

CAC Annual Report 2015

The Citizen Advocacy Center (CAC) is an award-winning, non-profit, non-partisan, free community legal organization with a mission of building democracy for the 21st century by strengthening the public's capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance.

A community lawyer protects the public's assets and promotes meaningful participation in the democratic process through traditional and non-traditional lawyering strategies that include community organizing, public policy research, coalition building, legal advocacy, civic education, and litigation. CAC is a grassroots, community-based organization whose formula for civic engagement results in systemic changes at local and state levels. Efforts that start at the local level often result in statewide initiatives that strengthen tools that support public participation or dismantle anti-democratic barriers that are rooted in state law.

For over 20 years CAC has evolved into a well-established and respected public interest law office that serves community interests with an incomparable and results-oriented model.

Our three major initiatives in 2015 were:

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

Public Education and Capacity Building

CAC is 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. CAC community lawyers address issues of public concern raised by community members and create active and vibrant democratic communities. Regardless of the subject matter or the viewpoint of those making the inquiry, CAC builds the capacity of concerned citizens to use civic tools and the law, organize community members, and build coalitions to affect systemic change.

Community Lawyering and Grassroots Assistance:

CAC provides extensive community lawyering and technical assistance at the grassroots level in DuPage County, the Chicagoland collar counties, and suburban Cook County. CAC also provides technical assistance throughout Illinois, such as answering basic questions on various laws related to the democratic process.

Sample of counties served:

● DuPage	● Cook	● Kane	● Grundy
● LaSalle	● Will	● Lake	● Sangamon
● Whiteside	● Winnebago	● McHenry	● DeKalb

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

Public Inquiries:

- Can a member of the public be forcibly removed from a meeting of a public body based on the content of her public comment?
- Can a school board prohibit a parent group from meeting on school premises because they lack 501(c)(3) status?
- Does the Open Meetings Act (OMA) apply to student groups at a state college or university?
- Does the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) apply to college and university campus police, especially where they have jurisdiction to ticket and enforce the law outside the campus boundaries?

- Does a board member of a public body have to use FOIA to access public records of their school district?
- At what point does a government body waive its right to withhold public records based on the “preliminary exemption” exemption?
- Can a municipality repeal “home rule?” What can citizens do to repeal “home rule”?
- Can an elected official endorse a candidate running for public office?
- What are common objections to nominations for candidacy or to citizen-initiated submissions of questions for referendum?
- Can a municipality require me to apply for a permit if I canvas my neighborhood to educate people on political issues?

Sample of Communities Served:

• Elmhurst	• Hinsdale	• Villa Park
• Glendale Heights	• Lisle	• Campton Hills
• Winfield	• Joliet	• Wheatland Township
• Bensenville	• Milton Township	• Wheaton
• Plainfield	• DeKalb	• Glen Ellyn
• Maywood	• Downers Grove	• Antioch
• Bloomington	• Urbana	• Schiller Park
• Elburn	• Plainfield	• Chicago

Sample of Community Forums:

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

- Glendale Public Library Bilingual Education Forum (Guest Speaker)
- FOIA Fest 2015 sponsored by the Chicago Headline Club for journalists (Panelist)
- An Evening with the Authors of Corrupt Illinois with co-authors Dick Simpson and Thomas Gradel (Co-sponsor with Elmhurst College)

- “Lost in the Fine Print: Examining the Impact of Forced Arbitration Screening & Discussion” at Loyola University School of Law (Co-sponsor with Alliance for Justice, Citizen Works, Illinois Public Interest Research Group, Institute for Consumer Antitrust Studies at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, National Association of Consumer Advocates and National Employment Lawyers Association/Illinois)
- “Standing Up to Special Interests” Campaign Finance Forum (Panelist)
- “Summit for Action and Civic Reform” ICPR Forum (Panelist)
- “How ‘Open’ Are Open Meetings Laws?” Lorman Continuing Legal Education Seminar (Webinar Presenter)
- 5th Annual DuPage NAACP Career Fair (Booth) (5th year of CAC participation)
- “Class Matters” workshop by Class Action and Crossroads Fund (Participant)
- “Lost in the Fine Print” Screening at Naperville Unitarian Universalist Church (Guest Speaker)
- U.S Department of State Sponsored Delegation from Korea (Host Speaker)

Building Democracy: Examples of Community Lawyering Assistance

CAC routinely assists community groups address self-identified issues of public concern. As part of our community lawyering assistance, CAC identifies community leaders and helps them build their skills so they may effectively engage additional community members in specific campaigns as well as build overall civic engagement. Citizen Initiative Awardees are exemplary of this intense CAC activity.

Citizen Initiative Awards

Every year CAC honors those who organize within their community to make a difference. They are average citizens who identified systemic issues of concern and rather than assuming that others will take on the issue, chose to get involved and increase democratic participation in their community.

