CITIZEN ACTION/ILLINOIS
2009 Program Resolutions

Approved by the Policy Council
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ECONOMIC POLICY AND JOBS

Citizen Action/Illinois is committed to developing and securing an economic system characterized by sustainable economic growth and opportunity for all Americans; a system designed to create jobs while meeting the needs of our society.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports state and federal programs that secure the basic economic rights of all our citizens to the jobs, education, housing, and health care which are vital to our democracy; full employment for every individual willing and able to work, and programs that include creatively using public dollars to stimulate growth in high-value, high-wage jobs in both the private and public sectors, including public investment in profitable new enterprises, ambitious job training and retraining programs coordinated with economic development projects and targeted to areas of high unemployment; and investment in higher education programs that will stimulate economic growth in basic research, medicine, environmentally sustainable industries and other emerging technologies.

Citizen Action/Illinois will work to guarantee a living wage for all working families. We support higher state and federal minimum wages, as well as passage of living wage ordinances at the state and municipal levels and comparable worth legislation as well as the efforts of unions, women's organizations, and other coalitions that are striving towards these goals.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the right of all workers, including our own employees, to organize democratically and bargain collectively concerning wages, benefits and conditions of employment.

Citizen Action/Illinois will oppose all measures, legislative, legal or administrative, designed to restrict that right or reduce the benefits under workers compensation that have been won by organized labor. We support efforts to strengthen collective bargaining including passage of the federal Employee Free Choice Act, as well as legislation to outlaw the use of "permanent replacement" workers to undermine the right to strike, to prohibit the use of strikebreakers by public-supported institutions, and to prohibit use of public funds to oppose organizing efforts. We support the inclusion of farm workers and former welfare recipients in the overtime protections of the state minimum wage law and oppose any efforts to deny workers overtime pay, including attempts to give comp time in lieu of increased pay.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes any efforts to privatize public sector services and contracts when those efforts would have the effect of undermining collective labor agreements, destroying jobs and wasting taxpayer money.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the development of a rational trade policy that strives for global economic integration, which will improve living standards and the quality of life for everyone.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports a “high wage” strategy of economic development that places American goods and services on an equitable basis with foreign goods and services and prevents unfair competition from foreign goods that are produced at substandard wages and/or by children. We support measures designed to encourage public bodies to “Buy American” and oppose any trade agreements that will result in lowering labor, health, safety or environmental protections. We oppose the “Wal-Mart” model of economic growth, one that resists collective bargaining and reduces living standards for its employees, while displacing community-based businesses through the mass marketing of imported goods produced in low-wage communities. We also support efforts to eliminate sweatshops in the United States and in factories around the world, and urge the establishment of
independent monitoring groups to investigate sweatshop abuses while demanding that U.S. retailers pledge to monitor their subcontractors to ensure that human rights codes of conduct are observed.

*Citizen Action/Illinois supports the Invest in America’s Future agenda which will create government funds to guarantee the creation of civilian jobs that address the real needs of this country for renewal of infrastructure, environmental repair and protection, educational improvement, affordable, integrated, and accessible housing, job training and health care.*

**ENERGY POLICY & UTILITY RATES**

*Citizen Action/Illinois is committed to achieving fair, reliable and affordable rates for utility services in Illinois, while also supporting policies and programs that promote conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.*

Citizen Action/Illinois supports a comprehensive energy policy that includes: (1) an affordable payment plan for low-income utility consumers, (2) statewide energy efficient appliance standards; (3) significant new funding for energy efficiency programs that can help to save consumers money, provide environmental quality benefits and keep energy dollars in the Illinois economy, and (4) full and adequate state funding for low-income energy assistance, (5) a state renewable portfolio standard, which would require electric utilities to generate a portion of their electricity from renewable resources such as wind, solar and biomass.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the rigorous enforcement of state and federal safety requirements regarding the operation of nuclear and coal power plants. We will work to replace these plants with safer, cleaner sources of power in order to reduce reliance on fossil fuel power sources that pollute the air.

Citizen Action/Illinois will work for fair electricity rates. We will oppose proposals that would allow electric utility companies to charge market rates to captive customers, in violation of longstanding consumer protections contained in the Public Utilities Act.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports state legislation to maintain a well-funded Citizens Utility Board (CUB) and will oppose attempts by lawmakers to limit CUB’s ability to lobby or participate in the legislative process.

We support an elected Illinois Commerce Commission, under which ICC commissioners would be more accountable to consumers for their actions and less likely to favor utility companies on decisions involving rates, consumer service policies, and financial restructuring.

We support the restoration of federal regulation of natural gas suppliers.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to protect consumers from Alternative Retail Gas Suppliers. Residential and small business customers are at the mercy of ARGS marketers who prey on the customers’ inherent inability to accurately predict gas prices on the national futures markets. The ARGS systematically engage in deceptive marketing campaigns and provide no real value for consumers.
Recognizing that the accelerated pace of technological and regulatory change in the telecommunications industry requires new public policies to provide consumers access to the most effective and efficient service, Citizen Action/Illinois will work to assure that consumers are protected and that specifically residential, nonprofit organizations, and small business ratepayers receive the best quality service at the lowest possible costs and that the privacy of consumers is strictly guarded.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports universal service policies to keep residential phone rates low; to improve access for high-cost areas, like rural counties; to assist access for key populations, including low-income residents, children, minorities, seniors, and people with disabilities; to facilitate the wiring of schools, libraries and community centers and to ensure equitable infrastructure investment and prohibit “electronic redlining”. We will continue to advocate for fair rules to ensure that competition develops not only for business users but also for residential ratepayers, without one company, such as the incumbent monopoly provider, having undue advantages over market entrants. We will work to uphold the rights of consumers included in the 2001 Illinois Telecommunications Act and to uphold and strengthen the authority of the Illinois Commerce Commission to enforce strong telecommunications regulations and assess meaningful sanctions. We urge the FCC to maintain adequate funding levels for the Video Relay Service (VRS) program, which is vital to the communication access of people who are deaf.

