

Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)

From: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) [doris@judgewatch.org]
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2009 11:08 PM
To: letters@thejournalnews.com
Cc: ysteinbu@LoHud.com
Subject: 090322 We applaud your editorial supporting state and federal efforts to open up government How about some.doc

CENTER FOR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC. (CJA)

A national, nonpartisan, nonprofit citizens' organization, working to protect the public interest in the integrity of our judicial selection and judicial discipline processes. Its mission is to ensure that only the most qualified trial lawyers become, and remain judges.

We applaud Journal News' 3/22/09 editorial Views on state and federal efforts to open up government by more transparency and access to information. But how about some "sunshine" in local government, which operates as if still in the Dark Ages?

White Plains has a vitally important local issue to publicize: the upcoming vacancy on the White Plains City Court bench. Let's have a little sunshine on the subject of how White Plains citizenry gets its City Court judges and how they comport themselves, starting with reference to our website http://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/cja/latest-news.htm

"Sunshine Week" provides the perfect occasion not only for local governments to change their unacceptable old standards to reflect the openness of changing times, in particular, by local newspapers informing their readers as to the fitness of local judicial candidates.

On Monday morning, March 23, 2009, our Director Elena Ruth Sassower, named by White Plains Citizen Net Reporter "White Plains Person of the Year 2004" as "Defender of the Constitution," will be hand-delivering to Mayor Delfino and the six other Common Council members the record on appeal from two "fraudulent judicial decisions" rendered by incumbent White Plains City Court Judge Hansbury in landlord-tenant proceedings, ultimately resulting in her wrongful eviction from her White Plains co-op apartment, her home for 21 years. Such appeal-generating, egregiously erroneous judicial decisions were the retaliatory end product of Judge Hansbury's demonstrated disqualifying bias and interest. (More to come as to Judge Hansbury's judicial derelictions in other cases, as well as those of other City Court judges.)

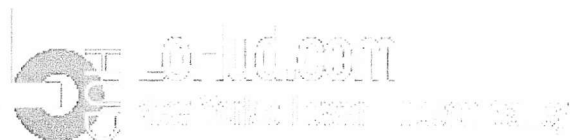
She will also deliver documents showing how Mayor Delfino's Corporation Counsel has attempted to thwart legitimate access to such basic information as to when Judge Hansbury's term expires, which she was told would not be disclosed without her making a written FOIL request. Likewise, as to her further requests for information concerning the Mayor's Judicial Screening Committee and its procedures. Such FOIL requests she was further told she could not serve by fax, but only personally or by certified mail.

Elena will be available for interviews in White Plains tomorrow after noontime by calling her cell phone: 646 220 7987.



Doris L. Sassower
DORIS L. SASSOWER
Co-Founder and President
Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)
Tel: 914-421-1200 Fax: 914-684-6554
www.judgewatch.org

Table with contact information for Corporate Office (Westchester, NY) and Long Island, NY Office. Includes addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.



March 22, 2009

More light on 'sunshine'

Everyone, it seems, wants to let the sunshine in, when it works for them - "sunshine" being the term used for government transparency and access to information.

Last week in Albany, for example, Senate Minority Leader Dean Skelos, top Republican from Long Island, complained loudly that ruling Democrats were excluding the GOP from deliberations over a new state spending plan for the fiscal year starting April 1. "It's tragic that all the advances we made to open up the budget process are being completely ignored," he said, "and that the governor is turning back the clock to the days of three men in a room that came to symbolize the dysfunction of state government," Jay Gallagher of our Albany bureau reported.

It's worth noting, of course, that Skelos, who was the Senate majority leader last fall, before the Democrats won the majority in his house, was himself once one of the three men in the room after his predecessor, former state Sen. Joseph Bruno, stepped down. Bruno was one of those "three men" for a long, long time.

