

Celebrating

50 years

1969-2019

Chicago Lawyers'
Committee
for Civil Rights



I AM
THE C.H.A.
WAITLIST

LA VIVIENDA
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HOUSING
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HOUSING
IS A
HUMAN
RIGHT

ON THE HEELS OF CELEBRATING OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY in 2019, I am deeply grateful for the clear vision of our founders and the bold leadership of our board, staff, and partners through the decades.

In 2020, we face terrifying threats to the rule of law and the rapid rollback of civil rights gains. Still, we are emboldened because we stand on the shoulders of previous generations of lawyers, community organizers, clients, and supporters who did not shrink from the fight for racial equity and economic opportunity.

The 1960s were a time of great tumult and also great hope as the civil rights movement swept across our nation and city. While protesters took to the streets to demand de-segregation and equality, there was little appetite within prominent law firms to challenge the city's most powerful institutions and politicians. Chicago needed an independent legal team, with the mandate and the resources to advance civil rights and attack the problems of poverty and racial discrimination wherever they manifested.

In 1969, eight law firms and a handful of individual attorneys founded Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights to answer that call, serving as the legal flank of the civil rights movement in our city and state. With a 20-member Board of Directors and a small legal staff led by David Tatel, now a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, they took on some of the most egregious and controversial issues of the day.

From our beginning, Chicago Lawyers' Committee was predicated on strong partnerships with both the private bar and community-based organizations. As stated in our first annual report:

The poor and the black can become full and equal participants in our economic and political system only when they achieve the power to deal on equal terms with public and private institutions. An essential element of that power is access to expert legal resources, particularly in connection with complex litigation and business law problems. These are precisely the areas in which large law firms are uniquely qualified.

While our language has changed over the last 50 years, our vision has stayed the same. Today, we use community lawyering strategies to help communities build the power to directly influence the decisions that impact them. Our record shows a steadfast commitment to attacking injustice by filing high-impact litigation and advocating for policy reform to advance voting rights, police accountability, education equity, fair housing, employment opportunity, and other core civil rights matters. We have also provided critical transactional legal assistance to thousands of nonprofit organizations and small businesses to help them get started or strengthen their capacity.

Today, I am proud that we have nearly 40 member law firms among our membership; a vibrant pro bono program—*Pro Bono Works*—with over 800 attorneys donating legal work worth more than \$7.5 million a year; growing support from a broad range of funding sources; and deepening community partnerships. Our Board of Directors has always attracted dynamic lawyers and leaders, including former President Barack Obama and Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

We are proud of our heritage and humbled by the scope of the challenges today. The need for Chicago Lawyers' Committee remains as urgent now as it was in 1969. For those of you who have been traveling this road with us, thank you for your critical support. For those of you just learning about Chicago Lawyers' Committee, we invite you to join the movement. We need your support more than ever.



Bonnie Allen
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bonnie Allen".

BONNIE ALLEN, Chief Executive Officer

the m

AMERICA'S quest for racial equity has moved in a series of small and big steps. Community organizers, faith leaders, youth activists, journalists, musicians, elected officials, and many others played essential roles. From Birmingham to Washington to Chicago, marching for justice became the iconic image of the cause.

But a pivotal step came when lawyers joined the movement. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy summoned hundreds of leading lawyers from across the country to the White House. He issued a call to action to fight Jim Crow in the South and challenge all forms of segregation and discrimination in the urban North and on the West Coast. Leaders realized that to dismantle the entrenched structures and systems that created and perpetuated racial injustice, we would need to build a legal infrastructure to bolster civil rights. The national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law became the first corps of movement lawyers.

In few places was systemic racism more glaring than in Chicago. In 1969, as astronauts crossed space to set

Marching for Justice: Protesters with the Chicago Freedom Movement on South Kedzie Avenue in 1966. Throughout the '60s and '70s, lawyers provided



arch continues

foot on the moon, Black residents lived a world apart from White Chicagoans in stark racial segregation and economic desolation. This was three years after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had taken up residence in Chicago to raise awareness of housing discrimination—only to encounter venomous racial attacks that paralleled those in the Deep South. And it was less than a year after Dr. King's murder ignited the fuse of long-smoldering rage over endemic discrimination, prompting unrest to erupt on Chicago's West Side.

