

The **ACLU** News

2003 Chapter Activities Update

The Steering Committee which for many years had met at the College of Law was forced to move its meeting site because of policy changes by the College on the use of its facilities. We have found a new home for our monthly meetings at the studios of WILL. Our appreciation and thanks to our Don Mullally for making this possible.

Over the course of the past two years discussions have been frequent about the desirability of an essay contest for high school students on civil liberties. Thanks to a group headed by Cecile Steinberg this project is now underway. Response from the local high schools has not been very encouraging but as a first time effort we are not discouraged. The plan for the next school year involves making contact with schools and teachers much earlier, thereby enabling them to incorporate the essay contest into their curriculum for the year.

The Champaign Chapter supported enthusiastically and financially the Bill of Rights fund-raising dinner in Chicago at which our own Victor Stone was presented a lifetime achievement award. The small table of Champaign supporters was warmly received - and many members who were unable to attend the dinner made contributions amounting to more than \$2000 to the Roger Baldwin Foundation in honor of Victor.

The Chapter continues to support formally and informally the work of other organizations in the County whose values we share. We continue to welcome and include representatives of both the undergraduate chapter and the chapter at the College of Law. These groups have become a real presence within the University community, have

played an active role in educating students about rights and civil liberties, and have been effective and forceful in encouraging dialogues on issues of importance to them - and to society. Financial support has been offered by the Steering Committee to the groups as needs arise.

Late fall saw the demise of the Delinquency Prevention Policy Board. The Chapter had been influential in the founding of the group and had been actively represented on the Board. The initial State grant was for three years, during which time the Board was a significant factor in seeking and obtaining state and federal funds to support organizations and activities in the county. When federal funds ran out, the County Board assumed responsibility for the Delinquency Board. The high hopes that attended that transition were not achieved, and the Board ceased to operate. The Chapter however remains concerned about and committed to improving the situation for juvenile offenders and those at-risk.

The Chapter has continued to respond to issues presented to it. Over the course of this past year about a dozen questions of civil liberties infringement have been raised. Where there seemed to be a true civil liberties question, the individual has been referred to the "intake counselor" at the ACLU office in Chicago. The professional staff in Chicago then decides how best to handle the situation, whether to assume some responsibility for it, to refer the matter to a local attorney, or to inform the party that the matter is not of interest to or concern of ACLU of Illinois.

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As in the past we continue to receive formally and informally requests for advice and assistance. Discussions during the past six months have included items such as local policies on the arresting of individuals for possession of narcotics and drug precursors, the charging policies and practices of the States' Attorney, religious programs in the public schools, attempts of a faculty member to intimidate the free speech rights of a graduate student, an academic department heads refusal to consult with a faculty colleague, death penalty programs and concerns, policies of the Champaign County Housing Authority, child welfare issues, and the continuing saga of the *Crue* (Chief Illiniwek) case. The Steering Committee has also kept abreast of the discussions of the advisory committee to the Chief of the Champaign Police Department

Much time at our meetings has been devoted to discussions of the civil liberties scene in our country. The assault on civil liberties is pervasive and quite troubling to anyone who values the liberties that we enjoy. The erosion is serious. Individually and collectively we have from time to time indicated our concern to members of the Illinois delegation in Washington.

Members throughout the area are encouraged to communicate with us on issues about which they are concerned. Members are always welcome at the Steering Committee meetings (usually the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m.) The financial support tendered to the Chapter by those who attended the fall gathering was very important. The Steering Committee appreciated the hospitality of Cecile and Alan Steinberg for this event. The Committee has had more than adequate resources to address its needs, support its programs and the programs of others, and have a presence in the community.

Nominations for 2003-2004 Steering Committee

The nominations for this year's steering committee, to be selected at the annual meeting April 27, include two new members.

The present members were also re-nominated, with the exception of Charles McIntyre and Lois Pausch, who have asked to step down.