The following are examples of prominent community organizing efforts and demonstrate leaders engaged in their communities or community groups dedicated to proposing ideas for changing conditions, standards, and expectations in their communities.

One Voice Grows to Many: Helping Citizens of Villa Park Understand Zoning

CAC was contacted by concerned citizens regarding issues such as understanding permissible zoning uses, how to read zoning documents, zoning ordinances, and the right to speak at zoning hearings. A resident of Villa Park phoned CAC when she began to notice inconsistencies between what she heard about laws governing

zoning of medical marijuana dispensaries and the practice at the village regarding application approval. The specific question of concern was application compliance with the zoning code with respect to permissible locations and adherence to proper procedure. CAC reviewed relevant ordinances and taught the resident how to wade through multiple zoning applications, learn how to read the village's zoning code, acquaint herself with the nuts and bolts of the zoning relief application process, learn how to use public databases, give public comment, petition her elected officials with questions and concerns, and advocate her stance on the application. CAC provided encouragement and support to bolster her confidence to use her voice. The individual felt empowered to testify at a zoning public hearing where she gave public comment questioning what she flagged as inaccuracies between the proposed application and the village's zoning code on issues such as proximity of the proposed business to a daycare facility and property ownership. Soon after the public hearing, the petitioner withdrew the application.

A new application was re-submitted for a different location under a special use permit to comply with state law. Again, the citizen posed questions at the zoning board and raised new concerns about information presented in the zoning application. The application was once again withdrawn after the public hearing. When a third application was filed, this time for a conditional use permit, the number of community voices speaking out grew from one person to many, with the primary issue being residents concerned about how government decisions were being made and their lack of faith in the government process. In a 3-3 vote, the zoning application for the medical marijuana dispensary failed, the deciding vote being cast by the President.

The concerned resident is also advocating for the creation of an Art Center in Villa Park. She and other activists started a nonprofit entity to promote the arts in Villa Park and have lobbied their local government to convert a former Post Office to the Arts Center and used the Illinois and Federal Freedom of Information Acts to obtain documents to try to pursue the Arts Center. The Art Center opened in 2016.

Building the Confidence of Citizenry to Question Authority in Glendale Heights

As a direct outgrowth of CAC's partnership with Immigrant Solidarity DuPage and our work on public participation and student rights related to bilingual education, a parent in Glendale Heights contacted CAC about her involvement with the Marquardt School District's Parent Advisory Board. The Parent Advisory Board (PAB) is an entity created to represent the interests of minority parents in the district, including transitional bilingual education, and is subject to Illinois' sunshine laws. The resident was appointed to the PAB due to being an active parent volunteer at the school, and she contacted CAC for technical assistance to understand the process for waiver/modification relating to mandated transitional bilingual education at public schools, whether children in her school district were receiving the bilingual education they were entitled to, and how to maximize PAB participation in school district decisions. Additionally, she raised concerns about

transparency and accountability regarding the PAB itself, specifically noting the barriers that prevented PAB members from placing items on the meeting agendas and members of the PAB having the ability to meaningfully assess and advise the district on transitional bilingual education.

CAC provided training in how to use the FOIA and the protections provided by the OMA. Additionally, CAC assisted her with making FOIA requests. After working with CAC, she informed other parents of their rights related to government meetings such as the PAB. Many parents in the community were not aware that they had a right to speak at meetings of public bodies and access government records, or of how to get involved. Further, the parent demonstrated leadership skills by taking the initiative, in conjunction with CAC and Immigrant Solidarity DuPage, to organize a forum to inform parents about their children's educational right to bilingual education and how to advocate for bilingual education.

Improving Access to Justice in Oak Park

An Oak Park resident contacted CAC for assistance in influencing policy changes affecting minority government contractors at the state level. The resident was concerned about equality for disadvantaged businesses in the construction and professional service sectors of Illinois, and a problem with the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) payment system of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). Specifically, second-tier subcontractors were not being paid through state contracts. This is a problem because there is no process for second-tier subcontractors to seek recovery should the general contractor fail to pay the subcontractor. The concerned citizen conducted outreach to minority, women's, general contractor groups, community organizations, and other officials to speak out before IDOT on the effects of discrimination and advocate for establishing a level playing field for DBE participants. Identifying the need for policy reform at the state level, CAC provided assistance in drafting legislation needed to institute change. He successfully lobbied a state representative to sponsor a "Subcontractor Equality Bill" so that subcontractors would be included and receive payments directly. A bill based on his policy suggestions was introduced in the spring 2015 General Assembly Legislative Session. The bill successfully passed in 2016.

