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## Center for Justice and Democracy's Illinois Focus Spring 2007 Newsletter

- **Victory for Illinois Wrongful Death Victims**

Illinois has amended their Wrongful Death Act (P.A. 95-0003) to allow families of victims of a wrongful death to be justly compensated for their grief, sorrow and mental suffering. Historically, the view was, people killed due to the wrongdoing of others were a commodity and their families could only be compensated by what the victim would have earned if they were alive. This is a narrow and antiquated view of a value of a person, and does not nearly reflect the trauma and suffering caused to family members, particularly when a child is involved.

Now a jury can at least hear from the families about the sorrow and grief when determining to what extent the wrongdoer should be held accountable. It is about time that Illinois came into line with 23 other states and allows juries to get a full picture of what their preventable death really means.

- **Attack on Civil Justice System from Sponsored News**

With the amounts of money that big business, insurance companies and corporate defense firms are pumping into the "tort reform" movement it is more important than ever for people to stand up and take notice. These institutions have done a masterful job at dictating the agenda and blaming victims for anything from insurance hikes to businesses and doctors leaving the state. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has gone so far as to start newspapers in "target" areas. These newspapers proclaim their journalistic independence but write about lawsuits and take a very anti-consumer view of the world. There are three such newspapers around the country with one sitting in our very own state. The Madison Record ([www.madisonrecord.com](http://www.madisonrecord.com)) and St. Claire Record ([www.stclairerecord.com](http://www.stclairerecord.com)) are owned by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and take a very anti-consumer, pro-business stance as they cover legal news in their respective counties. It is with tactics like these that these groups have been able to shape the minds of the American people.



Unlike what these newspapers are saying, litigation is hard and tiresome, but it is often the only avenue that consumers have to protect themselves and hold wrongdoers accountable.

## New Staff at CJ&D - IL

This year CJ&D - IL has seen many staff changes, but through it all we continue to fight on the behalf of victims throughout Illinois. We would like to take a moment to introduce the new staff at CJ&D - IL.

**Akane Tsuruta** joined us in February as a researcher/field organizer. She received her B.A. from Beloit College in 2005, double-majoring in Political Science and Communications. She has researched and worked in the media and media reform, including producing and anchoring a television news program based on the goals of civic journalism.

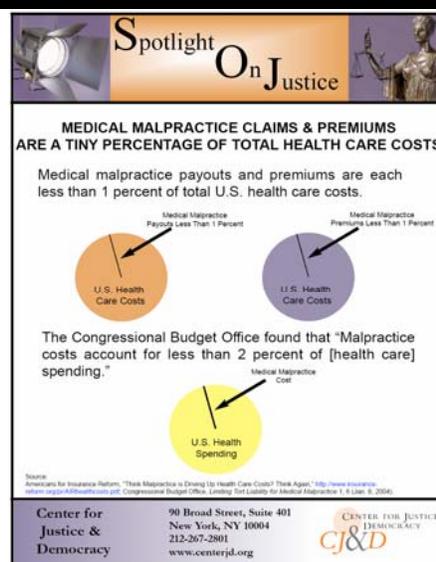
**Jason Held** joined us in May as the staff director. He grew up in Atlanta, GA and attended American University in Washington, D.C., where he majored in political science and international affairs. After working in various capacities in both politics and marketing in Washington and Los Angeles, he returned to school and received his law degree from Temple University in Philadelphia. Jason has been involved with many nonprofits, working on issues ranging from GLBT Rights to labor and employment issues to the arts.

They both are here for anything that you may need. Please contact them at **312-644-8442** or [Illinois@centerjd.org](mailto:Illinois@centerjd.org).

# New Resource: Spotlight On Justice

CJ&D has developed a new resource to help protect access to the Civil Justice System and get our message out. CJ&D now releases a weekly one-page "Spotlight on Justice," featuring key facts and information on a single issue. Past topics range from the asbestos industry's cover-up and the importance of class action lawsuits.

This concise and powerful resource allows us to keep issues affecting the civil justice system current and on people's minds. It is the perfect tool for busy people who may not have time to read our full, in-depth reports on the civil justice system and the underhanded attacks on it by tort "reformers." Keep an eye out for Illinois-specific Spotlights on Justice. Our weekly Spotlights on Justice can be found on our website at [www.centerjd.org](http://www.centerjd.org).



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Dear Friends of CJ&D,

As you can see we have been through many changes since the last time you heard from us. With our new team in place we are hoping to be a better resource for you in the future. We are committed to fighting people who would like to take the right of citizens to voice their complaints and get redress in the civil justice system while holding wrongdoers accountable. Soon we will be releasing a new report about construction safety in Illinois. This report will talk about how injured workers and the public lost protections and wrongdoers are held less accountable for their actions. Additionally, we are in the process of writing a report exposing nursing home abuse and neglect in Illinois. We are currently looking for victims and their families of nursing home abuse. If you know of cases or victims of these abuses, please contact our office and join the fight to help protect our seniors and families.



In this fight the odds are stacked against us. The other side is made up of large, well funded organizations. It is only with the help of friends like you that we will be able to continue and be successful in this fight. To that end we hope you will join us in this cause. Please contact us at [illinois@centerjd.org](mailto:illinois@centerjd.org) or **312-644-8442** to find out how you can help.

Thank You,

Jason Held, Staff Director & Akane Tsuruta, Field Organizer/Researcher