

The **ACLU** News

Chapter Update from the President

The Champaign County ACLU has been keeping busy over the past several months. Take a look at just some of the things we have been working on!

For the second year in a row, Champaign was host to a state-wide event organized by the ACLU of Illinois. Held on April 22, the ACLU of Illinois convened in Central Illinois for a Membership Conference entitled, "Defending Democracy In Our America." Members of the ACLU in Illinois gathered, strategized and organized on current and pressing civil liberty issues. Members had a chance to hear from ACLU Board President Jill Metz and sign a declaration in support of marriage equality. Urbana Mayor Laurel Prussing also led a session at the conference.

Our chapter held its Annual Meeting & Brunch on April 23 at the Great Impasta in Downtown Champaign. This year's featured speaker, Geoffrey Stone, spoke about "Civil Liberties During Wartime." The chapter also honored the work of John Lee Johnson with the Victor Stone Award for lifetime achievement in support of civil liberties. Four new members were welcomed to our local governing body: Elaine Gehrman, Ben Grosser, Andrea Rundell, and Mary Cory.

The Champaign County ACLU had a small but mighty group of 10 marching (or riding in the red VW) at this year's CU Freedom Celebration Fourth of July parade. This year's theme was "Broadcasting Our Freedoms" and the ACLU's presence could not have been more appropriate.

The ACLU has remained an active voice in the Campaign for Comprehensive Sex Education. Steering Committee member Esther Patt has remained active in the campaign over the past several months. The group has begun work with Champaign schools on establishing comprehensive sex education as part of the standard health curriculum.

Our chapter was a co-sponsor of a Channing-Murray Social Justice Forum on April 25 entitled, "Why is it time to Change our Drug Laws? How UIUC and C-U Drug Policies Affect ALL of Us." The panel discussed racial disparities in sentencing for drug offenses, prison overcrowding & alternatives to incarceration, needle exchange & opiate maintenance, new treatment modalities, local & University policies regarding

drugs & alcohol, and other related topics.

For the third year in a row, the Champaign County ACLU was a co-sponsor of the C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice annual Unity March, held on October 7. Nearly 200 participants marched from the intersection of Bradley and Prospect passing through parts of the community most effected by racism and poverty in Champaign.

This summer, the Champaign County ACLU Steering Committee voted to purchase three sets of the acclaimed "ACLU Freedom Files" and donate a complete set to each of the libraries at three area high schools - Urbana High, Champaign Central, and Centennial - in honor of Geoffrey Stone. This 10-part series tells the stories of real people in America whose civil liberties have been threatened, and how they fought back. Produced and directed by Emmy Award winner Jeremy Kagan, the series combines interviews, documentary footage, comedy, drama, music and animation to engage viewers and alert them about critical civil rights issues ranging from free speech to religious freedom.

The Champaign County ACLU has nearly 900 card-carrying members! We hope that you will join us for our annual Fall Gathering fundraiser on Sunday, December 3 at the home of Susan Cohen. Please submit the response form enclosed or respond online at www.aclu-cu.org. We look forward to seeing on on December 3!

- Rachael Dietkus



VETO SESSION BEGINS NOVEMBER 14 - URGE MEMBERS TO OVERRIDE HB2067 VETO

HB2067 fixed two problems with current Illinois juvenile law. It allows judges to determine whether and for what duration children must register as sex offenders (currently kids as young as age 12 have to register for life based on the offense they are found guilty of or plead guilty to). The legislation also deleted language recently enacted that required all kids found guilty of any sex offense at any age to register at age 17 (as though the offense were committed at that age.) The General Assembly passed this legislation with the support of The Child Care Association and the PTA. In July, the Governor vetoed HB 2067. During veto session in November, a 3/5 majority will be required to override the veto, which means it will have to pick up a handful of votes in both chambers in order to pass.

The Governor's brief veto message reads "While I recognize and appreciate the hard work of all the sponsors in passing this legislation, I cannot condone leniency towards sex offenders, whether the sex offender is a juvenile or an adult. Furthermore, it is important that the people of Illinois have a dependable medium that provides information regarding sex offenders in their area."