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS & TOXIC SAFETY**

*Citizen Action/Illinois believes all people have a fundamental right to a safe and healthy environment in their communities and workplace, as well as an obligation to maintain environmental quality for future generations.*

Citizen Action/Illinois will work to maintain, improve, and protect the existing network of public safeguards designed to protect the quality of air, water, land and natural resources. We support policies to improve the fuel economy of our automobiles and trucks as a means to reduce dependence on imported oil. We support tax credits for the sale of advanced fuel-efficient vehicles and better public transit to provide an energy-saving alternative to private motorized modes of transportation. We support the Illinois Clean Diesel Campaign to reduce diesel emissions throughout the state, improve public health and air quality.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports improving the safety of our food supply and the protection of our farm workers. We support efforts to improve the inspection and quality of our food, and we support Senator Richard Durbin’s legislation to consolidate, streamline and enhance food safety oversight at the federal level by creating a single federal Food Safety Administration as well as the implementation of a food safety program to standardize the food safety activities of America’s food supply. We support labeling of all food items treated with dangerous pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, radiation or subject to genetic engineering. We support the right to know about allergens, hazardous substances, and toxins contained in synthetic fragrances and cosmetics, and call on the FDA to place a warning label on such products marketed without adequate testing.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports expanding "community right-to-know" disclosure of toxics used, emitted, transported or disposed by industry and government, including a zero reporting threshold for persistent, bioaccumulative toxic contaminants. We recognize that the only long-term solutions to the toxic hazards created by landfills and incinerators, air emissions, water discharges, and the transportation of hazardous chemicals; are policies designed to reduce the use of toxic substances in
our industrial processes. We support state and federal legislation to create a national toxic use reduction program.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports aggressive public policies, including federal and state legislation, to cap and reduce domestic greenhouse gas pollution and calls on the U.S. to support the strong international treaties to reduce global warming negotiated at Kyoto and to be negotiated at Copenhagen in December 2009.

**EDUCATION**

*Citizen Action/Illinois strongly supports the right of everyone to the best possible integrated education and fully supports the system of public education from pre-school through university levels.*

Citizen Action/Illinois supports increasing and equalizing state funding of local elementary, secondary and community college systems as well as Head Start/Home Start programs. We will work for the replacement of residential property tax funding of schools with full state funding through the income tax.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes efforts aimed at weakening collective bargaining rights for teachers and other public education employees. We will oppose actions and policies that have the potential to undermine public education through the establishment of charter schools, vouchers, or other methods whereby public funds are used to support private education. We call for a moratorium on the recent public school closings, particularly when unique educational services for students with disabilities are provided in those settings. We seek to preserve the economic vitality of communities where our public universities and community colleges are located by opposing the privatization of services critical to these institutions’ operation.

Citizen Action/Illinois calls for ending the decline in state support for Illinois public universities. We call on public university management to recognize the collective bargaining rights of its faculty, staff, graduate students and other employees. We support ending the continuing practice of abuse and overuse of part-time faculty.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the availability of appropriate and adequate bilingual education at all levels of public education.

Citizen Action/Illinois will work to ensure that all children with disabilities are guaranteed a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment, with all necessary supportive services. We call on local school districts to remedy any physical and programmatic barriers that prevent students with disabilities from attending/educators with disabilities from working at their neighborhood schools. We oppose any efforts to reduce funding for special education as well as any effort to amend federal and/or state special education laws and regulations that result in or perpetuate the segregation of students with disabilities. We support passage of the IDEA Fairness Restoration Act and call on Congress to follow through with its statutory commitment to fully fund IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) by increasing the federal contribution from 18% to 40%.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports policies to ensure that every child and employee has a right to an environmentally safe, accessible, and healthy school that is clean and in good repair. We support policies to help students make nutritious food choices while at school, including policies to standardize and implement statewide nutrition standards for all food in schools, including “competitive foods” or
foods sold in the cafeteria outside of the school lunch program. We will also support efforts to ensure that students have physical education as part of the school day and that primary grades have recess each day.

Citizen Action/Illinois calls on the federal government to assert its historic role in improving education at every level. In particular, we will work for a federal commitment to universal higher education that makes college education affordable for all by significantly expanding federally-funded student grants, as well as low-interest loans, as well as increased federal support for Head Start and early childhood education. We support increased federal funding for academically enriched after-school programs administered by public schools, and programs to supplement local and state resources for primary and secondary schooling including funding for additional teachers, facility improvements, and busing so students with disabilities may equally participate in extracurricular activities.

**FAMILY FARMS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Citizen Action/Illinois supports policies to encourage family farming in Illinois and a national farm and food policy that assures fair commodity prices by establishing appropriate price supports and regulation of supply to meet demand, and a national grain reserve to prevent consumer gouging in the event of crop failures.

Citizen Action/Illinois calls for the expansion of Illinois’ local and organic food system, as well as an assessment by the state of impediments to locally grown food production.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports new state and federal policies aimed at assisting rural areas and calls for special efforts to aid rural schools and health care facilities, and develop necessary infrastructure (such as accessible transit systems).

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the system of member-owned and member-controlled rural electric cooperatives.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to bring justice to migrant employees that work on many of the farms in Illinois, including protection from unsafe exposure to farm chemicals, sanitary work conditions, and fair payment for their labor.

Citizen Action/Illinois is concerned about the environmental and public health dangers of corporate hog farming and supports strict controls, including local community oversight of large-scale hog farm siting decisions.