Honoring Long Term Civic Engagement - Bensenville

CAC also honored Bensenville resident Paul DeMichele for his long-term civic engagement and continued efforts in monitoring many local government entities throughout DuPage County. During his early years of being civically engaged, Mr. DeMichele collected 6,600 signatures in two weeks to place a question for referendum on the ballot to save a junior high school that was on the chopping block. The community showed overwhelming support to save the school, and the school still stands this day. He has been a trustee the Elmhurst District 205 School Board, Addison Township, and Bensenville Fire Protection District, as well as a

monitor of activities within the DuPage County Board, DuPage County Forest Preserve, and Bensenville Village Hall.

Mr. DeMichele has also been actively engaged in organizing Red Ribbon Breakfasts in Elmhurst to promote the need for drug free community, a director within the Elmhurst Chamber of Commerce, and a director of the nonprofit Life Education Center that focuses on substance abuse prevention training for K-8 students. Mr. DeMichele also rallies other citizens to various causes through using community organizing tools and reaches out to individuals to invite them to be more civically engaged. One of his passions is financial accountability of the entities he monitors. Mr. DeMichele has extensively used FOIA to determine how public dollars are spent and has questioned public expenditures when he has identified issues of concern. He regularly consults CAC when he has unanswered questions or seeks to better understand the law. Over these years, CAC has been a constant source of support for Mr. DeMichele's civic activities.

Other Community Lawyering Assistance Examples

Fairness for LGBT Youth in Elmhurst

CAC was contacted by Elmhurst residents who were alarmed when the Superintendent of York Community High School pulled morning announcements submitted by the extracurricular group AS.IS. AS.IS stands for "Accepting Sexual Orientation in School." The 15 year-old organization is a gay-straight alliance in which students and faculty can discuss ways of respecting differences in school. The primary goals of AS.IS are to (1) reduce homophobic behavior, (2) combat bigotry, and (3) build tolerance and respect among the York Community. AS.IS received authorization for 11 announcements during LGBT History Month. After 6 of its announcements were read, the Superintendent suspended further announcement. Here are two examples of the announcements before the rest were pulled:

- Dear York, Happy LGBT History Month! Did you know that Oscar Wilde caused a lot of controversy by being open with his sexuality? It was such a big deal that he destroyed his career by being in a relationship with Alfred Bruce Douglas. Keep him in mind whenever you read *The Importance of Being Earnest* or *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Love, AS.IS.
- Happy LGBT History Month! Did you know that the word "drag" is an acronym? It's a stage direction coined by Shakespeare and his contemporaries that stands for "dressed resembling a girl." Love, AS.IS.

CAC assisted an Elmhurst resident with making a FOIA request to learn why AS IS announcements were suspended and what how the school implemented its policy for authorizing morning announcements. The resident was intimidated by the FOIA process and needed guidance to make the nuanced arguments to defeat the school's use of exemptions to withhold the emails such as invoking of the "preliminary

drafts” exception arguing that the email exchanges were pre-decisional to formulating a policy, and the exemption for privacy in that members of the public complained about the morning announcements.

After students and teachers attended District 205 School Board meetings to protest the suspension of the AS IS announcements, the high school adopted a new policy that provides for prior approval of all announcement content based on a mix of factors, some of which are discretionary. CAC continues to work with concerned parents and youth to ensure that the school applies the policies in a uniform manner and without undue reference to the content of the speech.

Confronting Civic Backlash in Hinsdale School District 86

CAC was contacted by concerned citizens in Hinsdale and Darien who were alarmed when a board member utilized the school’s grievance policy to file a complaint against a community member who gave a public comment that included critiques of budgeting and finance.

Members of the community contacted CAC fearing a ripple effect of intimidation on the public’s confidence to speak out. CAC gave public comment and called out the tactics and abuse of power made by the board member to intimidate the community member for sharing her viewpoint and for the content of her speech.

The superintendent dismissed the board member’s complaint as an inappropriate use of the school’s grievance policy. The board member appealed the dismissal to the full school board (which he was a sitting member of) and used the dais to identify the public comments as rude and mean spirited. The school board voted 5-0, with the board member who filed the complaint and another board member abstaining, to affirm the superintendent’s decision that board policy does not include the right for a board member to file a grievance against a member of the community.

College of DuPage

For some time CAC has received complaints regarding the accountability, accessibility and transparency of the College of DuPage (COD), the state’s largest community college. Concerned citizens and members of the media began making FOIA requests which provided information that further fueled growing concern of wrongdoing. Media reports listed several allegations, including spending \$80,000 at an on-campus restaurant that the COD President had built for what ended up being rarely used for educational purposes and granting large, no-bid contracts to businesses of board members of the philanthropic COD Foundation. CAC was time and again a sought-after community resource for assistance after the community college responded to the FOIA requests, such as to interpret government records. Based on CAC being a nonpartisan and respected community institution, the League

of Women Voters Wheaton asked CAC to co-host, moderate, and participate in a forum with COD representatives titled: “Separating Fact from Fiction at COD.”.

