ILLINOIS HOUSE HONORS CITIZEN ADVOCACY CENTER

ELMHURST — Two decades of working to make government more open, accessible, and accountable has earned the Citizen Advocacy Center a salute from the Illinois House of Representatives.

In the final weeks of the 98th General Assembly, the House adopted a resolution congratulating CAC on the 20th anniversary of the nonprofit, nonpartisan community legal organization. Deputy Minority Leader Patricia R. “Patti” Bellock (R-47th Dist.) offered the resolution, which the House approved November 19.

“I’ve worked with the Citizen Advocacy Center over the last 20 years and applaud them for their outstanding commitment to making government more transparent and accountable by empowering the voice of its citizens,” said Bellock. “Our communities have been served well by the Center and its staff, who are models of integrity and hard work in stimulating citizen awareness to sustain justice.”

Officially known as H.R. 1278, the resolution honored CAC’s efforts to promote meaningful participation in the democratic process. As highlighted by the House, these efforts have included:

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

“It’s gratifying to see our work recognized by the House,” said CAC Executive Director Maryam Judar. “Providing citizens with the tools to make their voices heard, whatever their viewpoint, is nonpartisan in the best sense of the word. As this resolution shows, support for CAC crosses party lines.”

Founded in 1993 by community lawyer Theresa Amato, CAC opened officially on April 13, 1994. The 501(c)(3) organization’s mission is to build democracy for the 21st century by strengthening the citizenry’s capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance. Amato, who is CAC’s current board president, served eight years as the organization’s first executive director. Community lawyer Terry Pastika succeeded her in 2001 and directed CAC until 2013. Pastika now serves as a board member, and community lawyer Maryam Judar is CAC’s third executive director. For more information about CAC or to make a tax-deductible contribution, visit us at www.CitizenAdvocacyCenter.org

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