In this climate, a small group of prominent lawyers and firms came together to launch Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. That same year, the organization left its first major imprint when it successfully advocated for a federal investigation into the killings of Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, who were assassinated in their beds by Chicago police.

Through the following decades—as recounted in the following pages—Chicago Lawyers' Committee was an architect of multiple landmark decisions in civil rights history. In recent years, Chicago Lawyers' Committee has filed litigation to challenge today's unjust structures and systems, including inequitable school closings, racially discriminatory property tax systems, and abuse of the tax increment financing tool. We invite you to read more about our current and historic advocacy in the pages that follow. **Join us as the march continues . . .**

vital support in the push for civil rights. Photo by Bernard Kleina



BEGINNING WITH OUR FIRST CASES in the 1970s, Chicago Lawyers' Committee has consistently fought for strong, stable, and safe communities that are rich with affordable and non-discriminatory housing options. We've challenged laws, policies, and practices that have led to recalcitrant segregation, commercial disinvestment, limited affordable housing, and environmental devastation for many low-income residents, particularly in communities of color.

Following years of White flight in the 1960s—along with bank redlining, blockbusting panic tactics by sellers, and exclusion of communities of color from FHA-backed loans—many of our city's Black residents were unable to buy housing, even after home prices plummeted in their neighborhoods. We went to battle with them and helped to win lasting changes. We achieved some significant victories. But 50 years later, segregation and poverty continue to bifurcate Chicago into two profoundly different cities.

Today, we continue to push back against both overt and more subtle housing discrimination through individual client representation, major impact litigation, policy reform, and focused community education—among other essential tools. Pro bono attorneys and community leaders have played critical roles in all aspects of our housing advocacy; together we continue to build stronger, more equitable, and affordable communities.

Because Chicago remains in many ways a tale of two cities, Chicago Lawyers' Committee continues to fight against housing discrimination in all its forms.



housing

then

Starting in 1969 and continuing through the early 1970s, we worked with our law firm partners to represent victims of contract buying scams.

These contract buyers paid exorbitant monthly payments to unscrupulous sellers in communities devalued by White flight. The sellers bought real estate at bargain prices and then charged Black residents double or triple the price through contract agreements. Never intending to hand over the title, these sellers saw a way to profit from racism. We proudly supported a group of Black buyers on Chicago's South Side who decided to fight back against these discriminatory practices. As several cases wended through the courts, the buyers organized boycotts that helped lead to the renegotiations of hundreds of usurious contracts and, ultimately, major legal and policy reforms on the city, state, and federal levels.



now

In 2017, we filed litigation to challenge Cook County's residential property tax assessment system

that systematically discriminated against Black and Latinx homeowners and communities. With co-counsel from Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym, and Miner, Barnhill & Galland, we filed suit against then-Cook County Assessor Joseph Berrios on behalf of the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, and South Suburban Housing Center. Our litigation followed extensive investigative reporting that exposed the broken and unjust system. The media coverage and legal pressure helped sweep Berrios out of office. After necessary reforms, we successfully negotiated with new Assessor Fritz Kaegi to resolve the lawsuit.



Above: Chicago Lawyers' Committee's lawsuit against the Cook County Assessor's Office helped usher in a new era of reform regarding residential property taxation.

Left: We have fought housing discrimination from our inception, including an early series of cases on behalf of Black homeowners that led to the renegotiations of discriminatory contract buying agreements.

FOLLOWING THE LANDMARK CASE *Brown v. Board of Education*, many Americans envisioned our education system as the great equalizer, preparing all students—no matter their race or income—to fully participate in society. But for low-income students of color, access to safe schools with high-quality resources and fair discipline policies remains an unfulfilled promise decades later.

