alert Tell Illinois schools to stand by Jessica Ahlquist	Freedom From Religion Foundation website ffrf.org	Constitution Week
9/17/2012	Illinois Family Institute Lashes Out Against Jessica Ahlquist for speaking About Her Case in Local High Schools	Friendly Atheist blog www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist	Constitution Week
9/17/2012	Teen Atheist, Friendly Atheist, and Accuracy	Illinois Family Institute Website	Constitution Week
9/18/2012	Jessica Ahlquist: More Controversy in Illinois	Caution Church Ahead blog www.cautionchurchahead.com	Constitution Week
9/18/2012	Ahlquist Speaking Appearance Sparks Controversy in IL	Cranston Patch	Constitution Week
9/18/2012	Controversy Over Atheist Speaker at York Reaches Wide Audience	Elmhurst Patch	Constitution Week
9/18/2012	York Government Students learn About a First Amendment Battle From One of Their	Elmhurst Patch	Constitution Week

	Own		
9/18/2012	First Amendment advocate speaks at York High School today despite objections from some parents	Elmhurst Press	Constitution Week
9/18/2012	Atheists Beat the Illinois Family Institute At Their Own Game	Friendly Atheist blog www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist	Constitution Week
9/18/2012	Do They Never Learn? Elmhurst, Meet Cranston	The Digital Cuttlefish blog freethoughtblogs.com/cuttlefish	Constitution Week
9/18/2012	Jessica Ahlquist in IL	The Freedom of Nonbelief blog freedomofnonbelief.blogspot.com	Constitution Week
9/19/2012	Comment and Reprint of Elmhurst Press Article "First Amendment advocate speaks at York High School today despite objections from some parents"	Center for Inquiry On Campus Facebook page www.facebook.com/cfioncampus	Constitution Week
9/19/2012	Comment and Reprint of Elmhurst Press Article "First Amendment advocate speaks at York High School today despite objections from some parents"	The Chicago Freethought Project blog chicagofreethought.webs.com/apps/blog	Constitution Week
9/22/2012	Wake Up Parents: It's About the Kids	Waking America Up Blog walkingamericaup.wordpress.com	Constitution Week
9/30/2012	Jerry Moore: Preserving Constitution takes courage and truth	Elmhurst Press and 54 other mysuburbanlife.com local papers	Constitution Week
10/5/2012	Columnist misrepresented articles on teen atheist LTE from Illinois Family Institute regarding Jerry Moore article of 9/30/2012	Elmhurst Press	Constitution Week
Sept. 2012	Constitution Day 2012	York High School Website	Constitution Week
5/1/2012	The Goals of Democracy and Those of Economic Development: Bridging the Two While Valuing Public Participation	DCBA Brief - Article by Maryam Judar and Terry Pastika	Economic Development
9/27/2012	Viewpoint: Love the food, hate the parking	Elmhurst Independent	Editorial
10/13/2012	Ethics allegations fly in Pankau-Cullerton race	Daily Herald	Ethics
11/14/2012	Pension loophole could mean \$500,000 more for ex-Grayslake cop	Daily Herald	Ethics
10/31/2012	Election 2012: Free and Fair	DePaul College of Law Sponsored by the Journal for Social Justice and the Center for Public Interest Law	Event
9/27/2012	Curious About Candidacy?	Co-Sponsored by The McCormick Foundation, The Winfield Register and CAC	Event
5/18/2012	Experts say group arrests unlikely	Chicago Daily Law Bulletin	First Amendment
1/6/2012	City leaders share their 2012 goals for the city	Elmhurst Press	Government Monitoring
1/16/2012	Assessors push crackdown on abuse of homestead exemption (Source)	Chicago Tribune	Government Monitoring
1/16/2012	Elmhurst mayor won't seek homestead	Chicago Tribune	Government