"New bills related to broadening (the Freedom of Information Law) and open meetings are disingenuous when we see that a \$122 billion budget is being discussed completely behind closed doors - with the public shut out," Skelos said pointedly - at a Senate panel hearing on ways to open up government operations and records to the public. The hearing, along with many other events and campaigns in New York, Washington and elsewhere, marked "Sunshine Week," a commemoration initiated by publishers and newspapers that has emphasized the public's right to know about its government and its workings. Open government is essential if democracy is to thrive.

In New York, progress has been slow but steady, thanks to several lawmakers who champion government transparency, and the New York State Committee on Open Government, headed by Robert Freeman, its indefatigable executive director. The committee fights to preserve and expand freedom of information, open government and personal privacy rights.

State, federal efforts

Skelos is right, of course. He and fellow lawmakers in both parties should remember that as a host of proposed bills regarding open government meetings and freedom of information make their way through the Senate and Assembly.

According to the New York Newspaper Publishers Association, for example, the Senate "plans to study the feasibility, cost and benefit of requiring state and local governments to proactively disclose records of public significance on their Websites." Other bills under consideration, including some with companion bills already in the Assembly:

- Expanding the definition of a "public body" for the purpose of open-meetings law compliance;
- Requiring government bodies to post meeting notices on their Web sites and permit audio-visual coverage of open meetings;
- Giving judges expanded penalties to impose for willful violations of the open-meetings law;

EX H-1

- Requiring certain records discussed at open meetings to be made available to the public prior to such meetings; and
- Permitting agencies to waive reproduction fees for FOIL requests.

Several are sponsored by members of the Lower Hudson Valley delegation, and they are to be applauded.

Now the bills must be reconciled and passed by both houses, then sent to Gov. David Paterson for his review. Advocates will be sure to recommend which deserve his signature.

State lawmakers and the governor should take a hint on the desire for transparency not just from the public but also from the Obama administration. Federal agencies were advised Thursday to release their records and information to the public unless foreseeable harm would result. Attorney General Eric Holder issued new guidelines that fleshed out President Barack Obama's Jan. 21 order to reveal more government records to the public under the federal Freedom of Information Act whenever another law doesn't prohibit release, The Associated Press reported.

The new standard replaced a more restrictive policy imposed by the Bush administration, under which the Justice Department defended any sound legal argument for withholding records. "We are making a critical change that will restore the public's ability to access information in a timely manner," Holder said in a written statement. Obama had given Holder until mid-May to issue these guidelines, but the attorney general acted much more quickly, making sure they came out during Sunshine Week. Good effort, and good timing, indeed.

Additional Facts

On the Web

- Sunshine Week, led by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, is a national initiative about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include print, broadcast and online news media, civic groups, libraries, nonprofits, schools and others interested in the public's right to know: www.sunshineweek.org
 - New York State Committee on Open Government: www.dos.state.ny.us/coog/coogwww.html
-

Other editions: Mobile | News Feeds | E-Newsletters | Blogs | Twitter

Find it: Jobs | Cars | Real Estate | Apartments | Weekly Deals | Classifieds | Grocery Coupons



SEARCH ALL

All Local News Directory Jobs More »



SPONSORED BY:

HOME NEWS SPORTS TRAFFIC ENTERTAINMENT LIFE&STYLE HOMETOWNS MULTIMEDIA OPINION OBITUARIES BUY/SELL CUSTOMER SERVICE

Westchester Rockland Putnam New York Business Crime Politics Education Environment World/Nation Data Central

Comment, blog & share photos Log in | Become a member | Search people

POWERED BY YOU AND The Journal News

More light on 'sunshine'

MARCH 22, 2009

Read Comments(5) Recommend Print this page E-mail this article Share ?

Text Size: Normal | Large | Larger

Everyone, it seems, wants to let the sunshine in, when it works for them - "sunshine" being the term used for government transparency and access to information.

