

THE CENTERPIECE

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- If the murder pace continues, Chicago could end the year with more homicides than any American city. In the first nine months of this year, 403 murders occurred in the city, far outpacing New York's total of 319. Two-thirds of the homicides took place in the city's south and west sides, and many involve gang activity. In its November edition, **Illinois Issues** examines Chicago's efforts to combat its 27 percent increase in homicides over last year, which is earning the city – deservedly or not – a label as the most violent place in America.
- Public funding of campaigns was thrown for a loop last year when the U.S. Supreme Court decided *McComish v. Bennett*. Political science professor **Michael G. Miller** presented a paper on the McComish case, and how to address its challenge to public funding, at the **Paul Simon Institute's Conference on Ethics and Reform** in Illinois in Chicago on September 28th. McComish was a First Amendment challenge to the matching funds provisions of some state-level public election funding programs. Specifically, candidates who did not participate in Arizona's public funding system argued that provisions in the law granting money to participating candidates based on the spending of non-participating candidates chilled their speech. By a 5-4 vote, the Court agreed and barred this type of provision. Miller's paper outlined the issues in *McComish* and described how effective, constitutional public funding reforms could be crafted in the future. Miller's talk included findings from his forthcoming book on public election funding. <http://www.paulsimoninstitute.org/images/PDF/ethicsconference/miller-michael.pdf>
- Well-designed efforts by state government can reduce the impact of traffic accidents and the injuries and deaths that result from some accidents. To advance its agenda in improving traffic safety, the **Illinois Department of Transportation** (IDOT) recently awarded the **Institute for Legal, Legislative, and Policy Studies** 1.3 million in funding for fiscal year 2013 to continue work on three projects designed to increase traffic safety and better manage traffic risks. One grant focuses on training prosecutors, probation officers, and law enforcement in better methods for reducing and managing DUIs. Under a second grant, the Institute supports IDOT's efforts to collect, analyze, and use data on traffic safety in the state. The third grant funds university employees who work with local police agencies to implement practices in communities around the state to improve traffic safety.

- **WUIS** statehouse bureau chief **Amanda Vinicky** spoke on the politics of Illinois' pension funding problem at a meeting of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign chapter of the American Association of University Professors on October 1st. Vinicky noted that lawmakers will likely take up a measure to reduce state employees', teachers', and university employees' pensions in January, after the fall elections. But, even if a law is passed, she said, it will surely go to court. Although the state constitution gives a guarantee that pensions earned cannot be "impaired," Vinicky explained that some believe a pension-reducing overhaul would be constitutionally permissible if it saves the system from collapse. Also speaking along with Vinicky were economist **Fred Giertz**, director of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs, and business administration professor **Avijit Ghosh**, University of Illinois vice president of technical and economic development.
- The **WUIS** fall fund drive will be on the air October 11-20, with an emphasis to support an informed community by converting donors and listeners to the WUIS Calendar Club monthly giving program. The Calendar Club, which the station instituted two years ago, has resulted in increased funding through less attrition and reducing the cost to listeners of renewing their support. Thanks to current Calendar Club giving, the fall fund drive will not be on the air as often as in past drives. This is the first drive since WUIS' broadcast programming became all news and information and its classical music programming moved to a 24/7 digital channel.
- UIS faculty who have received competitive public affairs research grants from the Center this year will present their findings at two upcoming campus forums. On November 13th (11:30 am to 1.00 pm in PAC Conference Room H), **Michael G. Miller**, assistant professor of political science will discuss how funding sources affect voters' evaluations of candidates; **Gary Reinbold**, assistant professor of public administration, will describe his work on inequalities and incentives in income transfer and tax programs in Illinois; and **Donald Morris**, professor of accounting, will talk about his analysis of same-sex marriage and the impact of the state income tax marriage penalty. On November 28th (11:30 am to 1:00 pm in PAC Conference Room G), **Suzanne Borland**, assistant professor of legal studies, and **Barbara Hayler**, professor emerita of criminal justice, will present findings from their survey of the background and perceptions of sitting Illinois judges; **Junfeng Wang**, assistant professor of public administration, will look at results of her research, conducted with colleague **Gloria Simo**, on high speed rail decision making in Springfield; and **Jason Pierceson**, associate professor of political science and legal studies, will discuss the work on his book about same-sex marriage and the U.S. Supreme Court. The forums are open to the campus community and the public.

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