**FAMILY POLICY**

Citizen Action/Illinois believes that our hope for the future lies in ensuring better lives for our children. Given that one-third of all families in the United States include people with disabilities, we will also remain attentive to the needs of the disability community in all of its advocacy efforts regarding family policy. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, we support the right of people with disabilities to bodily integrity, and freedom from medically unnecessary sterilization, growth attenuation procedures, and other treatments that violate the civil, constitutional, and reproductive rights of people with disabilities.

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Citizen Action/Illinois supports increasing protections provided by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, including their extension to other employers.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports increased public resources for child care at the state and local levels, and urges legislation that will increase child care options and facilities, while improving the quality of child care services.

Citizen Action/Illinois will support efforts at both the state and federal levels to enhance enforcement of child support payments, to enact parental abduction legislation to prevent kidnapping by non-custodial parents as well as sex abuse legislation to ensure effective criminal sanctions and appropriate treatment for perpetrators. We support progressive proposals to increase funding for child support and services for victims of domestic violence, and to improve the physical accessibility of domestic violence shelters.

Citizen Action/Illinois believes sexual orientation should not play a role in child custody matters and supports full and equal adoption and child custody rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Citizen Action/Illinois believes that young people need information about their sexual health to facilitate healthy, informed and responsible decision-making. As such, it is important that Illinois youth receive comprehensive sex education in schools that includes information about abstinence as well as medically accurate, age-appropriate information about the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and also informs youth about establishing and maintaining healthy life skills.

**FEDERAL and STATE RESPONSIBILITY**

Citizen Action/Illinois strongly supports the crucial role of the federal government in protecting and improving the rights and welfare of all people in the country. In recent years, Congress has transferred many programs to the states. While we believe government must be more accountable to and get more democratic input from the people, the wholesale shifting of those obligations to the state is inappropriate for many reasons: federal policies prevent inequality among states and are more cost-effective; only the federal government can respond to regional problems and crises; only the federal government has funds on the scale necessary to solve national problems; and national crises, require a national commitment.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports a strong federal effort in improving public education, economic security, health care, public health and public safety, child care, the environment, affordable, accessible, integrated housing, transportation, livable neighborhoods, equal opportunity, immigrant rights, global economic and environmental rights, demilitarization, progressive taxation, and natural disaster relief.

State government is a key in providing and maintaining a multitude of vital services, including education, environmental protection and transportation. State government oversees significant public properties and other assets necessary to provide those services, and according to the state constitution, such property can only be used for public purposes. State government is constitutionally mandated to raise the revenue necessary to fund the budget for those services, and the power of taxation cannot be surrendered, suspended or contracted away.
Citizen Action/Illinois opposes the privatization of the state lottery and the private-operation of the Illinois Tollway, whether by sale or lease. We call on the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly to craft and enact significant progressive tax reform that would address the structural deficit in state revenue and pension systems, fully fund state services, pensions and other obligations, and increase revenue to meet the state’s constitutional obligation to provide primary funding for public education.

**FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CREDIT**

*Ongoing changes in the system of banking and financial services adversely affect consumers, especially those who lack good credit or access to mainstream financial services. Citizen Action/Illinois is committed to an agenda to help consumers create and protect their financial assets.*

Citizen Action/Illinois will monitor the financial services industry in order to protect consumer interests, support reinvestment in local communities, and to assure access to affordable financial services for individual consumers, including reforms to end excessive interest rates, abusive payday and car title loan operations and other forms of predatory lending. We support efforts to reform and provide protection to consumers in real estate settlement transactions, including the purchase of title insurance and mortgages. We support legislation to win fair consumer credit including a reduction in credit card interest rates through disclosure of interest rates in all credit card advertising, caps on credit card interest rates, as well as prohibiting unfair transaction charges for card use at automatic teller machines. Citizen Action/Illinois supports strong and reliable consumer protections to borrowers; credit card forms and statements that have plain language in plain sight; tools that help people make an informed choice about what credit care use; and beefed up monitoring, enforcement, and penalties.

Citizen Action/Illinois will work to ensure that consumer protections are provided to borrowers who take out long or short term, high-interest rate loans.

**FOREIGN POLICY AND ARMS CONTROL – proposed edits: Jerry Kendall & David Borris**

*Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes that the question of world peace is of overriding concern to our society and all others. As a progressive organization, we commit ourselves to work for a peaceful and just world in which all individuals enjoy security, freedom from hunger and want, self-determination, and political, economic and social justice. We also commit to support for multi-national rather than unilateral efforts to attain these goals, and believe that the United Nations should be supported, as it is vital to attaining these goals.*

The war with Iraq has had tragic consequences for the people of the U.S., its economy, labor rights, civil liberties and prospects for improvements in healthcare, education, housing and transportation, as well as atrocities in the Middle East. Citizen Action/Illinois applauds the apparent progress in Iraq towards a transition to full Iraqi responsibility and pull out of military forces by August 31, 2010. We look towards a similar but shorter transition time in Afghanistan.

We call for expanded benefits for veterans, a timelier disability-evaluation process, high quality healthcare for veterans with disabilities, and protection for workers affected by military base closings. We herald the courage demonstrated by Iraqi workers and unions. We call for full respect for the right of Iraqi workers to freely organize and bargain in unions of their choice and unconditional cancellation.
of the foreign debt and reparations accumulated by Iraq during the Hussein regime. We pledge continuing solidarity in concert with the international trade union movement and the workers of Iraq as they lead the struggle for an end to the violence and a more just and democratic nation.

We support negotiation and diplomacy in efforts to avoid military conflict. We specifically reject the horror of pre-emptive war, which is contrary to U.S. tradition and international law. We seek global peace through social and economic justice.

