

POLITICAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION

HOW TO KNOW
IF YOU'RE BEING TARGETED
and

HOW TO FIGHT BACK

A TOOLKIT
FROM



United
Northwest
Side

POLITICAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION

has no place in our community.

WE BELIEVE in the importance of holding elected officials and those in positions of public power to high standards of **accountability and transparency**, in order to build public trust in our institutions and promote civic engagement. We continue to be alarmed by local leaders who seem to openly reject these values.

WE REJECT the **culture of abuse and impunity** that many of those who hold power in our community continue to defend and promote, which threatens our neighbors and erodes faith in our public safety system.

WE WILL FIGHT to build a community in which **none of our neighbors fears retaliation or abuse** by those in power for voicing opinions in public or private.

Use this toolkit to help identify if you or someone you know are the target of political harassment or intimidation by someone in power--and learn about important ways that you can fight back!

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How to IDENTIFY **POLITICAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION**

Has any of the following happened to *you, your family, or your home* **as a result of a political opinion you've expressed or critical comment you've made** to or about someone in power (a public official, their staff, a public employee, etc.)?

- **Physical Attack**
- **Arrest** by law enforcement
- **Citation / Inspection** by government agency
- **Confrontation** in-person at your home or place of employment
- **Doxxing** (your name, address, image or personal information posted online without your consent)
- **Aggressive Behavior / Unwanted Attention** of any kind

If so, you may be the target of an act of political harassment or intimidation. Such instances have unfortunately become commonplace in our community.

Let's take a look at a few recent examples....

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Recent *EXAMPLES* of POLITICAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION *in our community*

Local NW Side alders **Gardiner**, **Sposato** and **Napolitano**, have become experts in using aggressive tactics to stifle political speech. Here are just a couple of the many examples of political intimidation that have occurred in our community, and continue to.

41ST WARD



In 2018, on social media pages administered by Ald. Napolitano a constituent questioned the alder's hardline stance against "illegals" and was allowed to be **doxxed** and **harassed**. Local right-wing figures, many with open connections to law enforcement, posted the constituent's image, address, the location of their employer, and started a rumor campaign to get them fired—all with Napolitano's tacit consent.

45TH WARD



There are a vast number of allegations of abuse against Ald. Gardiner to count (and seemingly new ones every week), including colluding with contacts in CPD to **arrest** constituents and force them from their homes, encouraging supporters to **physically attack** critics, and more. In one less violent instance from 2019, Gardiner's office called in a city agency to inspect the chickens of a resident of a neighboring ward who had been critical of the him in comments on Facebook, marking the case "URGENT!" No violation was found, but the message was clear.

38TH WARD



In 2021, after local residents organized a protest against the police killing of Anthony Alvarez, all three alders organized allies in law enforcement to counter-protest to intimidate those demanding justice. Ald. Sposato couldn't resist the urge to taunt and mock those present and tell them to go home, including members of the victim's family.

*In just these few examples, we can see political harassment and intimidation as **political tactics** used by **right-wing figures** to aggressively silence dissent—often **with the cooperation of local law enforcement**.*

image credit: Raven Geary

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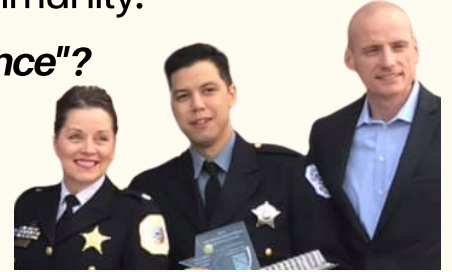
POLITICAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION

The relationship between elected officials and local law enforcement

If you call the police because you're the victim of a criminal act, you should be aware of the ongoing ways local public officials work with law enforcement to undermine the notion that police enforce the law impartially in our community.

Do local police collude with alders to enforce a CPD "code of silence"?

Current 16th District Commander Biggane recently cost the City roughly \$5 million for retaliating against a subordinate who made the mistake of formally complaining about abusive practices within the department. The only member of the City council to vote against the settlement? Ald. Gardiner.



CHICAGO SUN★TIMES

After picking up lost phone, construction worker claims he was wrongfully arrested, harassed by Chicago alderman

Benjamin George has sued Ald. James Gardiner and other city employees, saying his life was upended after he found a cellphone that belonged to an ally of the ward boss.

By Tom Schuba | Nov 24, 2020, 2:17pm CST

Do local police collude with alders to harass our neighbors?

That's just what a current civil rights lawsuit in federal court against Ald. Gardiner and the members of CPD alleges to have happened. After picking up a lost cellphone belonging to someone in Gardiner's office and going to return it, the suit alleges that Gardiner used contacts within the 16th District to harass him, arrest him, and force him to move out of state.