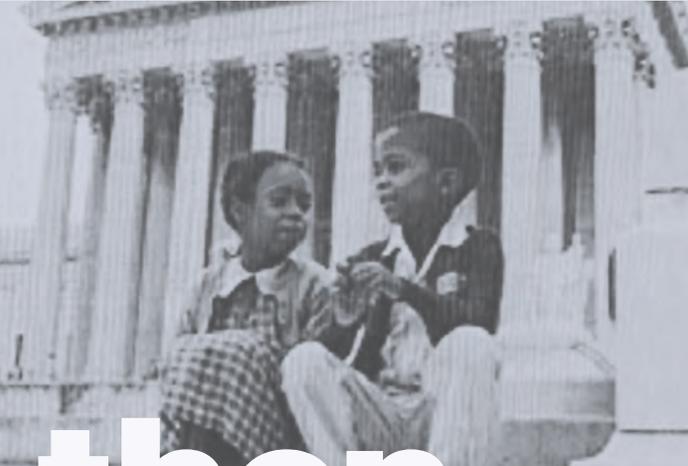
Since 1969, we've fought for equitable and affordable, community-based, preK-12 education. In the early days, some of our member firms represented community organizations working to improve public school quality and to provide specialized educational services. We also investigated school funding discrepancies based on race and filed legal challenges seeking equitable allocation of resources. More recently, our education equity work has included pro bono representation of students at disciplinary hearings, advocating for non-exclusionary discipline policies that will disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, and joining community groups in challenging discriminatory school closings.

Activist grandmother Olivia Shelton leads a rally outside National Teachers Academy. Chicago Lawyers' Committee successfully represented parents and community members in their legal battle to prevent Chicago Public Schools from closing this high-performing elementary school. CPS subsequently abandoned its plans.



education

now



then

In 1970, we took aim at gaps in per-pupil instructional expenditures in the city of Chicago,

which disproportionately affected schools with predominantly Black students. After we filed a federal class action lawsuit to force Chicago Public Schools to take action, CPS changed its policy and shifted its spending allocations to achieve more equitable funding.

Above: We have fought for equitable educational opportunities for a half-century, starting with a federal class action lawsuit in 1970 to make per-pupil instructional expenditures more equitable.

Right: While many thought the *Brown v. Board of Education* case would lead to educational equity, that remains an elusive goal 65 years later and thus remains a focus of our agenda.

In 2018, we joined parents, students, and neighborhood activists in taking a stand when Chicago Public Schools sought to close National Teachers Academy,

a top-tier South Side elementary school. After negotiations with CPS stalled, we teamed up with Legal Aid Chicago and pro bono partner Eimer Stahl to file a lawsuit alleging that the closure of this excellent school serving a majority low-income Black population was racially discriminatory. The judge granted our request for a preliminary injunction based on our allegation that CPS violated the Illinois Civil Rights Act. This case made history: In an unprecedented move, CPS abandoned its plans to close the school due to our race-based claim.



OUR NATION HAS A LONGSTANDING AND PERSISTENT RACIAL GAP IN VOTER REGISTRATION and participation, due to a history of exclusionary laws, policies, and practices that continue to suppress the vote of people of color.

Chicago Lawyers' Committee has fought for the voting rights and representation of historically disenfranchised populations for decades—with litigation, monitoring of polling places, policy advocacy and, more recently, a focus on civic empowerment through know-your-rights trainings and outreach in close coordination with coalitions and community partners.

Our work in this area began in the early 1970s in the southern Illinois city of Cairo and continued through to the 1980s with the *Ketchum v. Byrne* case, which blocked aldermanic redistricting that would have diluted community power. A few years ago, we filed the initial litigation in a Wisconsin gerrymandering case of great national importance. Today, we are involved with a range of issues, including Automatic Voter Registration, equitable redistricting, civics in prison, and our Election Protection work.

Election Protection volunteers prepare to assist voters in Blue Island, Illinois. Chicago Lawyers' Committee has fought for voting rights from southern Illinois to Indiana to Wisconsin and beyond.



voting rights now

then

In the mid 1970s, we worked with Black community members in Cairo, Illinois, to address their persistent and inequitable underrepresentation in local governance. Our legal challenge to the at-large election system in place at the time resulted in a successful settlement that included the creation of new aldermanic zones to better represent communities of color, and the subsequent election of Black representatives in the city and county governments.



In 2015, we filed the original suit challenging the Wisconsin legislature's attempts to gerrymander the state's legislative districts along partisan lines.

In *Whitford v. Gill*, we demonstrated that such districts favor one party, silence individual voters, and inevitably lead to racial gerrymandering. While the case attained much national attention and a victory in the lower courts, the Supreme Court reversed and remanded the case for a determination of harm to individual voters rather than a class of voters.