We stand in defense of civil liberties. We oppose anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and all forms of racial, ethnic and religious violence and bigotry.

We condemn the use of torture; Citizen Action/Illinois praises the Obama administration’s commitment to prohibit torture and abide by the protocols set out within the Common Articles of the Geneva Conventions, we applaud President Obama’s efforts to close the Guantanamo detention center and regularize the handling of captured suspected terrorists.

We also believe violations of the Geneva Conventions are war crimes, and any breaches of the international treaty should be investigated.

We urge that all reasonable efforts be made to justly and peacefully resolve the Middle East controversies, especially those between Israel and its neighboring States, and the Palestinian people, who deserve a sovereign state of their own living in peace side by side with Israel.

We believe that decisions about going to war should be made only after an open, honest debate about foreign policy and full Congressional debate.

We believe that national defense is among the fundamental duties of government. We further believe that a proper defense and true national security must rest on a viable domestic economy in a world order based on democracy and economic justice. Military policy must be reprioritized to reflect the new and different world challenges faced by the U.S. and democracy generally. Such new policy should reflect significant reallocations in spending, particularly focused on identifying wasteful spending on outmoded cold war weapons systems. Progressive reprioritization means that the first priority is the health and welfare of our families; current military spending priorities are hurting our families’ welfare.

We urge U.S. leaders not only to support efforts to strengthen democracy across the globe, but also specifically to seek justice and debt relief for peoples in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The economic crisis in Latin America, Africa and many Asian countries has deepened. We join with churches, unions and progressive organizations worldwide to call for total forgiveness of their un-payable debt to the World Bank and the IMF. We oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas and other unfair trade agreements that do not allow these countries to develop or to protect their environments. We also call for massive and prompt aid to fight AIDS in these countries.

We oppose the proliferation of all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. We praise President Obama for his pledge in Prague “to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” and to immediately and aggressively pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We applaud his commitment to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and to work to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We are encouraged by the signing of the follow on treaty to START I, but recognize that this is still only a small step. We encourage the
President to actively engage with the nuclear armed nations of the world to recognize their obligations under Article VI of the NPT to pursue negotiations in good faith on a treaty for complete nuclear disarmament. While Citizen Action/Illinois echoes President Obama’s position condemning the development of nuclear weapons by Iran and North Korean, or any other country, we also recognize the critical role disarmament plays in the non proliferation debate. We therefore encourage the President to set as a goal of the 2010 Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the beginnings of negotiations on a verifiable nuclear weapons convention with a path to zero.

We support a ban on land mines and oppose the proliferation of foreign arms sales to unjust, undemocratic and unstable governments, and believe that the arms trade is a long-term threat to our own peace and stability.

GOVERNMENT ETHICS & CAMPAIGN REFORM

Citizen Action/Illinois believes that the democratic nature of the electoral process in the U.S. has been fundamentally undermined by the undue influence of special interest money in politics. Citizen Action/Illinois will make every effort to expose that corrupting influence, while supporting reforms aimed at increasing the democratic process and representative nature of local, state and federal government.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports state legislation to reduce the undue influence of special interests and will continue to support legislation to further tighten campaign ethics and disclosure rules, including bans on campaign contributions by regulated industries and other appropriate contribution limits.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to reform Congressional, state, local and election campaign laws by substituting public funding for private donations for candidates who accept limits on overall campaign contributions. We support passage of Clean Money campaign reform legislation in the Illinois General Assembly and Congress, and will work closely with Public Campaign and others to achieve that end.

Citizen Action/Illinois will actively work to keep our Courts fair and impartial. We promote public financing of judicial elections.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes term limitations for elected state and federal legislators.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports a voter’s right to choose a “straight party” ballot and calls for that right to be restored in Illinois.

Citizen Action/Illinois believes that every vote should count, and calls for serious election reform across the country to encourage broader civic participation.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the examination and review of the state’s Freedom of Information Act provisions and Open Meetings Act in order to strengthen them, thereby protecting the public’s right to know.
HEALTH CARE

Citizen Action/Illinois believes that every citizen should have the right to affordable high quality health care and that the time has come for Health Security through a universal health care coverage program for America.

Citizen Action/Illinois is committed to enacting a national health insurance program that covers everyone in the U.S. for all necessary services, including medical, preventive, pharmaceutical, home and community-based long term care, as well as effective alternative health care services; that is structured through a publicly-administered single-payer program such as we already employ for Medicare; that is progressively financed through the tax system and does not rely on out-of-pocket cost-sharing to limit access to services; and that provides consumers choice of providers and facilities while controlling expenditures through negotiated rates and global budgeting.

Citizen Action/Illinois will work with USAction and the Healthcare for America NOW Campaign to fight for a uniquely American healthcare solution that gives every American a guarantee of coverage and real choice. Citizen Action/Illinois supports a national healthcare agenda with the following principles: 1) affordable coverage 2) comprehensive benefits 3) choice of private or public health insurance 4) equal access to quality care.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports strong federal patient protection legislation that broadens the rights of all health care consumers in managed care and affirms the liability of health maintenance organizations for the medical harm caused by their negligence.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes changes in the Illinois Medicaid program that would place its low-income clients at risk of erosion or disruption of benefits in the name of cost-containment. We support the integration of all people, regardless of income, into a universal health care plan.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports greater public efforts to address the prevention and treatment of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome epidemic; such policies must stress public education, adequate resources for care, and intensified research. We support (1) a healthcare system that fully addresses the medical needs of people with HIV/AIDS, (2) science-based programs that reduce the rates of new HIV infections, (3) a significantly increased national investment in objective scientific research to stop the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic, and (4) drug treatment and rational drug policies that have been proven to improve the lives of people with HIV/AIDS and to stem the spread of HIV.

