



Supreme Court of Illinois

September 16, 2024

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION TO RECEIVE JUSTICE INNOVATION AWARD

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice (ATJ Commission) will be honored with the Justice Innovation Award by the Law Center for Better Housing (LCBH) at *Bringing Justice Home* on October 17th at Buddy Guy's Legends in Chicago.

The ATJ Commission was chosen as the award's recipient for its use of technology-driven solutions to enhance access to legal information as achieved through its standardized, plain language forms project. Standardized forms are developed by the ATJ Commission's Forms Committee and its 13 drafting subcommittees.

Chaired by Judge Michael Fiello (Jackson County) and Judge Catherine Schneider (Cook County), the Forms Committee and its Eviction Subcommittee have spent years developing forms for use in the eviction process.

"I am pleased that the Forms Committee is being honored with the Justice Innovation Award," said Judge Fiello, co-chair of the Forms Committee. "The work of the Forms Committee is done by talented and hard-working volunteers from across the state, who are ably assisted by staff from the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts."

The Eviction Subcommittee has drafted plain language forms from eviction complaint documents to eviction orders, including agreed orders that provide templates for agreements between landlords and tenants. Last year, after years of thoughtful development by the Eviction Subcommittee, the ATJ Commission released new eviction answer and eviction sealing forms, giving self-represented litigants access to the tools they need to respond to an eviction case filed against them and ask the court to remove an eviction case from the public record after it is completed.

"It's truly an honor to be recognized by the Law Center for Better Housing with their Justice Innovation Award," said Judge Catherine Schneider, co-chair of the Forms Committee. "As Co-Chair of the Forms Committee I have had the great pleasure of working with dedicated volunteers like Mark Swartz, the Executive Director of LCBH, who are experts in their practice areas, who know the needs of self-represented people and the requirements of the law so that we may create legally accurate, yet approachable and usable forms."

Judge Fiello went on to say, "As a judge I also see the forms they have created being used in the courthouse by self-represented litigants and how those forms make it easier for them to navigate the court process. I also see attorneys using these forms, which is a testament to the fact that the Forms Committee is meeting its goal of creating easy-to-use, legally sufficient forms."

Programs and services provided by the ATJ Commission, such as IL Court Help, Language Access, Disability Access, and Appellate Resource were also highlighted by LCBH as programs

which allow litigants to meaningfully participate in the legal system and advocate for themselves without a lawyer.

The ATJ Commission, established in 2012 by the Illinois Supreme Court, is charged with promoting, facilitating and enhancing equal access to justice with an emphasis on access to the Illinois civil courts and administrative agencies for all people.

LCBH stands for renters' rights as the only legal aid organization in Chicago focused exclusively on housing justice issues. In 2023, LCBH served nearly 19,000 low- and moderate-income households through legal and supportive services while advocating for public policy initiatives to advance housing justice for all.

Find tickets to LCBH's 2024 Fall Benefit, *Bringing Justice Home* [here](#).

(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: James Brunner, Public Information Officer of the Illinois Supreme Court at 217.208.3354 or jbrunner@illinoiscourts.gov.)