Today, our work continues in a variety of areas—most notably by implementing and evaluating Automatic Voter Registration to improve voter access, and by redoubling our Election Protection work in Chicagoland and surrounding counties. Also critical is our policy advocacy to increase voting access for those in the criminal justice system, including pretrial detainees and the formerly incarcerated. We assist with voter access activities in the Cook County Jail and played an instrumental role in the passage of Illinois' new "Civics in Prison" law. Passed in 2019 as the first law of its kind in the country, it requires correctional institutions to provide peer-led civic education to incarcerated people as part of their release. In 2020, we will work to make the 2021 redistricting cycle fairer and more representative, not only for state-level district lines, but for selected municipal and school areas as well.

Below, left: *Ami Gandhi, director of voting rights and civic empowerment, speaks at a National Voter Registration Day event in downtown Chicago.*

Below, right: *Our voting rights advocacy over the decades has ranged from litigation, to monitoring of polling places, to a more recent focus on civic empowerment based on know-your-rights trainings.*



other areas of

civil rights



Former President Barack Obama and civil rights litigator Judd Miner (left) both served on our board of directors in the 1990s.

*transactional pro bono
legal assistance*

Strengthening Nonprofits and Small Businesses

SINCE 1985, WE HAVE OFFERED LOW-INCOME ENTREPRENEURS and community organizations high-quality legal assistance to help build and preserve wealth in disinvested communities of color. Over the last 34 years, we've assisted more than 6,000 nonprofits and small businesses throughout the city, with a special focus on the South and West Sides. With an enviable corps of pro bono lawyers that we recruit through [Pro Bono Works](#), we offer nonprofit and small business clients a broad range of legal help in all transactional matters.

access to justice

Settlement Assistance Program

THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS, we match over 80 pro bono attorneys each year with indigent parties who have filed civil rights lawsuits in federal court without counsel. Our volunteers assist these parties in settlement negotiations. In most of these cases—the majority involving prisoner civil rights violations or employment discrimination—we successfully recover monetary damages or other relief for these clients.



J. Cunyon Gordon, director of the Settlement Assistance Program (seated), mentors third-year law student and summer intern Natasha Wilkins.

and **ec**



We have countered hatred wherever it has surfaced, fighting back with a combination of litigation, policy advocacy, and training for community groups and law enforcement.

litigation and policy advocacy

Confronting Hate Crime in Illinois

BEGINNING IN THE 1990s and continuing through the 2016 election cycle—which sparked an alarming increase in hate crimes directed at Black people, immigrants, Muslims, LGBTQ individuals, women, people with disabilities, and others—Chicago Lawyers’ Committee has represented the victims of such crimes in court. In 2011, we won an award of \$1.44 million for three young Black men who were brutally beaten by a mob of White men in a racially motivated attack near Manteno, Illinois. We also have led advocacy efforts to improve hate crime reporting, conducted training for community groups and law enforcement officers, and helped to draft and expand hate crime legislation.

impact litigation

Winning Justice for Black Firefighters

IN 2011, AFTER A DECADE OF LITIGATION, we won a major court victory on behalf of Black firefighter applicants in *Lewis v. City of Chicago*. Several member firms co-counseled to bring this complicated race discrimination class action suit that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court. A final injunction required the City to hire 111 bypassed Black firefighter applicants by 2012 and award them up to \$20 million collectively in back pensions, as well as to pay at least \$30 million in damages to nearly 6,000 others who would never get the chance to become a firefighter.

conomic justice

how we work

PARTNERSHIP IS OUR BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS. We collaborate with community-based groups to identify patterns of discrimination and their priority issues—and then partner with law firms to attack and disrupt the structures and systems that cause and perpetuate racial and economic disparities.

Our advocacy tool box includes direct legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, coalition building, community education, and media advocacy. Today, our talented staff of lawyers and advocates focuses primarily on three core practice areas: education equity, equitable community development and housing, and voting rights and civic empowerment. At the same time, our flexibility allows us to respond to other emerging issues that threaten civil rights and racial equity.