Citizen Action/Illinois, recognizing that cigarette-smoking causes an estimated 250,000 fatalities each year in the U.S., calls for state and federal efforts to eliminate the marketing of and easy access to cigarettes and other tobacco products by children, and ending federal subsidies for the tobacco industry.

Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes that gun violence has become a public health epidemic in many urban communities, and supports local, state and federal efforts to ban handguns and assault weapons.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports passage of a state mandatory motorcycle helmet law.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports establishment of freestanding birthing centers to increase the health care options for women in underserved areas.
Citizen Action/Illinois will work to ensure that consumers receive high quality long-term care and a protection of their rights through an effective and independent State Long-Term Care Ombudsman program to wholly represent residents in all long-term care facilities. We support the Illinois Long-Term Care Council.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts that maximize public resources and develop skills for persons with serious mental illness, children with serious emotional disturbance, and those with developmental disabilities. We believe that comprehensive mental health legislation should foster the continual development of a comprehensive mental health system and support greater state funding for community services and state facilities; improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of clinical interventions to match the changing needs of clients; develop appropriate tools and structures to manage resources and care; promote integration of service systems in order to provide a comprehensive array of mental health and developmental disability support services; provide financial resources to employ adequate numbers of trained staff in the management and clinical treatment of the mentally ill and developmentally disabled in community settings, particularly in IMD’s, nursing homes and group homes; enhance and expand the involvement of consumers in the review, planning, evaluation and delivery of mental health and developmental disability services, and educate consumers in the political system, e.g. voter empowerment programs. We support all direct care workers to organize and bargain collectively in both private and publicly managed facilities and community care providers.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports parity in the provision of services for people with mental health disabilities.

We support legislative efforts that require health insurance coverage of hearing aids for people who are deaf and/or hard of hearing.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to extend state-provided health insurance benefits to the domestic partners of employees of the state and other large employers.

Citizen Action/Illinois believes that all medical decisions should be made by consumers or their designee (in consultation with their health care professional), and there should be no ideological limits on stem-cell research.

Citizen Action/Illinois affirms that hospitals organized as non-profits and exempt from property taxes are required by state law to provide charity care to those who cannot afford their services. We support efforts to rescind the non-profit tax status of those hospitals that do not provide adequate levels of charity care.

**HOUSING**

*Citizen Action/Illinois believes safe, adequate, affordable, integrated, and accessible housing is a right for all Illinois citizens and supports efforts to provide and protect housing for those in need.*

Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes that discrimination occurs against tenants who have housing vouchers, income from SSI, SSDI, TANF, child support, wages from farm work. We oppose any and all forms of discrimination of tenants based on their sources of income.

Citizen Action/Illinois calls for federal, state, and local governments to recommit themselves to ensuring that the housing needs are met for all, including an active program to increase the availability of accessible, integrated, affordable housing and to provide housing for the homeless, while opposing
attempts to privatize low and moderate income public housing. We support the development of national, state and local affordable housing policies that include both the preservation of assisted housing and other methods to maximize housing opportunities. We support the creation and preservation of accessible, affordable, and integrated housing options for people with disabilities.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the development of national, state and local affordable housing policies that include both the preservation of assisted housing and other measures to preserve and increase housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income renters. We support full federal funding of the HOPE VI program and oppose cuts in funding for public housing. We oppose the elimination or reduction in funding of the HOPE VI program used to renew communities devastated by poverty and disinvestments. We oppose legislation to convert the Housing Choice voucher program into state block grants.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports improved FHA policies to eliminate the backlog of vacant housing and to implement effective mechanisms to address mortgage delinquencies.

Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes that redlining by homeowners insurance companies undermines access to affordable housing in many urban areas, and supports HUD's initiative to identify and eliminate such discriminatory practices.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports anti-homelessness campaigns and such creative measures as community land trusts, fair rent commissions, and enhanced tenant protections during eviction proceedings and termination of tenancy. We support programs to give special attention to the needs of tenants who experience emergencies including those occasioned by domestic violence. We also support the exploration of programs to use aggregated security deposits for low-income housing development.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports national and local efforts to enforce mandatory set-aside policies. Such a policy would mandate developers to keep a portion of new or rehabilitated units affordable to people with low incomes or contribute to affordable housing trust funds. We support efforts to enact a National Housing Trust Fund.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the addition of public housing residents to the governing boards of public housing authorities.

Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes the inherent benefits of the Community Reinvestment Act and opposes any effort to dilute its requirements or enforcement.

HUMAN SERVICES

Citizen Action/Illinois has a long-standing commitment to protecting the poor and powerless from attacks on programs that address their basic needs, and is committed to defending those programs at the local, state, and national levels.

Citizen Action/Illinois will oppose any and all welfare “reform” proposals that aim to in effect punish low-income adults, children, people with disabilities and legal immigrants instead of addressing their basic needs and focusing on the elimination of poverty. We oppose efforts to supplant federal money appropriated for low-income families, or block grant Medicaid, as back door efforts to cut services to our neediest families. We will support proposals to increase funding for the Temporary Assistance to
Needy Families (TANF) program. We will also support the preservation of flexibility currently afforded to states to implement the TANF program.

Citizen Action/Illinois will support legislation that ends the federal five-year lifetime time limit on cash assistance. If the lifetime time limit stays, we will work to ensure that no individual or family provision complying with program requirements or case plans or making a good faith effort to become employable will lose their benefits.