Based on media reports and community outrage, activities involving the COD Board were dramatic, including the election of the “Clean Slate” coalition and the buyout of the COD President’s contract. As events unfolded regarding COD, CAC received media inquiries from the Chicago Tribune, Daily Herald, WBEZ, and others on issues ranging from censure of a COD board member, closed door meetings by the board, FOIA noncompliance by the college, and others.

Civic Education

“How ‘Open’ are Open Meetings Laws” Continuing Legal Education for Attorneys Nationwide

In a forum that provided national exposure for CAC, CAC executive director Maryam Judar conducted a 90-minute continuing legal education webinar on the topic of Open Meetings Laws. Judar provided an overview of common features within various state’s sunshine laws and notable differences. Topics included: Who Is Subject to OMA?; What Is a Meeting?; Meeting Place: Notice, Location, & Size; Exceptions to Open Meetings; and Violations: Enforcement, Cures, Penalties. Webinar attendees included government attorneys from coast to coast.

“Districtly Speaking” Elections Forum for Young Voters

CAC presented to a well-attended meeting of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority at Northern Illinois University (NIU). It is an organization of college educated women committed to the constructive development of its members and public service with a primary focus on the black community. The NIU chapter contacted CAC to present at its “Districtly Speaking” event to help its audience understand the roles of political parties and voters.

CAC partners with the Joliet Diocese and Immigrant Solidarity DuPage on Immigration Advocacy

For several years CAC has worked with the immigrant advocacy community regarding U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s immigration raids by helping to conduct research, collect data and monitor implementation. In 2015 CAC addressed this issue once again, by collaborating with the faith-based community in an inaugural event organized by our colleague Deacon Guadalupe G. Villarreal of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet Divine Savior Church. This was the first forum sponsored by a local diocese on immigrant advocacy, with the target audience being largely comprised of clergy. The forum evolved as a response to the many questions circulating in faith-based communities about the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s immigration raids. Comprehensive education of immigrant rights and how to advocate confidently around immigrant rights issues emerged as important elements and central themes. CAC educated faith based leaders that legal education should include protected status of schools and churches from ICE

enforcement actions and that the Bill of Rights are incorporated to the states via the Fourteenth Amendment. Crucial to immigrant rights issues, the Fourteen Amendment refers to the prohibition of the states to deny *any person* within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, thereby extending to undocumented residents as well as citizens.

Youth Civic Education Program – the “Civic Empowerment Zone”

The Civic Empowerment Zone is CAC’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. CAC focuses on building civic skills, confidence, and knowledge. We do this through engaging youth at the local level on issues they care about. By helping them master universal civic skills and learn practical application of laws and policies affecting the democratic process, youth develop a working knowledge of how to affect government decision-making.

In 2015, CAC held civic education forums, participated in educational efforts with other organizations, and worked with teachers to improve civic education. This work included building coalitions, sponsoring dynamic speakers, and participating in civic education and professional development activities. In 2015, CAC engaged in the following activities:

Civic Education Forums

High Schools

- Bartlett High School (Constitution Week)
- Downer Grove South (Panelist, Constitution Day)
- Geneva Community High School (Constitution Week)
- Waubonsie Valley (NAACP College Readiness Fair)
- York Community High School (Constitution Week)

Colleges/Universities

- DePaul University (Guest Speaker)
- Elmhurst College (Sponsor)
- Loyola University of Chicago (Guest Speaker)
- Northeastern University (Guest Speaker)
- Northern Illinois University (Guest Speaker)

Professional Development Programs

- CAC Constitution Week (Forum)
- Capitol Forum (Guest Speaker)
- Chicago Headline Club News Literacy Summit (Guest Speaker)
- ICPR Summit for Civic Action (Panelist)
- We the People (Judge)

Other

- Eagle Scout Court of Honor Pack 99 Ceremony (Guest Speaker)

For more than a decade, CAC has participated as a panelist at the all-day-long Constitution Day tradition at Downers Grove South High School. Virtually the entire sophomore class is brought in groups before a panel that includes a school administrator, a school safety personnel, a lawyer who represents school districts, and a CAC community lawyer. The purpose of the day is to provide an opportunity for students to ask the panel questions about their constitutional rights as students and citizens.

Constitution Week

For the last six years, CAC collaborated with area high schools to engage students in understanding the Constitution and First Amendment rights through individual first-hand experiences. In 2015, CAC welcomed Neli Farahmandpour. Neli is a teen voting advocate who spoke to students about the First Amendment Right to Petition as an important thread in the fabric of American democracy. A former Stevenson High School student who helped win enactment of “Suffrage at 17” in Illinois in 2014, Ms. Farahmandpour knows from her own experience the significant role that students can play in creating political change thanks to the First Amendment Right to Petition.