As we move into the 2020s facing an array of urgent challenges, we are supported by four strategic pillars that undergird all our efforts:

- **Break unjust structures and systems** to create racial equity and economic opportunity for all.
- **Center the priorities of communities of color** as a driving force for our work.
- **Model our race equity mission and values** in our internal culture and organizational structure.
- **Inspire supporters** to build a powerful resource engine to fuel our impact.

Through collaboration with community-based partners and member law firms, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights continues to honor the mission championed by President John F. Kennedy, who, in 1963, summoned the nation's leading attorneys to the White House and urged them to build the legal infrastructure to defend the burgeoning civil rights movement.



2019 member firms

CHICAGO LAWYERS' COMMITTEE for Civil Rights has relied on the expertise of private law firms throughout its history to press justice forward on all fronts, including housing, education, and voting rights. Current members are:

Bartlit Beck LLP
Boodell & Domanskis, LLC
Noelle Brennan & Associates, Ltd.
Buckley Sandler LLP
Roland W. Burris & Associates
Dechert LLP
Dentons
Eimer Stahl LLP
Foley & Lardner LLP
Ed Fox & Associates, Ltd.
Friedman Maguire & Carey, P.C.
Harris Winick Harris LLP
The Law Office of Al Hofeld Jr., Esq.
Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym, Ltd.
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
The Law Office of
Christopher Kendall, P.C.
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
Law Offices, Robert E. Lehrer
Loevy & Loevy
Mayer Brown LLP
McDermott Will & Emery
McGuireWoods
Miller Shakman Levine & Feldman
Miner, Barnhill & Galland
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP
Law Offices of Jonah Orlofsky
Outten & Golden LLP
Paul Hastings
Reed Smith LLP
Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP
Saulter Law P.C.
Schiff Hardin LLP
Sidley Austin LLP
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher &
Flom LLP
Geoffrey R. Stone, Professor
Stowell & Friedman, Ltd.
Thompson Coburn LLP
Winston & Strawn LLP
The Wood Law Office, LLC

\$100,000 and above

Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
The Democracy Fund

\$75,000 to \$99,999

Kirkland & Ellis LLP

\$50,000 to \$74,999

Chicago Bar Foundation
Chicago Community Trust
Polk Bros. Foundation
Skadden Arps Fellowship Foundation

\$25,000 to \$49,999

DLA Piper US LLP
Driehaus Foundation
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
Mayer Brown LLP
Schiff Hardin LLP
Sidley Austin LLP
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
The Coleman Foundation

\$15,000 to \$24,999

Anonymous
Dentons
Foley & Lardner
Impact Fund
Woods Fund Chicago

\$7,500 to \$14,999

BMO Wealth Management
Chase Foundation
Illinois Equal Justice Foundation
Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
Nate Eimer and Lisa Meyer
Michelle Kilkenney
Paul Hastings
Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI)
Seyfarth Shaw LLP
The Herbert & Nell Singer Foundation, Inc.
Thompson Coburn LLP
Winston & Strawn

\$2,500 to \$7,499

Bonnie Allen
Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen P.C.
Baker & McKenzie LLP
Barlit Beck LLP
Chapman and Cutler LLP
Chicago Winter Company
Linton Childs
Combined Insurance
Benjamin Crowder
Democracy at Work Institute
Eimer Stahl
Faegre Baker Daniels
Edward Feldman
Hughes Socol Piers Resnick Dym, Ltd.
Jones Day
Lauren Loew
David and Rachel Lurie
McDermott Will & Emery
McGuireWoods LLP
Miller Shakman & Beem
Miner, Barnhill & Galland
Nixon Peabody
Pierce Family Foundation
Ropes & Gray
Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr LLP
Mark Simon
Max Stein
Stowell & Friedman
Maureen Sweeney
The Dow Chemical Company
Donna Vobornik
Walter Mander Foundation

\$1,000 to \$2,499

Ben Applegate
Barnes & Thornburg
Myles Berman
Christine Binotti
Jack Block
Boodell & Domanskis

Buckley Sandler
Butler Ruben Saltarelli & Boyd
Adela Cepeda
Citibank
Dechert LLP
Brenna Devaney
Equal Justice America
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Sonny Garg
Jeffrey Gray
Paul Greenwalt
Horton Group
Thomas Jager
Jenner & Block
Joshua Karsh
Katten & Temple
Christopher and Sheila Kennedy
Ryan Kilkenney
Lori Lightfoot and Amy Eshleman
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Keenan Saulter
Kimberly Skaggs
The Mulligan Family Fund
Wade Thomson



Co-chairs, board members and founding member firm representatives at our 50th Anniversary Gala.