**INSURANCE REFORM**

*Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes that access to adequate, affordable insurance coverage is a necessity for consumers, businesses and local governments, and that such coverage must not be provided at the expense of basic citizen legal rights.*

Citizen Action/Illinois supports ending insurance price-fixing by repealing the industry's exemption from state anti-trust regulations and anti-rebating laws; rate protections for consumers, including rate review and public rate filings, discounts for good drivers, flex-rating. We call for an end to insurance rate discrimination based on gender, marital status, disability, geography and/or other factors not related to risk.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports legislation to make the Division of Insurance more accountable to consumers by making the position of Director of Insurance an elected office as well as efforts to increase competition in insurance rates by establishing state underwriting authorities for local governments, small businesses and non-profit organizations, and by allowing banks to broker personal lines of insurance, with appropriate consumer safeguards.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports federal and state insurance reform including much greater disclosure by insurance companies of earning, losses and profits, as well as repeal of the McCarran-Ferguson Act exempting insurance companies from anti-trust regulations.

Citizen Action/Illinois renews its commitment to work at all policy levels -- legislative, regulatory, legal and voluntary -- to end discriminatory practices by insurance companies, including those against victims of domestic violence.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes federal and state efforts to strip health insurance plans of state-mandated health benefits, including efforts to establish so-called “association health plans” or “high deductible health option plans” that preempt state law.

**LEGAL RIGHTS & CONSUMER SAFETY**

*Citizen Action/Illinois believes that a strong civil justice system is necessary to protect individuals from corporate recklessness, professional negligence and unsafe products. Citizen Action/Illinois continues to oppose efforts to reduce protections in the Illinois General Assembly and the Congress; and will strongly resist these efforts to limit the legal rights of plaintiffs.*
Citizen Action/Illinois supports the passage of a genuine “Patients’ Right to Know Act” to provide consumers with information on their medical providers, including their medical malpractice and disciplinary history.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports laws, regulations and policies to provide consumers and legislators with ready access to current information on health care service providers and facilities, including comparative and historical charts that show costs, prior and current annual and complaint inspection/survey reports on deficiencies, imposition of remedies, monetary fines that are imposed, monetary fines that are collected, and plans of correction.

Citizen Action/Illinois will oppose state and federal legislation designed to limit rights for workers and consumers to sue for damages from the sale and manufacture of unsafe products, and will work for increased criminal sanctions against corporations in product liability cases.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes the caps on non-economic damages that became law in 2005, and calls for repealing those caps, while opposing any further attempt to weaken or limit the rights of malpractice victims to receive full compensation for their injuries. We support the state’s increased oversight of medical malpractice insurance rates through public hearings on proposed rate increases and full disclosure of rate-setting methods and insurance company financials. We support efforts to more aggressively police and remove incompetent or negligent medical providers. We support legal efforts for the State Supreme Court to review P.A. 94-0677, which caps non-economic damages for medical malpractice in Illinois.

Citizen Action/Illinois will oppose attempts to weaken or repeal tort-based worker compensation laws such as the rail industry's Federal Employers' Liability Act and to reduce liability under existing state and federal laws for the damage caused to workers by asbestos exposure, while supporting efforts to increase civil liability for employers who risk the worker health and safety, including reinstatement of the Structural Work Act.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports full funding of legal assistance programs designed to provide low-income individuals with access to necessary legal representation.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports mandatory safety standards and independent pre-market testing for children's products. Our children are our most vulnerable consumers and companies should be required to test products for safety before they reach store shelves, rather than relying on ineffective recalls once a child is injured or killed.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Citizen Action/Illinois believes every Illinois resident has the right to be free from the fear of crime. Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes that the vast majority of those who live in poverty do not commit crimes, but that the existence of poverty greatly increases street crime. Consequently we reaffirm our commitment to policies that will end poverty, through jobs and economic development in impoverished areas as well as through quality education for all.

Citizen Action/Illinois advocates for an adequate number of police officers and supports the incarceration of repeat offenders but acknowledges that this alone is not enough to ensure safe communities. We support a comprehensive approach to crime that includes: 1) a community-oriented
policing strategy involving a partnership between the police and communities they serve 2) civilian review boards to hold police accountable 3) efforts to provide resources to block clubs and community groups, including changes in the state drug forfeiture law that would return a portion of seized assets to community-based groups assisting with law enforcement.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports alternatives to costly and ineffective mass incarceration, including community service and restitution to crime victims, greater post-incarceration support, meaningful education and job training opportunities. We support greater state and federal assistance to help communities offer drug treatment to everyone who needs help.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports a broader ban on assault weapons as well as handguns, and stricter regulation of firearms, ammunition and firearm dealers.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports tougher criminal sanctions for white-collar crimes, including environmental crime, so that serious offenders serve jail time.

Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes that domestic violence and sexual assault are serious crimes and supports full enforcement of and continued enhancement of existing legislation concerning these crimes.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the education of police officers regarding the prevention of crimes against senior citizens.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes the privatization of the prison system and the operation of for-profit prisons.

**RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

*Citizen Action/Illinois will fight for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities and will use our political power to ensure that all individuals with disabilities in Illinois are guaranteed their fundamental right to choice, equality of opportunity, inclusion, and integration, full participation, independent living, and economic self sufficiency.*

Citizen Action/Illinois believes people with disabilities in Illinois should have the right to live, learn, and work among family, friends, and loved ones in communities of their own choosing, and supports public policies that will enhance this goal.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports enforcement of the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.* Citizen Action/Illinois supports state and federal legislation which affirms the rights of all people with disabilities – regardless of age or disability type – to receive services in the community rather than in segregated institutions and facilities. Citizen Action/Illinois urges the State of Illinois to prohibit the reopening of institutions for people with disabilities, unless needed.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports passage of the federal Community Choice Act the Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net Act, and the establishment of a national, voluntary insurance program for purchasing community living assistance services and supports through the CLASS Act.
Citizen Action/Illinois supports passage of the ADA Restoration Act and commits itself to aggressively fighting efforts to repeal, amend or otherwise weaken the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, such as the ADA Notification Act and any other state or federal legislation that limits individual rights and remedies under the ADA. This includes supporting efforts to waive states rights to sovereign immunity.