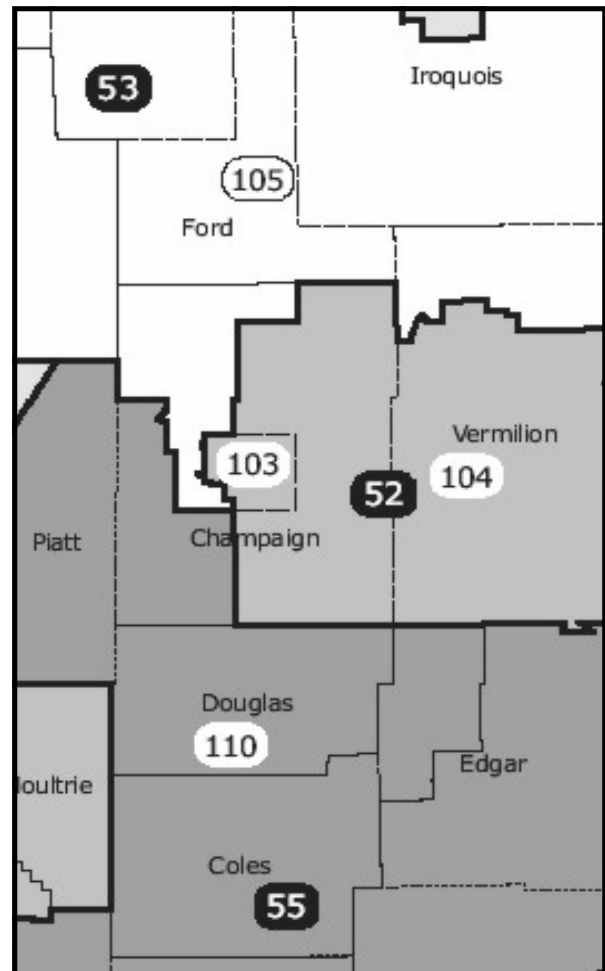
In fact, the veto allows the need to track truly dangerous sexual offenders and molesters to be compromised by inclusion of cases which may be better characterized as playground shenanigans. The legislative change would have allowed judges to withhold juveniles' names from the public based on the offense, the age at the time of the offense and the history of the offender. It would have reinstated fairness into Illinois justice for juveniles.

Other states distinguish between sex crimes in terms of severity and/or make distinctions for the age of the offender at the time of the crime when information is released to the public. In Illinois, all offenders are eventually treated as adults and as perpetrators of the worst possible sex crime. No distinctions are made

Another important legislative issue concerning juvenile justice is **SB458**, which passed in the Senate on a bipartisan vote as well. It would raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction by one year, to 18, matching 38 states and the federal government, as well as numerous civil codes. It would not prevent any existing adult court transfer provisions, but would make available to 17 year olds more community-based treatment alternatives under juvenile court jurisdiction.

Fact sheets are available online for both bills at:
<http://www.aclu-il.org/legislative/>

	HB2067	SB458
Representative Districts		
103 Jakobsson	Y	
104 Black	N	
105 Cultra	Y	
110 Rose	N	
Senate Districts		
52 Winkel	Y	Y
53 Rutherford	N	N
55 Righter	N	N
Y favors the ACLU position on both bills		



2006 FALL GATHERING

**Sunday, December 3
5:00 to 7:00 PM**

**at the home of
Susan Cohen and George Monahan
3506 S. Vine St. (Yankee Ridge)
Urbana**

See map on the reverse side!

This is the ONLY fundraising event the Chapter holds on an annual basis. Please join us for wine, conversation and snacks!

Providing your e-mail address below will allow us to invite you to join the aclu-cu announce email list.

RSVP

By mail...

ACLU
PO Box 2651, Station A
Champaign, IL 61825

Or on the web...

www.aclu-cu.org



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Please respond by November 30th!

___ Yes. ___ of us will attend. Enclosed is a check for \$____.*

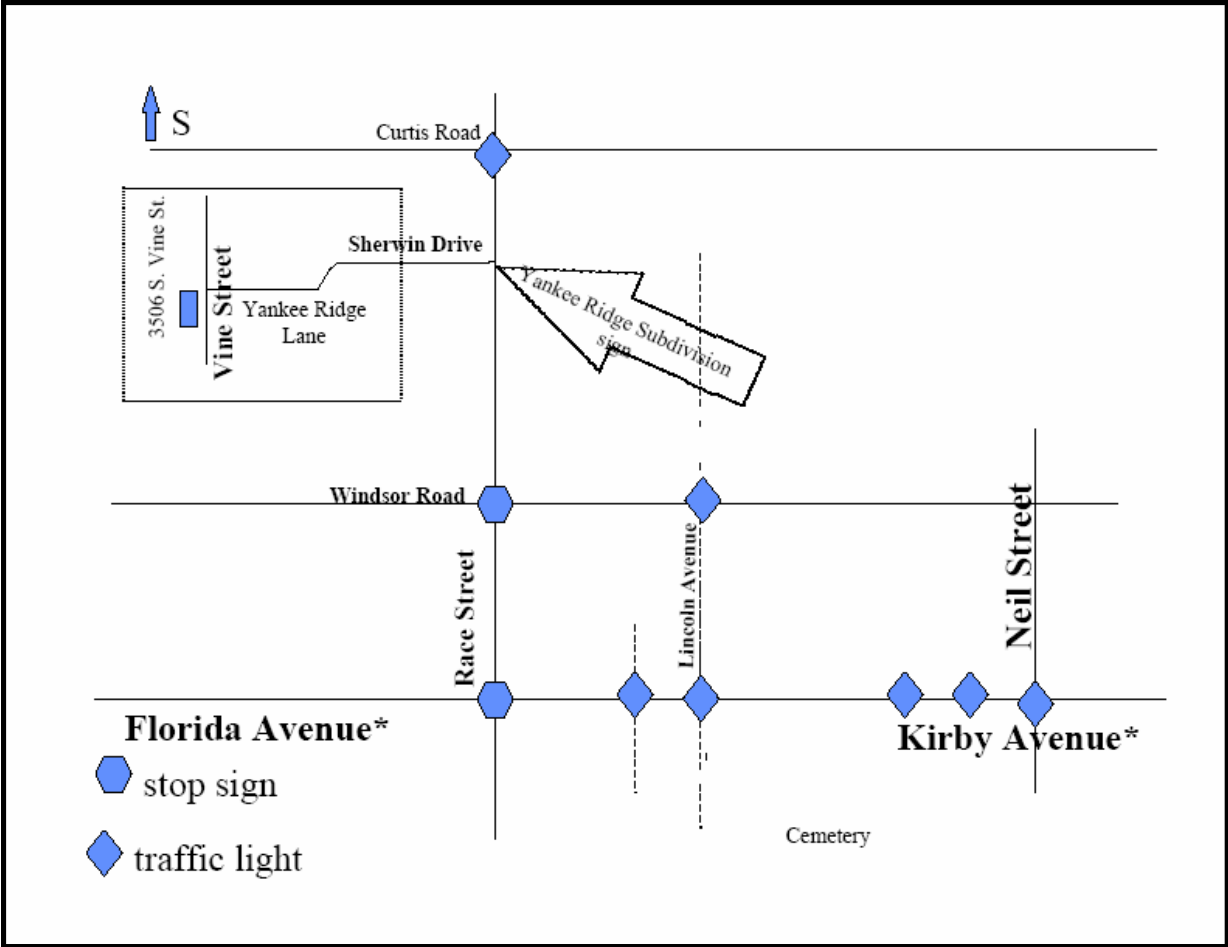
___ Sorry. Can't make it, but here is a check for the Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