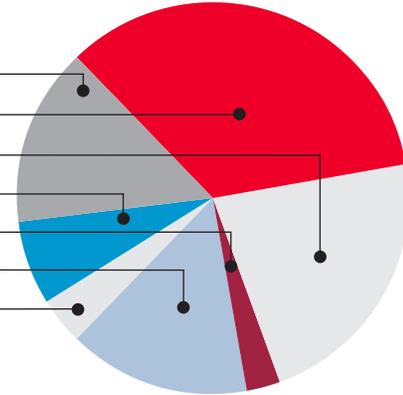
statement of activities

January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018

REVENUE

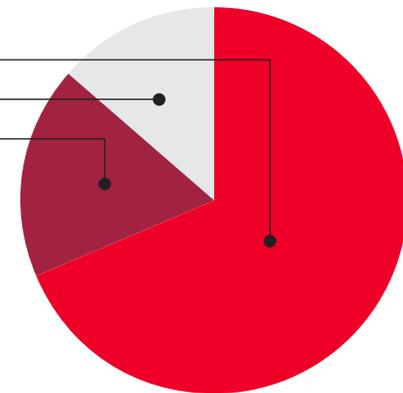
DOLLARS% TOTAL

Law Firm Contributions	\$ 289,000	14.9%
Foundation Grants	\$ 667,932	34.5%
Government Grants	\$ 429,072	22.1%
Individuals	\$ 51,684	2.7%
Fundraising Events	\$ 290,985	15.0%
Attorneys' Fees	\$ 79,145	4.1%
Other	\$ 129,714	6.7%
Total Revenue	\$ 1,937,532	100.0%



EXPENSES

Program Services	\$ 1,419,491	68.7%
Management and General	\$ 365,618	17.7%
Fundraising	\$ 282,581	13.6%
Total Expenses	\$ 2,067,690	100.0%
Change in Net Assets	\$ (130,158)	
Net Assets – BOY	\$ 618,189	
Net Assets – EOY	\$ 488,022	

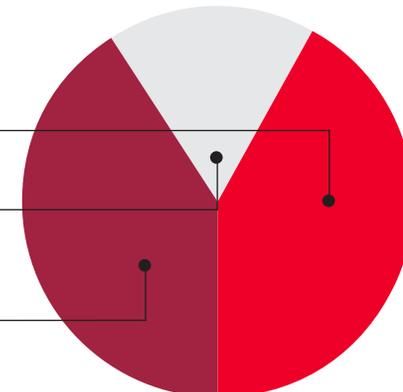


PRO BONO WORKS VOLUNTEERS

Total Volunteers: 862
Total Hours: 12,047
Estimated Value: \$7,561,533

Breakdown of Type of Volunteer Work

Election protection 41%
 Litigation, research and policy advocacy assistance 17%
 Transactional assistance to nonprofits and small businesses 42%



board of directors

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Program Counsel

ERICA SPANGLER RAZ
Senior Counsel and Director
of Pro Bono Works

TASHIANA STAFFORD
Notre Dame Legal Fellow

JENNY TERRELL
Skadden Legal Fellow

BERENICE VILLALOBOS
Program Associate

Thank you

to all of our supporters through the decades, and a special thanks to those who made our **50th Anniversary Gala** a tremendous success. We look forward to continuing to partner with you in the years ahead as we create a more equitable city and state with economic opportunity for all.



Chicago Mayor and former Chicago Lawyers' Committee board member **Lori Lightfoot** speaking at our Gala.



Chicago Sun-Times columnist and political analyst **Laura Washington** interviewing **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, New York Times journalist and founder of the New York Times 1619 Project at our Gala.

EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE

mission

We are civil rights lawyers and advocates working to secure racial equity and economic opportunity for all. We provide legal representation through partnerships with the private bar, and we collaborate with grassroots organizations and other advocacy groups to implement community-based solutions that advance civil rights.



CHICAGO
LAWYERS'
COMMITTEE
for Civil Rights

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