Protecting Voters During the Primary

In March, our Election Protection team staffed the 866-OUR-VOTE hotline and monitored the polls to answer questions from voters across Illinois who experienced a variety of barriers to the vote.

Working with our partners at national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, numerous law firms, and University of Chicago Law School, we addressed issues such as:

- Letters mailed to southwest suburban areas with significant populations of color, shaming voters based on their alleged voting history
- Electioneering - partisan campaigning and pressuring of voters
- Inconsistent experiences with election judges, including instances of disenfranchisement by election judges not following the law
- Old voting machines and equipment failure
- Delays caused by shortages of poll workers and late setup
- Barriers for people with disabilities accessing their polling places

We thank state and local election officials who worked with us to resolve many problems on the ground.

Read more

During this election, our legal volunteers also advocated for eligible voters in pre-trial detention at Cook County Jail and at area nursing homes. We will continue to address systemic inequities in voting across the state.
Challenging Property Tax Discrimination

On March 13, the South Suburban Housing Center joined two other community organizations, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council and Logan Square Neighborhood Association, as plaintiffs in our lawsuit against the Cook County Assessor's office filed in December 2017.

Advocacy Director Aneel Chablani joins John Petruszak of South Suburban Housing Center to talk about the impact of unfair property assessments in Cook County on
Black and Latinx communities with Dorothy Tucker and Perri Small on WVON 1690 AM.

Studies have shown that residential properties in majority-Hispanic and majority-Black census tracts are twice as likely to be over-assessed by 20 percent or more compared to residential properties in majority-White census tracts. Between 2011 and 2015, this regressive system shifted at least $2.2 billion in property taxes from high to low-income households. The expensive appeals process makes the system even more regressive.

This is the classic definition of institutional racism.

Our resource page

Our lawsuit seeks court oversight to adopt and implement a fairer, more accurate, transparent, lawful, and nondiscriminatory assessment.
Contact us if you have been impacted by faulty property tax assessments in Cook County.

The Fight to Keep Chicago Schools Open

On February 28, following months of student and community protests actively supported by Chicago Lawyers' Committee and our partner Chicago United for Equity (CUE), Chicago Public Schools voted to permanently close five schools serving majority low-income Black students.

Staff Attorney Jessica Schneider gives testimony to CPS on the proposal to close National Teachers Academy (NTA), a top-rated elementary school which serves predominantly low-income Black students, at a public hearing on January 29, 2018.
Evaluating SB100 One Year Later

Last Thursday, our Education Equity Project together with members of the Transforming School Discipline Collaborative convened more than 150 educators, policy makers, administrators, student organizers, and advocates to reflect on progress since the passage of SB100, a bill that was intended to transform school discipline practices in Illinois and weaken the school-to-prison pipeline.

What you missed: Three Takeaways from the Convening

"A lot of what I'm hearing right now is not resistance," reflects Staff Attorney Candace Moore. "It's a need for organization and a need for us to build together."

In response, our staff attorneys partnered with LAF and CUE to support meaningful community engagement in the public meetings and hearings,
producing evaluations and reports on the racial equity impacts of the proposed actions.

Our statement on school closings

We will continue to challenge these closings and the ways they unduly burden our most vulnerable young people and further the inequity that plagues our school system.

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Transgender Students Need Equal Access

*Nova Maday, 18, a transgender senior at Palatine High School who is suing District 211 for locker room access. (Armando L. Sanchez / Chicago Tribune)*

Transgender Students Need Equal Access
Chicago Lawyers’ Committee is proud to be part of an amicus brief filed last Thursday in support of the ACLU's lawsuit for equal access in Palatine, Illinois.

This is a textbook case of discrimination.

Nova Maday, an 18-year-old transgender girl, is forced by her school to change in a special area rather than use the girl’s locker room. Singling out a student for their gender identity leads to the precise social and psychological harms that anti-discrimination laws are intended to prevent. Our brief argues that the Illinois Human Rights Act requires that schools allow all students equal use of school facilities, including locker rooms.

In early 2017, Attorney Greg Schweizer represented a gay man who was harassed and assaulted by his neighbors because of his sexual orientation. Then he supported a second client in a criminal court case - a Latina woman attacked because of her heritage by a White woman. We profiled Greg and his work with our Hate Crime Project in this quarter's Pro Bono Spotlight.
SUPPORT OUR WORK

Can you chip in to help keep our lights on?

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