Neli spoke to hundreds of students at York Community High School in Elmhurst, Geneva Community High School, and Bartlett High School. The elements of Neli’s first-hand tale illustrate civics in action: As president of Stevenson’s Law Club, Neli informed her peers about HB 226, a bill introduced that year in the General Assembly that would allow 17-year olds to vote at the primary election if they will be 18 years of age by the date of the general election. Stevenson’s Law Club and Political Action Club teamed up to host meetings to discuss the proposed law. In March 2013, Neli went to Springfield to meet with members of the Illinois Senate and testified in front of the Senate Executive Committee. The House passed the bill by a vote of 95-22, and the Senate passed it 43-9. When Governor Quinn signed the measure in a ceremony at Stevenson High School, Neli looked on. Neli shared with her audiences what she learned about the values of bipartisan support, of getting involved in civics, and of persistence, and she shared her belief that other young people can achieve similar success if they are willing to take the initiative and become engaged in civic life.

A CAC community lawyer attended the programs to provide the constitutional context for Neli’s championship for voting through the Right to Petition. Teachers shared that it was remarkable to have such a recent graduate of high school available to address her peers about such an important issue. Students were attentive and engaged. Students demonstrated their close attention to the subject matter by asking thoughtful questions of Neli and probing how she got involved.

The schools inadvertently scheduled voter registration to coincide with Neli's visits, which reinforced the substantive subject matter and rendered it even more topical.

Student Internship Program

CAC has a highly developed internship program where youth work with CAC 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 current context, legislation updates, and case law. 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 2015 we hosted interns and volunteers from the following educational institutions:

- IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law
- Indiana University Maurer School of Law
- University of Nebraska Lincoln College of Law
- Ohio Northern University Claude W. Pettit College of Law
- University of Chicago Law School
- University of Michigan Law School
- University of Iowa School of Law
- Northeastern Illinois University (2)
- Elk Grove High School
- Proviso Math & Science Academy
- York Community High School (2)

One of CAC's summer interns became familiar with CAC through her teacher who first became civically engaged with CAC's assistance and began an extracurricular group called "Students4Democracy." The student wanted to become more involved, so she applied and interviewed at CAC. CAC hired her for our 10-week summer intern program.

At the end of the summer internship, CAC convenes an 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. While examples of interns' projects are listed below, each summer intern's project list is included as an attachment to this report.

Examples of Intern Projects

Megan Manoj, Elk Grove High School, Rising Junior

- Government Compliance with Posting Compensation Data of Employees and Elected Officials. Created a spreadsheet to capture which Illinois

counties and municipalities comply with the Public Employees Act and analyzed the data

- Township Property Assessment. Submitted FOIA requests to 17 Illinois counties for records evidencing county budgets and tax parcels for analysis of township property assessment costs
- Judicial Inquiry Board and FOIA. Reviewed over 1,000 pages received in response to a FOIA request.
- CAC Civic Education. Identified former CAC interns who worked on civic education projects at CAC to contact them with updates on the evolution toward strengthening civic education in Illinois

Nick Parker, Indiana University Maurer School of Law, Rising 3L

- Redrawing DuPage County Precinct Lines. Evaluated the Illinois Election Code and checked the provisions on redistricting precincts against the decisions of the DuPage County Election Commission
- Tax Levy for Library Construction. Assessed whether a municipality could levy a 0.02% tax for construction of a new library without first granting a public vote or chance for general public input
- Anti-Smoking Laws. Analyzed federal, state, and local regulations affecting business owners on rights and responsibilities associated with the prevention of smoking near doorways of public businesses and sent a FOIA request for smoking complaints lodged to the DuPage County Health Department
- Public Hearings and the Open Meetings Act. Researched and analyzed how zoning commission public hearings would be treated under the Open Meetings Act and whether public comment must be guaranteed at these meetings

Jumeka Wilson, Ohio Northern University, Rising 3L

- First Amendment Rights of Students and Teachers to Petition at Schools. Researched and wrote a memo on the rights of students and teachers to collect petition signatures or otherwise engage in political speech at an academic institution
- Police Civilian Review Boards. Compiled a list of all Police Civilian Review Boards around the country and researched the extent of their authority
- Ability of Libraries to Terminate Employees. Researched whether a Library Board of Trustees has the power to amend a librarian's job description
- Illinois Lobbyist Registration Act. Briefed *Reeder v. Madigan* in which a reporter sued the General Assembly when he was denied access to the General Assembly floor

Government Accountability and the Development of Systemic Democratic Protocols

CAC responds to citizen inquiries and monitors local governments for undemocratic practices and policies that systemically impede citizen participation within the democratic process. As a result, our community organizing work often addresses anti-democratic policy issues, which are embedded in local ordinances or state law, and that either need to be removed or reformed. Often, reports offering recommendations provide a platform from which change springs. Below is a sample of the government accountability issues addressed by CAC in 2015:

Raising the Bar for Economic Development: Tax Increment Financing & Civic Engagement

Members of the public from Cook County and DuPage County contact CAC routinely on the issue of tax increment financing, or TIF. TIF is a powerful yet poorly regulated and understood municipal economic development tool created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1977.

