



CHICAGO NEWS GUILD LOCAL 34071

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February 3, 2022

The members of Chicago News Guild Local 34071 call on the owners of the *Chicago Reader* to end a stalemate that threatens the *Reader's* survival. At stake is the future of this venerable progressive voice in the city's media, as well as the jobs of its 34 staffers (who include 18 CNG members) and the livelihoods of dozens of contractors and freelancers.

Over the past two years, the *Reader* has made bold and irreversible changes to move toward a nonprofit business model. The final step in that transition is the transfer of the assets of the pre-existing entity, the for-profit *Reader* L3C, to the new nonprofit Reader Institute for Community Journalism—only the nonprofit has a viable financial future. But board members at the L3C have stalled the transfer with last-minute demands.

The L3C board in 2019 unanimously agreed to the creation of a nonprofit that would take over the operations of the L3C. But now that the *Reader* has committed to this path, some of those same board members have begun insisting on a level of control over the nonprofit and its leadership that could compromise the RICJ's tax-free status and would strip it of the editorial independence that great journalism requires.

The delay resulting from these dangerous demands jeopardizes the *Reader's* ability to continue operations. The time has come for the board and the owners to free the *Reader*. Let us begin our next chapter.

Through years of a catastrophically bad climate for journalism, during which many of the *Reader's* peer institutions were gutted or shut down, we found a way to get by, in the process building the most diverse staff and widest range of distribution in the paper's 50-year history. We're in conversation with more of Chicago than ever before.

That conversation needs to continue. All the owners need to do is transfer ownership to the RICJ, as they agreed to do more than two years ago. We insist: Free the *Reader*.

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