Do local police serve as politicians or law enforcement?

Figures like John Garrido, Ammie Kessem and others publicly campaign against police accountability, affordable housing, the Fair Tax, even local teachers, sometimes appearing in political roles while in uniform (see Garrido joining Sposato to taunt protesters on the previous page, Kessem in uniform in her campaign materials at right).



Will local police serve and protect the entire community?

This issue came to the fore recently in the 45th Ward when the home of a critic of Ald. Gardiner was attacked by one of his supporters who was a member of the Northwest Side GOP. The commanding officer called to the scene was Ammie Kessem, a Republican committeeperson and herself a member of the NWS GOP. It was soon discovered that key details including the assailant's license plate number were left off the official police report, and despite their identity being an open secret, community members had to start a public campaign to have an arrest made.

****The victim in this case of political intimidation refused to be silent**, following up daily with other officers in the department to make sure an arrest was made, as well as sharing his story publicly, online and with members of the press.

Should you remain silent if you're a target of political harassment or intimidation?

NO!...

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If you're a TARGET of POLITICAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION what SHOULD you DO?

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If the police come to your door:

- Do not invite officers into your house; talk through the door or a window and ask them to show you ID. You do not have to let them in unless they can show you a warrant signed by a judicial officer that lists your address as a place to be searched or that has your name on it as the subject of an arrest warrant.
- Ask the officer to slip the warrant under the door or hold it up to the window so you can read it. A search warrant allows police to enter the address listed on the warrant, but officers can only search the areas and for the items listed. An arrest warrant has the name of the person to be arrested.
- Even if officers have a warrant, you have the right to remain silent. You should not answer questions or speak to the officers while they are in your house conducting their search. Stand silently and observe what they do, where they go, and what they take. Write down everything you observed as soon as you can.

How to reduce risk to yourself:

- Do not resist arrest, even if you believe the arrest is unfair. Follow the officers' commands.

If you are arrested or detained:

- Say you wish to remain silent and ask for a lawyer immediately. Don't answer any questions or give any explanations or excuses. If you can't pay for a lawyer, you have the right to a free one. Don't say anything, sign anything or make any decisions without a lawyer.
- You have the right to make a local phone call. The police cannot listen if you call a lawyer. They can and often will listen to a call made to anyone else.

from: American Civil Liberties Union (<https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/>)

RECORD/DOCUMENT AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

If you're being targeted for a political opinion you've expressed, you should be prepared for the people who are targeting you to question your credibility and dispute the accuracy of your account of events. Document as much as you can, via cell phone video, screenshots, photographs, etc.

GET LEGAL REPRESENTATION

There are attorneys across the city specializing in civil rights violations and cases of harassment, including ones that may be able to help *pro bono* (without a fee). If you need help getting in contact with one, United Northwest Side may be able to help connect you.

Reach us at unitednorthwestside@gmail.com

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If you're a TARGET of POLITICAL HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION what SHOULD you DO?

★ **REFUSE TO BE SILENT**

With local elected officials intent on abusing their power, it is our duty to fight back. We must speak out to defend our community.

The only reason we know about the ongoing patterns of political intimidation in our community is that our neighbors continue to show courage in talking about how they have been treated: in-person with friends and neighbors, on the wide variety of online community groups on social media, and elsewhere. In addition, we encourage you to ***share your own story with the following resources:***



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We're collecting reports of political harassment and intimidation in our community to help shine a light on this ongoing problem. Anything you choose to share will be kept confidential and only ever shared in a manner you're comfortable with. Contact us via DM on any of our social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#)), or via email at unitednorthwestside@gmail.com and a member of our team will be in touch with further info.



CITY OF CHICAGO OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

The City's Office of Inspector General (OIG) operates independently of the political structure at City Hall, and if you're target of abuse by a city employee (including your alder), the OIG can be a key resource for exposing patterns of abuse. Make a report to their office via their...

24-hour hotline: **866-448-4754**,

email: reportcorruption@igchicago.org, or

online form: igchicago.org/contact-us/report-fraud-waste-abuse

CITYWIDE (NOT COMMUNITY) PRESS OUTLETS

Block Club Chicago and **CBS 2** have been just a couple of the local news outlets that have covered cases of political harassment and intimidation in our community, and provide effective ways to share these stories with a wide audience, especially in instances where officials may be colluding with other governmental agencies in power, including local police or the Secretary of State's office.

*Conversely, the local NW Side **Nadig Newspaper** provides effective cover for acts of harassment and intimidation by usually ignoring them completely. It cannot be counted on to cover these issues critically, and it is possible that information reported to Nadig may be passed along directly to abusive officials themselves.*

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