AUTHORS OF NEW BOOK ABOUT ILLINOIS POLITICAL CORRUPTION
TO SPEAK AT EVENT CO-SPONSORED BY CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER

ELMHURST, Ill. — Does Illinois deserve its reputation as one of the most politically corrupt states in America?

Yes, according to Thomas J. Gradel and Dick Simpson, authors of the recently published book *Corrupt Illinois: Patronage, Cronyism, and Corruption*. “Our conclusions are inescapable,” Simpson says. “Illinois is among the top three most corrupt states, and Chicago is undoubtedly the most corrupt city.”

Gradel and Simpson will discuss the book’s findings at a program co-sponsored by the Citizen Advocacy Center and the Elmhurst College Urban Studies Program, to be held 7 p.m. April 1 in the Founders Lounge of the Frick Center, 190 Prospect Ave., Elmhurst.

To prepare their book, the authors spent seven years researching and documenting political corruption in Chicago, Cook County, the Chicagoland suburbs, Springfield, and numerous other downstate cities and towns. Their research took them back to 1833, when two ineligible residents voted for trustees during Chicago’s original incorporation as a town.

Gradel, a freelance writer and political researcher, worked for 35 years as a media consultant and served on the staff of Gov. Dan Walker. Simpson, a former Chicago alderman as well as a former congressional candidate, teaches political science at the University of Illinois at Chicago. *Corrupt Illinois* was published in February by the University of Illinois Press.

Central to the authors’ analysis is the role that political machines have played in fostering a culture of corruption, no matter which party has been in charge. Gradel and Simpson assert that corruption thrives when political leaders wield monopoly power and face little or no public accountability.

“Over the past century both Democratic and Republican machines have fleeced Illinois taxpayers,” Gradel says. “While all corruption is not caused by machines, all political machines depend on, breed, and nurture corruption. You can’t have political machines without corrupt hiring practices, crony contracting, and conflicts of interest.”

Gradel and Simpson’s talk is well timed for voters participating in the consolidated election that will take place throughout Illinois on April 7.

(MORE – Gradel and Simpson Talk)
“We hope the book’s content and message will alert voters to look closely at the candidates,” Simpson says. “What’s their ethical track record? Are they part of a corrupt machine or political organization? Who gives them campaign money?”

For the nonprofit, nonpartisan Citizen Advocacy Center, co-sponsoring the event goes hand in hand with the community legal organization’s more than 20-year track record of working to make government more open, accessible, and accountable.

“Political corruption is what happens when government conducts its business without transparency or accountability, regardless of party affiliation,” says Maryam Judar, community lawyer and CAC executive director.

CAC, which opened its doors in 1994, is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to build democracy for the 21st century by strengthening the capacities, resources, and institutions of citizens for self-governance. For more information about CAC or to make a tax-deductible contribution, visit us at www.CitizenAdvocacyCenter.org.

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