ADVERTISEMENT Last week in Albany, for example, Senate Minority Leader Dean Skelos, top Republican from Long Island, complained loudly that ruling Democrats were excluding the GOP from deliberations over a new state spending plan for the fiscal year starting April 1. "It's tragic that all the advances we made to open up the budget process are being completely ignored," he said, "and that the governor is turning back the clock to the days of three men in a room that came to symbolize the dysfunction of state government," Jay Gallagher of our Albany bureau reported.

It's worth noting, of course, that Skelos, who was the Senate majority leader last fall, before the Democrats won the majority in his house, was himself once one of the three men in the room after his predecessor, former state Sen. Joseph Bruno, stepped down. Bruno was one of those "three men" for a long, long time.

"New bills related to broadening (the Freedom of Information Law) and open meetings are disingenuous when we see that a \$122 billion budget is being discussed completely behind closed doors - with the public shut out," Skelos said pointedly - at a Senate panel hearing on ways to open up government operations and records to the public. The hearing, along with many other events and campaigns in New York, Washington and elsewhere, marked "Sunshine Week," a commemoration initiated by publishers and newspapers that has emphasized the public's right to know about its government and its workings. Open government is essential if democracy is to thrive.

In New York, progress has been slow but steady, thanks to several lawmakers who champion government transparency, and the New York State Committee on Open Government, headed by Robert Freeman, its indefatigable executive director. The committee fights to preserve and expand freedom of information, open government and personal privacy rights.

1 | 2 Next Page

In Your Voice | READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY

Hide Comments ▲

Newest first



judgewatch wrote: Superseding post to correct technical error.

CENTER FOR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC. (CJA) A national, nonpartisan, nonprofit citizens' organization, working to protect the public interest in the integrity of our judicial selection and judicial discipline processes. Its mission is to ensure that only the most qualified trial lawyers become, and remain judges.

We applaud Journal News' 3/22/09 editorial Views on State and Federal efforts to open up government by more transparency and access to information. But how about some "sunshine" in local government, which operates as if still in the Dark Ages?

Strangely overlooked is the urgent need to focus on vitally important local issues, such as City Court vacancies when they occur and the so-called "process" by which City Court vacancies are filled, for example, the upcoming vacancy on the White Plains City Court bench when City Court Judge Brian Hansbury's term expires.

Let's have a little sunshine on the subject of how local communities get their City



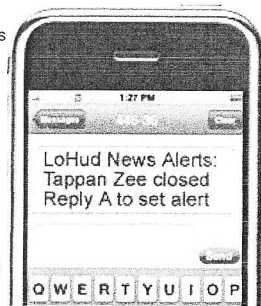
Senate Republican Leader Dean Skelos, R-Rockville Centre, testifies during a legislative hearing on open government in Albany Wednesday. Skelos says he and fellow Republicans are kept out of talks between the governor, Assembly speaker and Senate majority leader where the budget and other issues are discussed. (AP Photo/Mike Groll)

ON THE WEB

- Sunshine Week, led by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, is a national initiative about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include print, broadcast and online news media, civic groups, libraries, nonprofits, schools and others interested in the public's right to know: www.sunshineweek.org
- New York State Committee on Open Government: www.dos.state.ny.us/coog/coogwww.html

LoHud.Com Text Alerts

Get breaking local news as it happens from LoHud.com. Enter your phone number below:



Continue

- » Modify existing alerts
- » 4INFO | Get this tool

ADVERTISEMENT

More Opinion Headlines

- Doctor, hospital offered best breast cancer care
- County's air monitor in the wrong place (1)
- County medal a token of rarely spoken 'thank you' (2)
- No need to disparage Ossining schools
- Former officials deserve credit on Croton Landing

Latest Headlines

James Harrison's pit bull reportedly attacks his young son

EX H-2

Court judges, be they appointive or elective, and how these judges comport themselves once on the bench. For White Plains in particular, see our website at <http://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/cja/latest-news.htm>

"Sunshine Week" provides the perfect occasion for local governments to change their unacceptable old standards to reflect the openness of changing times. It is especially essential for local newspapers in all communities to focus the glare of publicity on the qualifications of their local judges who sometimes have profound impact on the lives of the average person. When City Court judges seek reappointment or re-election, they must be held accountable for their on-the-job performance record and the public must have free access to that information.