Citizen Action/Illinois calls on the United States to join the over 120 other countries that have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the first international treaty on the human rights of people with disabilities.

Citizen Action/Illinois believes the legislature should provide stable funding for independent living centers that are staffed and governed primarily by individuals with disabilities through the adoption of formula funding. This funding should reflect each centers’ population and client base, as well as other factors such as geographic area.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the establishment of a comprehensive approach to ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are met before, during and after a national disaster.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports a policy of insuring access to all facilities open to the public for individuals with disabilities, including the removal of architectural, program and informational barriers; access to interpreters, readers, Braille services and assistive technologies; the hearing-aid compatibility of telephones; telecommunication devices and amplified telephones for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. We commit to a policy of holding all Citizen Action/Illinois functions in buildings that are accessible and providing reasonable accommodations to all participants requiring them.

**SENIOR CITIZEN RIGHTS**

Illinois senior citizens are a progressive force of tremendous potential power, representing over ten percent of our state population and far more of its accumulated wisdom and experience. The power of Illinois seniors can only be fully realized through the coordinated efforts of all progressive senior organizations. Citizen Action/Illinois pledges its support to the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans in their on-going work on issues of importance to seniors and all Illinoisans, including health care reform and defense of senior citizen benefits.

Citizen Action/Illinois reaffirms its support of Medicare as a universal program for all seniors 65 and over and for people with disabilities that provides affordable, accessible high quality care. We oppose any measures that undermine Medicare’s principles of social insurance such as means testing, private contracts, vouchers or changes in balance billing rules while supporting extension of Medicare coverage to pharmaceuticals and other necessary health care needs. We support a guaranteed benefit by and through Medicare that is comprehensive, universal and affordable, that gives every senior and person with disabilities access to every drug at the best possible price. We support a plan that allows Medicare to negotiate for the lowest possible price to rein in the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs. We believe that the Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 was the wrong solution; a guaranteed benefit by and through Medicare that is comprehensive, universal and affordable must be passed into law. Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to improve and expand coverage of Illinois’ Medicare Part D wrap-around program for low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities – Illinois Cares Rx.
Citizen Action/Illinois reaffirms its support for Social Security and opposes any measures to cut benefits or privatize the program.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the right of Senior Citizens’ choice in health care services and the transformation of the State’s primarily facility-based system into a comprehensive home and community-based system of older adult services, taking into account a need for 24 hour skilled nursing care and congregate housing with services. In the restructuring of health care services, we support the provision of housing, health, financial and supportive older adult services and promote the rights of all health care workers in the transformed long term care continuum. We support parity in the provision of home and community-based services for seniors with disabilities.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the right to retirement security and opposes the attacks on pension benefits in both the private and public sector. We support pension reforms that would prevent over-concentrations of company stock in employee pension plans; empower employees to hold executives accountable for providing false information; give employees a seat on the investment boards that handle their money; require companies to adequately fund worker pension plans and prohibit financial advisors from engaging in conflicts of interest. We oppose corporate efforts to use bankruptcy laws to avoid pension obligations and other legal strategies that threaten the Pension Fund Guaranty Corporation. We call on all Illinois public employers to adequately fund their pension obligations and oppose moves to reduce costs by cutting pension benefits for their employees or substituting defined “contribution” for defined benefit plans.

SOCIAL & CIVIL RIGHTS

Citizen Action/Illinois goes on record in favor of a U.S. Supreme Court that aggressively protects the rights of individuals against the power of big government and big business, and believes that all nominees to the Court should be strong believers in the guarantees of the Bill of Rights, including the right to privacy. Citizen Action/Illinois believes all individuals should have the civil right to fulfill their potential as active and productive members of our society.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes, and will support local, state and federal efforts to end, discrimination based on race, gender (including sexual harassment), ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, source of income and receipt of public benefits (including Housing Choice vouchers). We explicitly support affirmative action to achieve these ends. Citizen Action/Illinois is resolved that women should have full legal and economic rights in our society. To guarantee that equality, Citizen Action/Illinois reaffirms its commitment to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress and its ratification in Illinois. Citizen Action/Illinois and its political committee will work to promote the full participation of women in government, political parties, and all levels of policy decision-making.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the current death penalty moratorium in Illinois.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes any type of racial profiling and will support local, state and federal legislation to protect all citizens against such discrimination as well as against hate crimes.

Whereas, freedom of choice gives us the opportunity to decide what is right for us based on our own ethical, moral and religious beliefs, and whereas we believe a better society will result when every
child is born wanted, and whereas we believe all people regardless of income, age, marital status or place of residence should have access to accurate information on quality reproductive health care and that, prior to Roe v. Wade, thousands of women died from unsafe and illegal abortions. Citizen Action/Illinois supports a woman’s right to choice over reproduction, with access to a full range of services, information and education relative to reproductive health care of women, including publicly-funded services for those unable to pay, and supports efforts to maintain the right to choose.

Citizen Action/Illinois believes that all people, regardless of immigration status, deserve protection under the laws of the United States. We recognize the contributions that immigrants have made to this country as well as to the economy. As a result, we believe that all immigrants deserve equal access to education and educational resources. We also recognize the struggle that immigrants have endured and support them in their struggle to establish themselves as a legal entity in the U.S.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes the provisions in the Patriot Act and Homeland Security Act which, under the guise of fighting terrorism, deprive many immigrants and ethnic groups of their freedoms of assembly and association, and other basic civil rights by curtailing whole sections of the Bill of Rights due to racist, biased, and unfounded and unreasonable fears.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports legislation such as the DREAM Act, which makes it a reality for undocumented students to achieve their dream of attending college, and through this act, adjust their status in the United States.