In collaboration with the Chicago Smart Collaborative, CAC provided the substantive content for a TIF public participation resource, published on the internet, called: "Raising the Bar for Economic Development: TIF & Civic Engagement." The website is a resource to outline the nuts and bolts of TIFs with an emphasis on the availability of data via public records that public bodies are required to provide related to TIF districts, opportunities for public input throughout the process and after TIF district creation, and reform recommendations to strengthen TIF accountability.

CAC Public Database: Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor Determination Letters for FOIA and OMA

Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) is an administrative agency that issues non-binding and binding determination rulings on complaints related to FOIA and OMA filed by members of the public and the press. CAC community lawyers assisted several individuals file complaints on issues such as improper application of the preliminary draft provision and improper designation of the "voluminous request" provision.

While the PAC office reviews thousands of complaints, the only rulings posted publicly are binding opinions, of which there are only 76 since the PAC gained binding authority in 2010. Far greater in number are non-binding determination letters, which are substantively identical in legal analysis. Non-binding determination letters are of tremendous value to citizens, journalists, policymakers, and public bodies because they reveal how the Attorney General's Office interprets

open government statutes. Currently to access a determination letter, an individual must know what s/he is looking for and submit a FOIA request.

CAC collaborated with the Chicago Headline Club to launch a project to obtain all the determination letters bearing substantive analysis on Illinois open government laws and to make them available to the public in a usable format. With the assistance of the Illinois Attorney General's office, CAC thus far has received over 400 letters. As they are analyzed, they are uploaded to a searchable database on CAC's website, which can be found at <http://www.citizenadvocacycenter.org/public-access-counselor-determination-letter-index.html>. This is an important tool for citizens seeking positive outcomes in social and economic justice through their government monitoring efforts that includes utilizing Illinois open government laws and the rights they confer to the citizenry, and for journalists in their investigative reporting.

Litigation and Issue Advocacy

CAC 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 CAC litigate to challenge abuses of power and to remove systemic barriers that impair citizen access to local government.

Civic Education Policy Advocacy and Civics Standards

CAC has been a leader in advocating for civic education policy reform at the state level. CAC efforts just over the last five years have included:

- Authoring the Illinois Civic Health Index 2010 that was published by the National Conference on Citizenship and in collaboration with the Robert R. McCormick Foundation;
- Writing the "Advocacy and Policy" chapter within the Illinois Civic Blueprint that was published by the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation;
- Spearheading and advocating within the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition Public Policy Committee;
- Spearheading the creation of the Civic Education Legislative Task Force which was charged with assessing Illinois civic education standards and making reform recommendations; and

CAC is Appointed as a Member on the Task Force on Civic Education

CAC was an appointed and influential member of the Legislative Civic Education Task Force that made six major recommendations to the General Assembly

regarding civic education reforms. Much of CAC's work in youth civic education is reflected the major Task Force recommendations:

1. Require a civic education course in high school (completed; implementation in progress)
2. Revise Illinois Social Studies Standards (public comment period in proposed rulemaking now closed)
3. Require a service learning project in middle and high schools
4. Align licensure and certification requirements for pre-service teachers with best practices
5. Involve students in the election process
6. Extend the Task Force to gather public input through public hearings (completed)

CAC Successfully Advocates for Task Force to hold Public Hearings

A major priority of CAC's work on the Task Force was ensuring that the general public had an opportunity to give public comment, whether in favor of or opposed to major Task Force recommendations. This was not a simple task. The state agency charged with facilitating the Task Force was opposed to convening public hearings. CAC was a forceful advocate and worked closely with the Task Force Chairman to ensure public hearings happened. Once approved, CAC kicked into high gear and did extensive outreach among the citizens, public officials, and nonprofit organizations with which we work to inform them of the opportunity to voice an opinion on the recommendations. As CAC constituents are well-versed in civic engagement, the turnout rate was high.

The public hearings garnered hundreds of comments which were extraordinarily valuable. The public hearings were a crucial strategic component to civic education reform because it provided a sense of where there was consensus on civic education and what issues of concerns raised at the forefront would need to be addressed, such as the funding component.

Civic Education Policy Advocacy

Based on the most significant recommendation of the Task Force, in March 2015 State Representative Deb Conroy introduced legislation that recommended institution of a civic education requirement for Illinois high schools. CAC once again kicked into high gear and through several avenues educated and informed the public about the status of civic education in Illinois, the overall civic health of the state, the process by which a bill moves through the General Assembly, and opportunities for citizen impact. CAC also monitored the development of the civic education bill as it worked through the General Assembly and kept our constituents informed.

Additionally, because CAC has relationships with public officials across many different public bodies, CAC fielded calls from school board members wanting to learn more about how the required civic course would impact school curriculum. Notably, in the midst of legislative gridlock that has brought state operations to a near standstill, on August 21, 2015 civics became law in the Land of Lincoln, beginning with the incoming freshmen in the 2016-2017 school year.