	exemption tax break on rental property		Monitoring
7/18/2012	Westmont home rule referendum may come down to voter trust, expert says	mysuburbanlife.com Westmont Progress	Home Rule
11/14/2012	Census appeal could negate vote to repeal home rule in Westmont, attorneys say	Suburban Life	Home Rule
10/4/2012	LTE CAC objects to "Anyone else offended?" column	Elmhurst Independent	Letter to the Editor
1/21/2012	Audit led to clerk's dismissal	saukvalley.com	Media Inquiry
2/23/2012	DuPage NAACP gala honors those who make a difference	Daily Herald	Media Inquiry
2/29/2012	Want a say about township government? Now's the time	Daily Herald	Media Inquiry
3/7/2012	Plan would ensure mayors could serve on county board	Daily Herald	Media Inquiry
3/12/2012	Candidates, state's attorney differ on double duty for elected officials	Trib Local Elmhurst	Media Inquiry
4/20/2012	Palatine officials say gambling ban still in place	Daily Herald	Media Inquiry
6/7/2012	City Council bans tanning beds for minors	Chicago Tribune	Media Inquiry
7/20/2012	District 113A in damage control after closed documents leaked online	mysuburbanlife.com Lemont Reporter/Met	Media Inquiry
8/29/2012	Officials in 31 suburban townships get automatic raises	Daily Herald	Media Inquiry
10/11/2012	City of Chicago Budget	WBBM CBS Newsradio	Media Inquiry
3/8/2012	Open Government Training for Journalists and Citizen-Journalists	McCormick Media Matters	Open Government
3/17/2012	Let the sunshine in: 6 ways government can do better with public records, access	saukvalley.com	Open Government
3/28/2012	LTE Don't roll back FOIA reform	State-Register Journal	Open Government
4/2/2012	Missed our FOIA training? Here's a recap	headlineclub.org	Open Government
4/4/2012	Pension board delays iPad purchases after reader's tip	Daily Herald	Open Government
4/16/2012	Some aldermen plan to raise concerns as hearing set out on mayor's trust plan	Chicago Tribune	Open Government
4/23/2012	Group: Citizens can record open public meetings	saukvalley.com	Open Government
5/4/2012	LTE Lack of Transparency	Chicago Tribune	Open Government
6/7/2012	Intern LTE: Citizen input trumps budget concerns	Daily Herald	Open Government
6/17/2012	Study still shows massive FOIA noncompliance	Northwest Herald	Open Government
11/27/2012	LTE Higher Expectations for Elmhurst City Council	Elmhurst Patch	Open Government
11/29/2012	Closed meeting questioned	saukvalley.com	Open Government
12/5/2012	Will public works decisions be made in	Chicago Tribune	Open Government

	private?		
Spring 2012	Big Brother Has Big Shoulders: Defining Privacy in the Face of E-Discovery Expansion and FOIA Reform	Public Interest law Reporter Loyola University Chicago School of Law	Open Government
11/23/2012	Alderman not always agreed with Mayor, but cite his passion	Elmhurst Independent	Open Government
9/13/2012	Citizen Advocacy Center welcomes high school student and First Amendment advocate Jessica Ahlquist for the constitution signing's 225th anniversary	Elmhurst Press	Press Release
9/14/2012	Celebrate Constitution Week with CAC Forum	Elmhurst Patch	Press Release
9/19/2012	Former Chicago alderman looks at suburban corruption	Daily Herald	Press Release
9/27/2012	College, Citizen Advocacy Center offers 'Political Corruption In The Suburbs'	Elmhurst Independent	Press Release
9/18/2012	Political Corruption in the Suburbs	Elmhurst College Website	Press Release
7/25/2012	LTE Lombard remap was self-serving	Daily Herald	Redistricting
7/5/2012	LTE Elmhurst Residents Should be Outraged at the City's Handling of TIF 4	Elmhurst Patch	TIF
7/12/2012	LTE Residents should be outraged at City's TIF plans, CAC exec says	Elmhurst Independent	TIF
7/12/2012	Joint Board okays new TIF, though some had asked for delay	Elmhurst Independent	TIF
8/7/2012	Elmhurst's Newest TIF Gets An Unfriendly Welcome at Monday Public Hearing	Elmhurst Patch	TIF
8/13/2012	Citizens speak out against N York Tax District	Elmhurst Independent	TIF
8/27/2012	Letter: TIF 4 is Justification for a Boondoggle and has Become Corrupt Political Process	Elmhurst Patch	TIF
8/30/2012	Leader: Misunderstandings part of school revenue negotiations Pastika says Morley not respectful; 'math is fuzzy'	Elmhurst Independent	TIF
4/27/2011	Tollway tries to stay honest on new projects	Daily Herald	Tollway
5/7/2012	Illinois looks to convert freeways to tollways	Daily Herald	Tollway
10/3/2012	Whistle-blower proposal's details draw fire	Chicago Tribune	Whistleblower