



Court Watch NOLA (CWN) educates over a hundred volunteers in best practice standards and the basic procedures of criminal court, providing each new volunteer approximately 25 hours of legal education on a yearly basis. The daily presence of CWN volunteers with their bright yellow clipboards and ID cards in New Orleans felony court, misdemeanor court and bail proceedings are a constant reminder that those working in these courts will be held accountable for their actions by educated, empowered and informed members of our community. The data community court watchers collect is published in an annual report via press conferences, posted on CWN's website and circulated to all criminal justice stakeholders. Court watchers are recruited from all New Orleans communities with a special focus on the formally incarcerated, victims and family members of both groups. The Orleans Parish District Attorney and criminal judges collect very little data and publicly disclose even less; the data CWN publishes is some of the only data New Orleans citizens receive on the functionality of their criminal courts.

CWN monitors all criminal actors: the prosecutor, judges, police, deputy sheriffs, private defense, public defenders and the clerk of court. CWN considers these criminal justice actors to be institutional stakeholders in a larger process of pushing the system toward change. Nothing in the public arena has ever changed without the advent of public attention. CWN empowers community through education to demand accountability and the election of better criminal justice officials.

### **Some of CWN's 2016 accomplishments**

- ✓ Successfully persuaded the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office to open all weekend and night bail/bond hearings to the public. Before CWN's intervention, family members, victims, community members, and the media were all stopped at the court doors on the weekends or at night by a deputy sheriff and forbidden entrance.
- ✓ Coordinated with partners such as Voice of the Experienced (VOTE) a Judicial Forum where the judicial candidates for two major judicial races debated the integral issues at stake in their respective races. As reported by NPR, over 200 people attended and the YouTube video recording posted on the CWN website received over 1000 views.
- ✓ Published two major reports in eight months; four major reports in the last fourteen months. Through more than 80 mentions in the media and more than 15 public presentations, CWN provided key data to stakeholders, policy makers, and ordinary citizens who have started to use CWN data to demand changes in our criminal courts.
- ✓ Convinced the Municipal Court to inform misdemeanor defendants they have the right to consult with defense counsel before the prosecutor invites them into a back room to speak to them about their case.
- ✓ Supported court watchers in creating independent grass roots committees and hosting radio shows to review public officials' CWN record and report about such data to the community during the 2016 election season.

**To ensure CWN strengthens its current existing activities on a yearly basis, CWN respectfully requests \$25k.**

This budget request would allow CWN to fund the following activities:

- Strengthen our part time-volunteer coordinator to increase recruitment in the formally incarcerated, victim, and religious communities. **\$10,000**
- Better resource our statistics consultant to ensure CWN's data is sound and unimpeachable. As CWN begins to produce more cutting-edge and high-profile reports, CWN needs to continue to ensure its data is sound. Additionally, the statistics consultant can respond to increased data requests from community members and groups that current staff are unable to respond to. **\$8,000**
- Strengthen resources to volunteers CWN could host free lunches 6 times a year. These lunches allow CWN community court watchers to come together to discuss pivotal issues such as: the track record of incumbent judges and the DA, organizing around elections, mistreatment of **\$5,000**

defendants, etc. CWN would no longer have to charge community organizers who would like to be trained on the CWN model and criminal law procedure but are unable to volunteer. CWN would be able to pay for parking for court watchers so they would not have to walk 5 blocks to court. CWN would be able to print data sheets (on which court watchers record their court data) for court watchers. CWN would be able to provide a meal for the four-hour in-office training required of all community volunteers before they begin to monitor court. CWN could continue to equip each court watcher with a bright yellow clipboard so they can be easily identified in court and the Judge, ADA, police officer, etc. will understand he or she is monitored.

- Publications CWN would like to print and widely disseminate its annual reports and one-page infographics to those walking into court, those walking into City Hall, and those in the community it hopes to recruit as volunteers. **\$1,000**
- Office Expenses CWN's rental of one desk in a shared space near the courthouse with use of conference room will be increasing starting in May 2017. **\$1,000**

**Requested Background Information:**

Our Current Annual Budget is \$225k. The Executive Director has previously managed a budget of approximately \$500k. Other CWN staff have directly managed a \$1 million budget and coordinated a \$15 million budget.

For further information contact: [slevine@courtwatchnola.org](mailto:slevine@courtwatchnola.org) or visit our website: [www.courtwatchnola.org](http://www.courtwatchnola.org).