

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT SPRINGFIELD

CENTER FOR STATE POLICY AND LEADERSHIP

Institute for Legal, Legislative and Policy Studies

Public Affairs Center, Room 451

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Springfield, IL 62703-5407

The Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies is the product of evolution. Its origins date back to 1974 with the formation of the Illinois Legislative Studies Center. A few years later, the Center for Legal Studies was established. And then, it was another couple of decades before the Office of Policy and Administrative Studies was created. With the merger of the Institute for Legal and Policy Studies and the Institute for Legislative Studies in 2007, all of these different streams of activity have been brought together in a single unit aimed at mobilizing the intellectual resources of UIS to improve public policy and practice, mainly in Illinois, but also with the possibility that the Land of Lincoln's experience may have broader applicability.

The main resource the Institute works with, not surprisingly given our existence within a university, is knowledge. We create new, practical knowledge through research and evaluation projects. Some of these efforts help state agencies with risk reduction, whether – to name a couple of examples – it is curbing the threat posed by drunk drivers or helping mentally ill jail inmates access treatment services. Other projects are more specifically concerned with politics, such as gathering evidence of the need for campaign finance reform. In the period ahead, we plan to give more attention to the role of rigorously obtained evidence in shaping the policies and practices of state and local governments.

The Institute's emphasis on creating knowledge is matched by equal attention to the transfer of knowledge to people and organizations who can put it to use in solving public problems. We offer a wide variety of training and education opportunities, from our highly regarded and time honored legislative internship program to our responsibility for managing the statewide training of probation officers. We marshal the faculty of the university to help specific organizations acquire the skills their staff need to be more effective. Knowledge is also transferred through publications and conferences, some that are new and one-time and others that represent long-term commitments to educate citizens about the workings of state government. Given the rising complexities and uncertainties of the age in which we live, the Institute is committed to build on its impressive track record to do more to train public employees and equip citizens to interact with their government and hold it accountable for better performance.

The direct application of knowledge to address critical issues as they emerge also falls within the scope of the Institute's work. Our continuing efforts to facilitate the exoneration of the wrongfully convicted in downstate Illinois represent an important stake in trying to help improve the functioning of the criminal justice system within our own environment. The same goes for projects we have undertaken to assist the local public school system in its endeavor to enhance the quality of education. When and where the Institute can be helpful, we want to be ready to serve the local public interest.

The creation, transfer, and application of knowledge define both the work and the hope of the Institute. As we continue to evolve with changing times, these three functions will remain the foundation for all that we do.

Sincerely,
David P. Racine, Ph.D.
Director