CAC Provides Reform Recommendations For Revised Illinois Social Science Standards

Another Task Force recommendation was implemented through the creation of the Illinois Social Science Standards Revision Task Force and its ensuing activities. The Social Science Task Force was an outgrowth of the partnership formed between the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Task Force for Civic Education and was charged with revising Illinois' Social Study Standards for the first time in 18 years. CAC reviewed the Social Science Task Force's detailed recommendations and provided extensive written public comment to the Illinois State Board of Education. CAC's specific recommendations were focused on strengthening the proposed revisions to ensure hands-on opportunities for students to "practice democracy" and convert the communities in which they live into "civic labs."

CAC Presents before the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

CAC presented a professional development workshop on "How a Bill Becomes Law in Illinois" for teachers, administrators, and others. The workshop outlined the step-by-step process a bill must go through when moving through the General Assembly and at which points the public has an opportunity to influence elected officials.

At another meeting of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, CAC co-presented with fellow Civic Education Task Force members Shawn Healy and Larry Pahl on the results of a McCormick Foundation poll capturing statewide attitudes on civics and community service, and provided general information on monitoring bills, submitting witness slips, and providing testimony.

CAC Serves as a Panelist at the United States Association of the Former Members of Congress Annual Meeting

At the request of the McCormick Foundation, CAC executive director Maryam Judar represented the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition on a panel at a national conference in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the United States Association of the Former Members of Congress. Presenting before former members of Congress, Judar highlighted Illinois' progress in strengthening civic education in the state, including the totality of ICMC's efforts, how the Task Force came to fruition and the important role it played in the overall strategy, and the ensuing legislation. Distinguished

panelists from Florida, North Carolina, and California reported on their respective state's efforts.

CAC also presented on the strides described above before audiences that included journalists and teachers at the following events:

- American Society for Public Administration Luncheon, February 12
- ICPR Forum on Campaign Finance, April 29
- Chicago Headline Club News Literacy Summit, July 23
- ICPR Summit for Civic Action, September 17

Promoting Transparency in Government

Transparency Coalition

In 2015 CAC continued to spearhead a coalition that promotes greater openness and transparency in government. The coalition also defends against erosions to state laws to ensure and protect access to the democratic process. Coalition members include the Chicago Headline Club, Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, Citizen Works, UIC Political Science Professor and Former Chicago Alderman Dick Simpson, American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, Illinois Policy Institute, Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, Better Government Association, Illinois PIRG, and the Illinois Attorney General's office.

Strengthening the Tools for Public Participation

HB 175 Open Meetings Act Statute of Limitations Extension

The Transparency Coalition supported this successful bill that amended the statutory timeline for filing a request for review to the Public Access Counselor. The amendment revised the timeline for filing a request on an OMA violation from 60 days of the discovery of the violation rather than from the date of the violation itself. It was amended to provide a two-year window for becoming aware of the violation.

HB 3932 FOIA Coverage for Private Campus Police

The Transparency Coalition supported a bill that would have clarified the role of private campus police. An amendment to the Private College Campus Police Act, the bill sought to make information and records in the custody or possession of a campus police departments open to inspection or copying in the same manner as any other public record under FOIA. The bill failed to pass due to amendments weakening the original bill. The situation remains controversial, and CAC continues to field inquiries from the public on the matter.

Defense against Erosion of the Illinois Freedom of Information Act

HB 261 Threat to Newspaper Notices

CAC worked in concert with the Illinois Press Association in squashing a bill to amend the Notice by Publication Act. The bill sought to allow public bodies that are required to provide notice by newspaper publication to instead publish the notice on an official government website. A CAC report produced in collaboration with the Illinois State Press Association documented the results of a statewide audit of Illinois public bodies' Open Meetings Act website notice compliance.

CAC conducted a random sampling of 20% of Illinois school districts, municipalities, counties, and townships to analyze compliance with current web posting requirements under the OMA. Our study documented that local government websites fail to meet the posting requirements:

- Of the aggregate 756 public bodies that were surveyed, 385 had websites (51%).
- Of that 51% (or 385 public bodies), 73% complied with posting notice, 57% complied with posting an agenda, and 48% complied with posting approved meeting minutes within the time constraints of the OMA.
- Further, compliance with the OMA's website posting provisions for those with at least one known full-time staff member had a 77% compliance rate with posting notice, 64% with posting agendas, and 54% with posting approved meeting minutes.

These results were widely circulated by media outlets, including in the State-Journal Register, the News-Gazette, and Quad-Cities Online. The bill died early in the legislative session, in March.