On Monday morning, March 23, 2009, our courageous Director Elena Ruth Sassower, named by White Plains Citizen Net Reporter "White Plains Person of the Year 2004" as "Defender of the Constitution," hand-delivered to the office of Mayor Delfino and the six other Common Council members the record on appeal from two "fraudulent judicial decisions" rendered by incumbent White Plains City Court Judge Hansbury in summary landlord-tenant proceedings brought before him -- ultimately resulting in her wrongful eviction from her White Plains apartment, her home for 21 years.

Such taxpayer costly appeal-generating, egregiously erroneous and dishonest judicial decisions were the retaliatory end product of Judge Hansbury's demonstrated disqualifying bias and interest, in complicity with White Plains City Court Senior Judge JoAnn Friia, as to whose similar disqualification I had spoken out in opposition to confirmation of her Mayoral reappointment at a White Plains Common Council Public Meeting in December 2006, unfortunately ignored and disregarded by the Mayor and Common Council. (More to come as to the judicial derelictions of Judges Hansbury and Friia in other cases, as well as those of other City Court judges in White Plains and elsewhere).

She also delivered documents showing how Mayor Delfino's Corporation Counsel has attempted to thwart legitimate access to the most basic information, such as the date when Judge Hansbury's term expires, which she was told would NOT be disclosed without her making a written FOIL request. Likewise, as to her further requests for information concerning the identity of and contact information for the Mayor's Judicial Screening Committee, as well as its procedures. Such FOIL requests, she was further told she, now no longer resident in White Plains could not send by fax, but only personally or by certified mail.

Readers with relevant data as to White Plains City Court or other local community judges are invited to email or write us. Contact information below. Volunteers for CJA's City Court and other projects welcome.

DORIS L. SASSOWER, Cofounder and President of the White Plains based Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. Tel: 914 Fax: 914 684 6554 email: doris@judgewatch.org

3/23/2009 7:25:12 PM

Recommend(1) New post Reply to this Post Report Abuse



judgewatch wrote:

CENTER FOR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC. (CJA)
A national, nonpartisan, nonprofit citizens' organization, working to protect the public interest in the integrity of our judicial selection and judicial discipline processes. Its mission is to ensure that only the most qualified trial lawyers become, and remain judges.

We applaud Journal News' 3/22/09 editorial Views on state and federal efforts to open up government by more transparency and access to information. But how about some "sunshine" in local government, which operates as if still in the Dark Ages?

Strangely overlooked is the urgent need to focus on vitally important local issues, such as City Court vacancies when they occur and the so-called "process" by which City Court vacancies are filled, for example, the upcoming vacancy on the White Plains City Court bench when City Court Judge Brian Hansbury's term expires.

Let's have a little sunshine on the subject of how local communities get their City Court judges and how these judges comport themselves once on the bench. For White Plains in particular, see our website at <http://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/cja/latest-news.htm>

"Sunshine Week" provides the perfect occasion for local governments to change their unacceptable old standards to reflect the openness of changing times. It is especially essential for local newspapers in all communities to focus the glare of publicity on the qualifications of their local judges who more often than judges of the higher courts can have profound impact on the lives of the average person. When City Court judges seek reappointment, they must be held accountable for their on-the-job performance record and the public must have free access to that information.

On Monday morning, March 23, 2009, our courageous Director Elena Ruth Sassower, named by White Plains Citizen Net Reporter "White Plains Person of the Year 2004" as "Defender of the Constitution," hand-delivered to the office of Mayor Delfino and the six other Common Council members the record on appeal from two "fraudulent judicial decisions" rendered by incumbent White Plains City Court Judge

Driver hurt in rollover on I-84 in Putnam

2 dozen students injured in grate collapse at Brooklyn school (2)

Conn. court backs release of church abuse papers in Cardinal Egan's former diocese

Carmel fire damages counseling center, pizzeria (3)

Featured Video

Sort by: Industry (Default)

LoHud.com careerbuilder

Top 100 Videos

- Management Unlimited Care
- Education Hackley Schools
- Health Care Accurate Care Physical Therapy
- Health Care Premier Health Care
- Management Richmond of New York

Find More Videos!