Officer nominees are: Stephen Portnoy, President; Paul Wisovaty, Vice-President; Shirley Stillinger and Kevin Nolan, co-Secretaries; and Joan Severns, Treasurer.

Meet the New Nominees...

I am Kathy Claar, former staff reporter and writer for the *Octopus* and *CUCityview* weekly newspapers. I have had other experience in journalism in Chicago and vicinity writing and reporting for the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* and various papers in a chain of suburban weeklies called *Pioneer Press*.

I attended graduate school in Ag Econ during the early and mid 80s and currently own and manage farmland in Shelby County.

I have long been a member of the League of Women Voters both here and in other places we have lived. I am married to Corby Claar. We have no children unless you count the four-legged furry feline kind.

I have become increasingly concerned since the events of September 11 that we as a nation may be sacrificing our civil liberties in exchange for dubious "protection" from terrorism. I am honored and very pleased to be nominated to the local chapter's steering committee.

I am Gary Peters. Born in Champaign County in 1952, I went to schools at Sidney, Unity (Tolono), and Eastern Illinois University, graduating with a B.S. in Music Education in 1973.

Unfortunately it was a sad time of cuts in funding for the Arts in public schools (sounds like today except for the starting salary of \$8,600!). I refocused my attention, picked up a hammer, and started to bend nails. Thus started my admiration for building, Architecture, and craftsmanship. I became a cabinetmaker in San Francisco in 1976, then returned to Champaign in 1978. Today I've run my own shop for 18 years.

MORE DEATH PENALTY PANELS HELD

Two death penalty panels were held in February on the UI campus. The first, held at the College of Law, featured two members of the Governor's Commission, State Appellate Defender Ted Gottfried and noted author and death row lawyer Michael Radelet and included UI Professors Patrick Keenan and Richard McAdams. Each spoke of their experience with cases where the accused were wrongly convicted or the death penalty should not have applied. Gottfried also gave a political perspective of the moratorium and clemency.

The second panel, sponsored by the Center on Democracy in

a Multiracial Society, was held at Temple Buell Auditorium. Billed as "The Prison Industrial System and the Future of Democracy in America", it was a lively event with DJ'd hip-hop music welcoming the audience. The front rows were filled with students from the Don Moyer's Boys and Girls Club. Several former death row inmates including recently **pardoned** Aaron Patterson, who had spoke to a previous forum by phone from death row in 2001, told the audience of their experiences involving discrimination. Patterson took up a collection to go toward bail for Ronald Kitchen, and encouraged support for Cortez Brown and Robert Todd, who he also believes are innocent.

ACLU Officers & Steering Committee

The local ACLU Steering Committee meets on the 1st 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 Stan Levy or any other committee

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VISIT YOUR NEW CHAMPAIGN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

At a recent forum on the Status of the Courts in Champaign County, one of the primary topics of discussion was making the court system more user-friendly.

One suggestion from officials was to have a “greeter” in the lobby to help people find their way to the right office or courtroom.

Clerk of the Circuit Court Linda S. Frank has also recently made court dockets available to the public on-line, going back several years. Previously the on-line system was only available to subscribers. While this is public information, they are still evaluating whether making it easily available free of charge could raise

privacy concerns, and are considering a limit to what cases are available in the future. The local Chapter has not taken a position on this issue.

While the League of Women Voters still has a court watcher program, very few trials have such watchers. We encourage members to exercise their right to attend public proceedings (nearly all courts **should** be open except for juvenile cases) and we would welcome your feedback on concerns such as defendants’ access to counsel and apparent understanding of procedures and pleas, equity of bond amounts set, etc. For calendars see: www.cccircuitclerk.com

2003 ACLU Inaugural Membership Conference

“Stand Up for Freedom—
Because Freedom Can’t Protect
Itself”

June 11-15, 2003
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USA PATRIOT Act II
Student Mobilization Initiatives
and Youth Reception

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