HB 3621 Threat to the Availability of Financial Records

The Transparency Coalition successfully opposed a bill that attempted to exempt from inspection and copying public records on the subject of incentives provided to and rent paid by businesses that agree to make use of a public facility for a convention, trade show, meeting, athletic contest, concert, musical, dramatic, or other artistic, cultural, or social event. The bill would have exempted municipalities from revealing key financial information about contracts and events held at publicly owned venues. The bill applied to convention and entertainment centers -- facilities built with hundreds of millions of dollars in public funds. The bill would have made it difficult to determine whether public officials were profiting from public facilities, would have prevented monitoring of sweetheart deals, and would have ultimately invited costly litigation. The bill also attempted to erroneously assert home rule communities are exempt from FOIA.

Letter to the Editor: Ensuring Public Access to Emails on Public Business

In response to the national news coverage of Hillary Clinton's use of a private server to conduct the public business at the federal level, CAC called for an amendment to the State Records Act and the Local Records Act to reflect current technological realities in a letter to the editor that was published during the spring legislative

session in March in the Chicago Tribune and the Daily Southtown. The laws should expressly state that communications pertaining to public business are public regardless of where the communication originates or where it is sent. This includes individual elected officials' personal electronic devices and commercial email accounts.

Budget Impasse

CAC joined the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform and other organizations in an entreaty to five Illinois State leaders to step up and bridge the budget impasse with compromise. In a communication and published letter to the editor in the Chicago Tribune on October 21, the coalition offered our assistance to facilitate the logistics of a meeting for timely resolution of the issue. The Governor and legislative leaders responded tepidly. Further communications from the coalition advocated for a meaningful, public dialogue. Ultimately the Governor and leaders met in December, without the watchful eye of the public. It was the first time the leaders met in months. The coalition also included Illinois Public Interest and Research Group, the League of Women Voters of Illinois, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, CHANGE Illinois, and the Better Government Association. News coverage included the Rockford Register Star, Daily Southtown, NPR, the Daily Whale, and Capitol Fax.

Elections: Redistricting, Campaign Finance, and Voter Registration

CAC joined an amici brief to the Supreme Court of the United States and endorsed three state reform efforts in 2015 in the arena of elections affecting redistricting, campaign finance, and voter registration.

CAC signs on to Amici Curiae in *Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*

CAC joined former high-ranking Illinois State officials from both the Democratic and Republican parties, civic and business leaders in Illinois, good government nonprofit organizations and others in submitting to the Supreme Court of the United States amici curiae in support of the appellee in *Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*. The case threatened to render unconstitutional redistricting commissions that wrest control of the process from legislators and puts it into the hands of reform commission members who ostensibly have no incumbent interests to protect. Illinois is currently seeking to amend its redistricting process and the outcome of this case would have had a grossly adverse effect on citizen participation. Amici include Former Governor Jim Edgar, Former Lt. Gov. Sheila J. Simon, Former Lt. Gov. Corrine J. Wood, Peter B. Bensinger, Ronald Gidwitz, Newton N. Minow, CHANGE Illinois, Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, the League of Women Voters Illinois, and Common Cause of Illinois

Independent Maps

CAC endorsed Independent Maps, a campaign that seeks to amend the Illinois redistricting process. It is a nonpartisan statewide coalition supporting the petition campaign to place the Independent Map Amendment before voters in November 2016. The campaign seeks to remove partisan consideration from map-making and render the process transparent.

HB 175 Independent Expenditures Disclosure

CAC supported this successful bill that requires more stringent disclosure rules for independent expenditures spent on state campaigns in Illinois. The law requires electronic disclosure with the Illinois Board of Elections within 5 business days after making the independent expenditure, except that the report shall be filed within 2 business days after making the independent expenditure during the 60-day period before an election.

SB 1265 Online Voter Registration

CAC joined good government groups to endorse an Online Voter Registration Bill promoted by Cook County Clerk David Orr’s Office. It provides that online voter registration shall be open for no more than 36 nor less than 7 days before an election.

Leadership and Staff

CAC Board of Directors:

President: Theresa Amato, Esq.
 Vice-President: Steve De La Rosa
 Secretary: Gordon Goodman
 Treasurer: Brian Conlon
 Directors: Porus Dadabhoy
 Barbara Greenberg, Esq. (resigned)
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Cristobal Cavazos	Myrrha Guzman, Esq.	Ellen Raymond, Esq.
Marcia De La Rosa	Naim Mansour	Dave Segel

Cheryl Ealey	David Pezza, Esq.	MaryLynn Zajdel
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CAC Staff:

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

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

John Argo	Bill Brand	Tamara Brenner	Gina Gibbons
Gretchen Hayes	David Jackson	Terrence Leen	David Porreca
Cora Weisenberger	Stan Zegel	Susan Khalaieff	

Thank you to our CAC Interns:

Natalie Zincoris	Brett Mazzoni	James Sieben
Kathleen Tunink	Kelsey Weyhing	Nick Parker
Ilse Sanchez	Megan Manoj	Jumeka Wilson
Justin Kudill	Patrick Franks	Greg Tsonis