



116 W. Illinois St., Suite 5E
Chicago, IL 60610
Tel: 312.644.8442
Fax: 312.644.8443
www.centerjd.org
www.illinoisdeservesthetruth.org
illinois@centerjd.org

Center for Justice & Democracy's Illinois Focus Spring 2008 Newsletter

Support important legislation in the General Assembly

Our lawmakers are currently deliberating a number of important issues on the house and senate floors. All Illinoisans should support these bills:

HB 2094, Construction Safety Act of 2008. Sponsored by John A. Fritchey (D-11th District)
The Construction Safety Act of 2008 includes vital safety standards for construction sites and legal protections for workers who are injured on the job. It also creates incentives for owners and contractors to keep worksites safer for all of us.

HB 5213, Nursing Home Liability Insurance. Sponsored by David E. Miller (D-29th District)
Illinois nursing homes are not required to carry liability insurance. HB 5213 makes carrying liability insurance a requirement for nursing homes, just as it is for Illinois car drivers. It also makes information about nursing home insurance plans available to the public, so potential residents and their families are better informed when making important life decisions. This bill would give nursing home residents the ability hold wrongdoers accountable when their rights are violated.

HB 5865, Insurance Premium Loss Data Reports. Sponsored by Mary E. Flowers (D-31st District)
CJ&D joined a coalition to support this bill, which requires health insurance companies to report how much of their money actually goes to healthcare, versus how much goes to profit or administrative costs. This bill recently passed on the house floor and awaits deliberation in the senate.

SB 2784, Civil Procedure Death of Party. Sponsored by Don Harmon (D-39th District)
This bill allows people who have been wronged to still be able to receive due compensation if the responsible person dies. In this way innocent victims don't suddenly have to pay for another's wrongful conduct. This bill passed the senate and now awaits a vote in the house.

CJ&D is getting the message out that these bills are important to all Illinoisans. You can help us by contacting your local papers and state elected officials to let them know you support these bills, too. Go to the Illinois General Assembly homepage (www.ilga.gov) to find out how you can contact your legislators or contact us at illinois@centerjd.org or **312-644-8442** to find out other ways you can help.

Tort Deformers Attack Civil Justice System By Air

Big Business, the medical lobby and their front groups are at it again. This time, they're using their deep pockets to try to influence our judges. ISMIE, the state's largest medical liability insurer, is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on a radio ad campaign in support of medical malpractice caps. Since there aren't any malpractice proposals in the legislature, we can only conclude that they are trying to influence our Supreme Court, which will make a decision on caps later this year.

ISMIE isn't the only group spreading "tort deform" propaganda. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also launched an ad campaign, this one touting a survey they released attacking Illinois' legal and business climate. It's too bad they only surveyed corporate attorneys and other business insiders.

As you know, caps lessen the protection of patients and the ability to hold wrongdoers accountable. This issue has been at the forefront of the CJ&D fight ever since we opened our office doors, but now it is more important than ever. We may not have as much money as the corporate "fat cats", but we have the stories of people whose lives have been forever changed by medical malpractice. We need you to help us reveal the true nature of the unjust "caps" law. Contact us at illinois@centerjd.org or **312-644-8442** to find out how you can join the effort.



Welcome New CJ&D-IL Staff!

The CJ&D office welcomes a few new faces this spring.

Eric Bell steps in as the field organizer/researcher for the Center for Justice & Democracy - Illinois. Eric was previously a community organizer for the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) where he worked on campaigns against predatory lending. He graduated from Grinnell College in 2007 with a degree in political science.



Charlotte Jameson joins CJ&D as a research intern. She is currently a senior at the University of Chicago and expects to receive her BA in political science in June 2008. Charlotte is president of the University of Chicago chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), where she works to end violence against women within the community and on campus. She is interested in racial justice and women's rights.

Nadia Qazi is our new communications intern. She is an undergraduate at Loyola University Chicago majoring in English Literature. She has always been a strong advocate for social justice and civil responsibility, and has published two essays on related topics. Nadia enjoys working as a mentor for inner-city children through Humanity First's Our Kids, Our Future project. She is currently pursuing a career in law.



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- **Check out our blog** - Last fall we launched our blog, *Illinois Deserves the Truth* (illinoisdeservesthetruth.org). Now, CJ&D staffers in New York started one of their own, *The Pop Tort* (thepoptort.com), which takes a humorous look at the civil justice system from a national perspective. Be sure to visit *The Pop Tort* for CJ&D commentary on civil justice news from across the nation, and *Illinois Deserves the Truth* for Illinois-specific news.
- **CJ&D Executive Director speaks at Loyola conference** - On May 7th, CJ&D Executive Director Joanne Doroshow will speak about "health courts" at a conference hosted by Loyola University. "Health courts" are administrative panels designed to replace civil courts as a way of settling malpractice claims. However, these panels favor corporate interests over injured victims and violate our constitutional right to a trial by jury. To learn more about "health courts" visit the CJ&D website (centerjd.org) and read the report, "Why Health Courts are Unconstitutional".



"If loving the civil justice system is wrong, I don't want to be right!"



- **Help us update your information** - We are updating our office contact lists. We want to be able to send you our latest legislative and action alerts, so please, send your contact information to Eric Bell at ericb@centerjd.org, or call at (312) 644-8442.