ADS BY PULSE 360 Get Listed Here

New York Mom Cures her Wrinkles

I Removed The Signs Of Aging From My Skin In 5 Days For Free....
www.MyWrinklesAreCured.com

Colon Cleanse Exposed

Warning! Dont try colon cleansing products until you've seen this.
www.ColonCleanseReport.net

New York Mom Wrinkles Melted Away

Learn How a Mom Combined 2 Products to Get Rid of Her Wrinkles Forever
HowtoFixYourWrinkles.com

Hansbury in summary landlord-tenant proceedings brought before him --, ultimately resulting in her wrongful eviction from her White Plains co-op apartment, her home for 21 years.

Such taxpayer costly appeal-generating, egregiously erroneous and dishonest judicial decisions were the retaliatory endproduct of Judge Hansbury's demonstrated disqualifying bias and interest. (More to come as to Judge Hansbury's judicial derelictions in other cases, as well as those of other City Court judges in White Plains and elsewhere).

She also delivered documents showing how Mayor Delfino's Corporation Counsel has attempted to thwart legitimate access to the most basic information, such as the date when Judge Hansbury's term expires, which she was told would NOT be disclosed without her making a written FOIL request. Likewise, as to her further requests for information concerning the identity of and contact information for the Mayor's Judicial Screening Committee, as well as its procedures. Such FOIL requests she was further told she, now no longer resident in White Plains could not send by fax, but only personally or by certified mail.

Readers with relevant data as to White Plains City Court or other local community judges are invited to email or write us. Contact information below. Volunteers for CJA's City Court and other projects welcome.

DORIS L. SASSOWER, Cofounder and President of the White Plains based Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. Tel: 914 Fax: 914 684 6554 email: doris@judgewidth.org

3/23/2009 6:12:27 PM

Recommend New post Reply to this Post Report Abuse



AREUKIDDIN1 wrote:

Replying to metaphysicalpoet:

Nice prejudicial, one- sided harangue by bluegal accomplishing nada except to aggravate the opposition. How soon we all forget Shel Silver and his Assembly minions. They're ALL major- league BS artist, feather-nesting weasels up in Albany (and elsewhere) and should be shown the door, one by one, by one.

I'll drink to that! start up in Peekskill

3/23/2009 10:34:01 AM

Recommend New post Reply to this Post Report Abuse



metaphysicalpoet wrote:

Nice prejudicial, one- sided harangue by bluegal accomplishing nada except to aggravate the opposition. How soon we all forget Shel Silver and his Assembly minions. They're ALL major- league BS artist, feather-nesting weasels up in Albany (and elsewhere) and should be shown the door, one by one, by one.

3/23/2009 1:12:50 AM

Recommend(1) New post Reply to this Post Report Abuse



bluegal wrote:

Yes, isn't it incredible how Senate Bruno Repubs ran the most oppressively one-sided government even when they were only two seats ahead and now have the nerve to complain about fairness.

Worse: they openly block any compromise in the Senate so they can get back in power. It's the same in Albany as in Washington. The party of NO wants the government to fail so they can reinstate the same spend spend spend, hold taxes steady on the middle class and lower taxes for the wealthy. They think we'll forget the years--during good times--when Pataki/Bruno ran the state agencies into the ground with mismanagement. Bruno's trial should reveal the corrupt regime he ran. Unless he takes a plea to keep it quiet. Let us not forget the millions and millions lavished on his members while Senate Dems got zilch.

3/22/2009 4:10:31 PM

Recommend New post Reply to this Post Report Abuse