*Suggested contribution: \$20 per person; \$5.00 student and limited income
Please make checks payable to *Champaign County ACLU*.



ANTI-GAY ADVISORY REFERENDUM FAILS TO REACH BALLOT IN ILLINOIS

In May and June, members of the Chapter joined with several other groups to examine local petitions submitted by Protect Marriage Illinois which would have put an advisory referendum on the statewide ballot to amend the state constitution to bar recognition of gay and lesbian relationships.

Working under the banner of the "Fair Illinois" coalition, the local group cross-checked thousands of Champaign County signatures with voter registration rolls. Allison Carter, field manager for Equal Marriage Illinois, a joint initiative of the ACLU, Lambda Legal Defense, and Equality Illinois, came to Champaign several times to jump-start the local effort, then turned it over to Equal Marriage Illinois Champaign County (<http://www.equalmarriagecc.org/>), who organized

weekly work nights fueled by pizza and soda pop until all the petitions had been checked.

Statewide, 60,000 petitions and more than 300,000 names were checked, resulting in challenges to tens of thousands of signatures. Thanks go out to those who worked on this!

In August, the State Board of Elections refused to certify the referendum after their own random sampling of 10% of the petitions showed a higher than acceptable number of invalid signatures.

Fair Illinois has been working with Fair Wisconsin this fall to help defeat their proposed constitutional amendment (see www.fairwisconsin.org).

ACLU Officers & Steering Committee

The local ACLU Steering Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm, in the conference room at Campbell Hall (WILL studios) in Urbana. Meetings are open to members—if you would like to be placed on the agenda, please contact Rachael Dietkus or any other committee member ahead of time.

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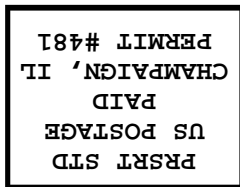
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WWW.ACLU-CU.ORG
We're on the Web!



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“WHAT ABOUT *HABEAS CORPUS*?”

This simple question, overheard at the ACLU table at the Urbana Farmer’s Market on a recent Saturday morning, has no doubt occurred to many the past several weeks, after passage of S. 3930, the Military Commissions Act of 2006. It certainly occurred to Senators Obama and Durbin, who voted against it—but apparently wasn’t a major concern for Tim Johnson, who voted for it when it passed in the House.

The writ of habeas corpus, a civil proceeding in which the court inquires as to the legitimacy of a prisoner's custody, is an important instrument for the safeguarding of individual freedom against arbitrary state action. It is expressly mentioned in article one of the Constitution, which says, "The privilege of the writ of *Habeas Corpus* shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it."

To highlight concerns with the act, the ACLU took out a full page advertisement in the Washington Post on the day President Bush signed the act, stating “Today, the

ACLU is the most conservative organization in America." Since its founding, the ACLU has fought to **conserve** the system of checks and balances and defend the Bill of Rights.

ACLU Executive Director Anthony Romero notes that "The president can now - with the approval of Congress - indefinitely hold people without charge, take away protections against horrific abuse, put people on trial based on hearsay evidence, authorize trials that can sentence people to death based on testimony literally beaten out of witnesses, and slam shut the courthouse door for habeas petitions. Nothing could be further from the American values we all hold in our hearts than the Military Commissions Act."

2006 Champaign County ACLU Fall Gathering
Sunday, December 3rd
See details inside.