Citizen Action/Illinois recognizes the rights of immigrants to seek and receive protection from local, state and federal laws and agencies without fear of retaliatory action; the right to work, organize, and demand protection from unlawful and exploitative employment practices; and the right to family reunification and a general amnesty to those hardworking individuals and their families who have lived in the U.S. for years without legal status. We support legislation such as The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005, which seeks to establish an earned legalization program for undocumented immigrants already residing in the U.S. and a worker program for immigrants in transition. We support legislation that would provide family unity and a resolution to the backlog for processing immigration applications. We oppose federal restrictions not allowing persons with HIV/AIDS to enter the U.S. Citizen Action/Illinois will oppose any efforts to make English the "official" language of Illinois and the U.S.

Citizen Action/Illinois opposes any federal or state constitutional amendment – or any legislation - that would define civil marriage as a union between a man and a woman or that would otherwise deny equal access to civil marriage for same-sex couples.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports the right of same-sex couples to obtain a civil marriage license and to thereby enjoy the state and federal rights conferred by civil union. At the same time, Citizen Action/Illinois supports the rights of all religious faiths to choose which relationships to sanctify.

**TAX REFORM**

Citizen Action/Illinois is committed to progressive tax reform at the local, state and national levels. We will support closing corporate tax loopholes, providing relief from regressive taxation and generating new revenues through progressive taxes.
Citizen Action/Illinois supports increasing the progressivity of the federal tax codes. We call for the repeal of the tax giveaways to corporations and the wealthy enacted by the 92nd and 94th Congress and will vigorously oppose the extension of those unjust tax changes, including legislation to make the repeal of the federal Estate Tax permanent.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports reform of state and local taxation that would replace residential property tax funding of schools with state funds generated by an increased income tax rate, closing corporate tax loopholes, and making the state income tax more progressive. We support amending the state constitution to provide for a graduated state income tax.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to reform tax increment financing which 1) strengthen eligibility tests for TIF designation, 2) encourage the creation of living wage jobs, 3) maximize protections for fair, affordable and accessible housing, 4) provide for prompt sunset, once the redevelopment project has been accomplished and 5) strengthen provisions for public community oversight and scrutiny. We support the use of funds received from TIF designated projects for public projects such as schools, parks, libraries, and accessibility improvements.

The public interest is best served when public decisions are democratically debated and resolved rather than based on private and short-term interests.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Citizen Action/Illinois seeks an adequately funded, highly integrated intermodal system of transportation, which includes all publicly funded transportation, suburban and intercity rail, freight rail, roads and bridges, whose express purpose is to move people and goods efficiently. A transportation network that strengthens our economy and meets the human and commercial needs of Illinois must be developed through comprehensive regional and state planning that includes a cross-section of stakeholders and abides by environmentally sound practices.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports increasing federal and state support for public transportation, including mass transit, bus service within and between communities, commuter, and inner-city rail. We support fully assessing and restructuring current funding mechanisms to ensure that transit systems in the NE Region and throughout the state grow with public demand, support existing job centers and economic activity as well as new economic growth and meet the needs of transportation disadvantaged populations, specifically low income populations, seniors, individuals with disabilities and communities without transportation to get to work and other life-sustaining activities. We support integration of all transportation investments to support the economic vitality of our communities through transit oriented development projects, employing local workforces, responding to the transportation needs of community stakeholders, creating pedestrian and bicycle friendly environments and reducing harmful pollutants.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports ensuring financial viability of our systems and applying accounting and reporting practices that provide for financial transparency and appropriate review to insure the best use of taxpayers dollars; meet all inherent financial obligations for operating expenditures and capital needs today as well as in the future; pay special attention to strengthening the integrity of transportation funding so that all workers’ futures are secure; and use funding streams appropriately, especially for targeted needs of low income populations.
Citizen Action/Illinois calls for a repeal of the “farebox recovery ratio,” which has resulted in on-going increases in paratransit fares for people with disabilities. We support passage of legislation to provide free mass transit rides on fixed routes for low-income people with disabilities, as determined through Circuit Breaker eligibility.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports implementing planning processes that set regional priorities, engage stakeholders and develop clearly identifiable methods for prioritizing projects that are tied to economic development goals. We support harnessing the potential economic benefits for the state of fully investing in the NE Region as a national transportation hub by building and maintaining a robust freight rail system among other initiatives. We support innovative new ways to broaden service coverage through public involvement, coordination initiatives and strengthening rural planning programs. Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to create a modern high-speed rail system in Illinois and the United States.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports public transit in high density regions of the state as a viable alternative to automobile use that results in consumption of non-renewable and environmentally damaging fuels and congestion that halts economic growth. We oppose shortsighted efforts that will in any way cut existing services or diminish the transit systems in Illinois through privatization that could jeopardize the economy and the personal safety of our citizens.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports efforts to improve transportation safety for passengers on rail, air, and highways, and improve safety of the transportation of hazardous materials by all modes.

Citizen Action/Illinois supports adequate staffing of transit systems with family-supporting jobs. Additionally, additional staffing should be made available to deal with emergencies and issues of homeland security.

**VOTER REGISTRATION & ELECTION REFORM**

*Citizen Action/Illinois is committed to seeing that the right and opportunity to vote is extended to all eligible Illinois residents. Thousands of citizens have been thwarted from registering and voting by legal, physical and administrative barriers. These barriers must be removed.*

Citizen Action/Illinois supports policies to ease and improve the accuracy of voter registration by guaranteeing that voting places are accessible to all and allowing Election Day voter registration. We support the easing of voting restrictions for those who register to vote by mail in Illinois by allowing that these registered individuals to vote by mail as opposed to requiring them to vote in person the first time they cast a ballot.