

# Chicago and Illinois among nation's leaders in public corruption, report says

February 16 2012, By Brian Flood

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The Northern District of Illinois, which consists primarily of the Chicago metropolitan area, is the most corrupt federal district in the country, and Illinois is the third most corrupt state, according to a new report produced by researchers from the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

The report, "Chicago and Illinois: Leading the Pack in [Corruption](#)," shows that the number of public-corruption convictions in the Northern District of Illinois (Chicago) leads all other districts with 1,531 convictions since 1976. The two closest contenders were the Central District of California (Los Angeles) with 1,275 convictions, and the Southern District of New York (Manhattan) with 1,202 convictions.

It also indicates that Illinois has been home to more federal public-corruption convictions, on a per capita basis, than anywhere in the country except for the District of Columbia and Louisiana.

The full report is available [online](#).

A team of professors and students led by Dick Simpson, UIC professor and head of political science, and Jim Nowlan, a senior fellow at the University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs, gathered figures for the report from the recently released 2010 public corruption statistics and data since 1976 from the U.S. Department of Justice's Public Integrity Section.

The "most corrupt" rankings were determined from the public-corruption conviction statistics from the country's 94 federal judicial districts relative to the population of their respective [states](#).

"For a long time -- going back at least to the Al Capone era -- Chicago and Illinois have been known for high levels of public corruption," said Simpson, a former 44th Ward alderman in Chicago. "But now we have the statistics that confirm their dishonorable and notorious reputations."

Nowlan, a former Illinois state representative, said [federal prosecutors](#) have been very active in the state.

"Besides the four governors, they convicted two U.S. congressmen, a state treasurer, an attorney general, the auditor, two state senators, five state representatives, at least two deputy directors of state agencies, numerous judges and elected and appointed county officials, policemen, inspectors and government employees," Nowlan said.

In Chicago, 31 members of the City Council have been found guilty or pleaded guilty to a variety of crimes since 1973. Two additional aldermen were indicted but died before they could be tried for alleged crimes.

"Clearly, much more must be done to stem the tide of corruption in Illinois," said Simpson.

During tonight's public meeting held by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Ethics Reform Task Force, Simpson and Nowlan will present the following recommendations:

1. Amend the city's ethics ordinance to cover aldermen and their staffs.
2. Give the Inspector General access to all city documents including

those held secret by the corporation counsel.

3. Ban all gifts to all elected officials and public employees except those from family members.

4. Bar all lobbying of other governmental bodies by elected officials and city employees.

5. Prohibit double dipping, patronage and nepotism, with real penalties, including firing.

6. Improve the city's ethics training to, at least, the state's required level.

Other contributors to the report are Thomas J. Gradel, Melissa Mouritsen Zmuda, David Sterrett, and Doug Cantor. Partial funding for the project was provided by the Crossroads Fund and the Woods Charitable Trust.

Provided by University of Illinois at Chicago

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