

The **ACLU** *News*

Making Schools Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Students

On Monday, November 2, Christopher Koch, the Illinois Superintendent of Schools will join a panel of local students, teachers, parents and administrators at a public forum addressing school safety issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity. In recent months, youth from 6 schools in Champaign and Ford counties have shared their stories about the environment in public schools where use of the word "gay" to mean bad is common, and students have been victims of bullying, isolation, verbal harassment and even physical assault because of their real or perceived sexual orientation. Teachers and school administrators are often uncertain about how to appropriately address the abuse and some ignore it altogether.

Research released this year focusing on Illinois schools concludes that verbal and physical harass-

ment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and nontraditional gender expression is a serious problem that contributes to a hostile learning environment for all students. See GLSEN, *Inside Illinois Schools: The Experiences of LGBT Students* (2009) available at www.aclu-cu.org/pdf/GLSEN2009.pdf

The November 2 forum will be held in the Parkland College Theater from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. It is free and open to the public and is sponsored by the East Central Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and its partner organizations: Champaign County ACLU, ACLU of Illinois, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, Acorn Equality Fund, Urbana High School Social Justice Committee and the Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign.

Keeping Secrets: Why Covering Up Bush-Era Transgressions is Contrary to the Rule of Law

Colleen Connell, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, will be the featured speaker at the YMCA Friday Forum series on Friday, November 13 from 12 - 1:30 p.m. in the Latzer Hall of the University YMCA, 1001 S. Wright Street, Champaign. The program is free and open to the public. Lunch is available for \$6.00 per person if you make an advance request to Samantha at 217-337-1500. As described in the YMCA's publicity about Connell's talk: "With a frequency never before seen, the Bush administration consistently asserted the state secrets privilege in order to derail court proceedings, not only excluding specific pieces of evidence but also effectively blocking certain claims in their entirety. Colleen Connell will

discuss legislation to codify the conditions under which the government may assert the state secrets privilege and the degree to which it can affect an otherwise legitimate claim."

Our ACLU chapter is a co-sponsor of this year's Friday Forum series. For a full list of the Friday Forum programs, please go to www.universityymca.org/fridayforum/. You will also have the opportunity to chat with Colleen Connell one-on-one at the chapter's fall gathering the evening of November 13 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the home of Marci Dodds and Cody Sokolski, 1005 W. University Avenue, Champaign. Suggested donation \$20.

ACLU Files Court Challenge to Parental Notice of Abortion Law

Citing “serious and irreversible harm to teens,” the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois filed a lawsuit on October 13 to strike down a newly effective law that prevents a teenager from having an abortion unless she notifies a parent or goes to court.

Every leading medical organization, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics opposes parental notice laws. While most teenagers tell a parent or adult family member before having an abortion, other teens have been beaten, thrown out of the house or forced to carry to term when their parents found out. Some have even taken drastic measures to try to end a pregnancy without going to a doctor.

Although the law includes a process for teens to ask a judge for waiver of the notice requirement, that option poses many problems including the challenges of arrang-

ing transportation and getting to court and the likely risk of being seen in the courthouse by someone who knows the teen.

Illinois law allows a pregnant teen to choose to carry to term and either raise the child or put the child up for adoption without interference from her parents. Singling out abortion as the only medical choice that requires parental involvement is politically motivated and, we believe, unconstitutional.

The ACLU of Illinois provided training last month for local attorneys who volunteered to represent teenagers who petition courts for waiver of the parental notice requirement. We are grateful to the lawyers who volunteered to help teenagers but we hope the legal challenge to the law succeeds and we will not need their services for too much longer.

Champaign County Advisory Committee on Jury Selection Exploring Options

The Citizen’s Advisory Committee, appointed earlier this year by the county board, has already met ten times to methodically look at the jury selection process in Champaign County in an effort to improve the makeup of jury pools to better reflect county demographics.

