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**MCCORMICK FOUNDATION’S NEW DEMOCRACY PROGRAM APPROVES FIRST ROUND OF GRANTS**

**CHICAGO, March 4, 2016** – The Robert R. McCormick Foundation announced nearly \$6 million in grants to support organizations committed to strengthening democracy and enhancing civic engagement in Illinois. The Democracy Program focuses on three pillars essential to a healthy democratic society—civic education and engagement; high quality journalism that informs and engages the public; and government institutions and practices that are accountable to the people.

“We believe that when citizens have the news and information they need and are able to engage with effective government institutions, our democracy can thrive,” said John Sirek, Director of the Democracy Program at the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. “With the hard work and commitment of these grantees, we feel that the future of Illinois’ civic life looks bright. “

In addition to investing in these programs, the McCormick Foundation, along with other statewide philanthropic and corporate organizations, have been working hard to ensure civic education is once again a priority Illinois schools. Recently, the Foundation helped lead a successful legislative effort to require Illinois high school students to complete a semester-long civics course to graduate. The new requirement takes effect on July 1, 2016, and applies to incoming freshmen for the 2016-2017 school year.

“By equipping young people with civic knowledge and skills we can help prepare the next generation to take the reins and become active and effective participants in the civic life of our community,” said David Hiller, President and CEO of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Among the approved grants for the Democracy Program:

Civic Education:

- [Barat Education Foundation \(\\$215,000\)](#) over two years to support the Our American Voice program.
- [Chicago Cares \(\\$60,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the Service Learning Institute.
- [Chicago Freedom Schools \(\\$140,000\)](#) over two years to support the Freedom Fellowship and Youth Leadership Board.
- [Chicago Metro History Ed Center \(\\$90,000\)](#) over two years to support the Chicago Metro History Fair.
- [Chicago Votes \(\\$75,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the DemocracyCup Program.
- [Communities United \(\\$170,000\)](#) over two years to support the Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE) collaborative.
- [Constitutional Rights Foundation of Chicago \(\\$100,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support general programming.
- [Facing History and Ourselves \(\\$300,000\)](#) over two years to support Facing History’s Chicago office growth initiative.

Civic Education (cont.):

- [ICIRR \(\\$75,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the New Americans Democracy Project.
- [Illinois Center for Civic Education \(\\$100,000\)](#) a one-year grant for support of the Illinois Center for Civic Education's We the People and Project Citizen programs.
- [Illinois Humanities Council \(\\$45,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the Capitol Forum on America's Future.
- [Illinois YMCA Youth and Government \(\\$60,000\)](#) over two years to support general programming.
- [Mikva Challenge Grant Foundation \(\\$200,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support general programming.
- [News Literacy Project \(\\$200,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support news literacy programming in Chicago.
- [Roosevelt Institute Campus Network \(\\$80,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support operations and evaluation activities in Illinois.
- [Stony Brook University \(\\$110,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support Chicago initiatives of Stony Brook University's Center for News Literacy.

Journalism:

- [Big Shoulders Fund \(\\$200,000\)](#) over two years for support of scholastic journalism professional development for middle school and high schools teachers.
- [Center for Media and Security \(\\$150,000\)](#) over two years to support general programming.
- [Illinois Public Media \(\\$200,000\)](#) over two years to support the Illinois Newsroom.
- [Institute for Nonprofit News \(INN\) \(\\$75,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support of Project Largo, an open-source online news platform for INN members.
- [Interfaith Youth Core \(\\$125,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the Disruptor Program.
- [Northwestern University – Medill School of Journalism \(\\$500,000\)](#) over two years to support the National Security Journalism Initiative.
- [Northwestern University – Medill School of Journalism \(\\$200,000\)](#) over two years to support the Medill Innovation Lab.
- [Northwestern University – Medill School of Journalism \(\\$100,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the Social Justice News Nexus initiative.
- [Poynter Institute \(\\$500,000\)](#) over two years to support Specialized Reporting Institutes and audience engagement events.
- [Reporters Committee \(\\$200,000\)](#) over two years to support the protection of media organizations' First Amendment freedoms.
- [Student Press Law Center \(\\$150,000\)](#) over two years for legal services and the advertisement of scholastic journalism organizations.

Good Government:

- [Better Government Association \(\\$150,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support general programming.
- [CHANGE Illinois \(\\$100,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support general programming.
- [Citizen Advocacy Center \(\\$200,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support general programming.
- [Civic Consulting Alliance \(\\$200,000\)](#) over two years to support general programming.
- [Civic Federation \(\\$200,000\)](#) over two years to support general programming.

Good Government (cont.):

- [Metropolitan Planning Council \(\\$100,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the Transform Illinois initiative.
- [University of Chicago \(\\$100,000\)](#) a one-year grant to support the Civic Leadership Academy.
- [University of Illinois at Chicago \(\\$300,000\)](#) over two years to support Participatory Budgeting in Chicago.

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**About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation**

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation's mission is fostering communities of educated, informed, and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic grant-making and Cantigny Park, the Foundation works to make life better in Chicagoland. The McCormick Foundation, among the nation's largest foundations with more than \$1.5 billion in assets, was established in 1955 upon the death of Col. Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. Find out more at [www.mccormickfoundation.org](http://www.mccormickfoundation.org), follow us on Twitter (@McCormick\_Fdn) and like us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/mccormickfoundation](http://www.facebook.com/mccormickfoundation)).