



# Press Release

For Immediate Release

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## Common Cause PA Selects Cicero Legislative Data API for *Our Philadelphia* Election and Campaign Online Database

**Philadelphia, PA – January 28, 2010** – Avencia Incorporated, an award-winning Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software design and development firm, announces the launch of *Our Philadelphia* ([www.ourphiladelphia.org](http://www.ourphiladelphia.org)), a new website built by [Common Cause of Pennsylvania](http://www.commoncause.org) and powered by Avencia's [Cicero](http://www.cicero.org) legislative district matching and elected official lookup web API. *Our Philadelphia* reveals top campaign contributors to all city councilmembers and state legislators from Philadelphia, as well as Mayor Michael Nutter and Gov. Ed Rendell.

Unlike many states, Pennsylvania has no limits on campaign contributions, and the online contribution databases maintained by the state and by the City of Philadelphia are barely usable with much of the data not available at all. So Common Cause of Pennsylvania is building its own watchdogging site and database as political fundraising heats up in advance of Pennsylvania's May primary, and as scandals continue to engulf top legislators in Harrisburg. In Philadelphia, an Ethics Task force created by Mayor Michael Nutter recently released recommendations in favor of forcing lobbyists to register with the city, making information about campaign contributions more available to the public, and further limiting gifts to city officials.

The site is being built around the following main goals and features:

- Elected officials lookups – enter an address and find your representatives as well as a list of their top contributors (powered by [Cicero](http://www.cicero.org))
- Campaign contribution database
- Election reform advocacy – including [redistricting](http://www.redistricting.org), campaign finance and ethics
- Open government and transparency advocacy
- City and state government watchdog

"*Our Philadelphia* is a powerful new tool for people who want to hold their elected officials more accountable," said James Browning, Director for Development for Common Cause/Pennsylvania. "And after last week's Supreme Court ruling striking down the ban on corporate spending to influence elections, the influence of corporate donors and the potential for money to further corrupt the political process has never been greater."



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Made possible by the Samuel S. Fund, *Our Philadelphia* will also focus on redistricting reform for the city and the state, tracking the influence of lobbyists, and promoting higher ethical standards for public officials. With a search tool powered by Avencia's Cicero legislative district matching and elected official lookup web API, the website allows any Philadelphia resident to look up their elected officials by entering an address. The profiles of top donors to each elected official are the result of a year-long campaign by Common Cause to make campaign finance records more accessible. Over time, *Our Philadelphia* plans to create its own searchable database of campaign contributions, and to add profiles of elected officials and their top donors from Montgomery, Delaware, Bucks, and Chester counties.

The [Cicero API](#) is no stranger to political advocacy and political watchdog websites. It currently feeds elected district boundaries and elected official information into several public and private web applications for newspapers, election watchdog groups, philanthropic foundations, unions, arts organizations and private commercial firms. A recent example of an application powered by Cicero is the [Redistricting the Philadelphia Region](#) website. Built for the Committee of Seventy, a Philadelphia-based 'good government', political watchdog organization, the website enables citizens to, based on their address, look up their political districts, visualize them on a map and learn about the process of redistricting.

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## About Avencia

[Avencia](#) is an award-winning, Philadelphia-based geographic analysis and software development firm specializing in the creation of innovative location-based software tools to enhance decision-making processes. Avencia believes these location-based technologies can help promote the emergence of more [dynamic, vibrant communities](#). For more information, visit [www.avencia.com](http://www.avencia.com)

## About Common Cause

Common Cause is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to restoring the core values of American democracy, reinventing an open, honest and accountable government that serves the public interest, and empowering ordinary people to make their voices heard in the political process. Learn more about Common Cause's efforts to hold power accountable at [commoncause.org/pa](http://commoncause.org/pa)

If you would like more information about Avencia or to schedule an interview with Robert Cheetham, Avencia CEO and President, please contact Abby Fretz at (215) 701 – 7503 or e-mail [afretz@avencia.com](mailto:afretz@avencia.com).

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