The research effort to date has included evaluating several years of court watcher reports, extensive briefings from court officials on the selection process, comparing procedures used by other counties, and a detailed analysis of summons data from 2008, including mapping the addresses of those summonsed and calculating rates by census block group in an effort to visualize under-represented areas of the county. Additional research assistance and data analysis was provided by Paula Hannaford-Agor, J.D., director of the Center for Jury Studies, with the National Center for State Courts.

Changes to the initial jury questionnaire are currently being implemented, including removing the question “Have you or a family member been convicted of a criminal offense?” In addition, the committee has identified a problem with the summons pool being refreshed too infrequently to effectively capture the

addresses of a mobile population. The committee has also recently begun public outreach efforts to encourage jury participation, including targeted radio spots and exploring a collaboration with WILL Youth Media Workshop.

Save the Date: Annual Meeting April 11

Former FBI agent Coleen Rowley, co-holder of Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 2002, will speak at the ACLU Annual Meeting on April 11, 2010.

When Coleen Rowley was an FBI agent in Minneapolis, her office got a lead just three weeks before 9-11: A known Islamic extremist named Zacarias Moussaoui had paid \$8000 in cash for lessons to fly a Boeing 747. Rowley's team arrested him and wanted a warrant to search his laptop computer but Rowley's superiors at FBI headquarters said "no."

After the September 11, 2001, attacks, Rowley wrote a memo for FBI Director Robert Mueller documenting how FBI headquarters people in Washington had mishandled the information from Minnesota and failed to take action. For further information about Coleen and her interests in civil liberties, see:
www.coleenrowley.com
www.huffingtonpost.com/coleen-rowley

ILLINOIS FOIA OVERHAUL ATTEMPTS TO STREAMLINE PROCESS

Gov. Pat Quinn has signed a bill revamping public access to information and to public meetings.

Quinn signed SB 189, a revised Freedom of Information Act supported by the ACLU of Illinois, which rewrites the Illinois FOIA. Starting in January 2010, the process of requesting public information should become faster and more accountable.

“The main thing this new act does is enforce many of the good words that were already part of Illinois law that were ignored by public officials,” said Hanke Gratteau, a member of Quinn’s Illinois Reform Commission and for-

mer investigative reporter and managing editor for the Chicago Tribune. “There is now recourse if that is avoided, and that’s why it’s good enough for me.”

The state also launched a new Web site where anyone with Internet access can look up state employee salaries, state contacts and state-issued licenses. It’s called the Illinois Transparency and Accountability Portal. The site is up at <http://accountability.illinois.gov/> but has little content yet.

<http://www.firstelectricnewspaper.com/2009/08/quinn-signs-new-reform-laws.html>

ACLU Officers & Steering Committee

The local ACLU Steering Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm, in room 3405 of the Siebel Center, 201 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana. Meetings are open to members—if you would like to be placed on the agenda, please contact Esther Patt or any other committee member ahead of time.

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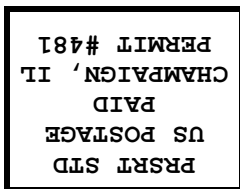
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**Fall Gathering
Friday Nov 13th!**

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



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Champaign County Chapter
P.O. Box 2651, Station A
Champaign, IL 61825-2651**

More Protection for Free Speech and Voting Rights

In the spring newsletter we reported that State Representative Naomi Jakobbson had introduced three bills addressing controversies that arose in our community last year. The bills passed the Illinois House, were carried through state Senate passage by State Senator Michael Frerichs and were signed by Governor Quinn in August. As a result:

- All faculty and staff at public universities and community colleges are free to communicate their views to any elected officials as long as they do not represent themselves as speaking for the institution.
- Faculty and staff at public universities and community colleges are free to attend political rallies on campus when not on duty and to wear political buttons or display political bumper stickers while on campus as long as any such display in an instructional setting is done only for purposes relevant to the class subject matter.
- State statute now includes a specific list of what forms of identification are sufficient for a registered voter to prove his or her current address is the same address as appears on the voter rolls. That list includes a lease and postmarked mail addressed to the voter – two forms of proof of address that were rejected at polling places last November at the instruction of the Champaign County Clerk.

BLOG.ACLU.ORG

*...timely updates from the experts on a
wide range of ACLU issues.*