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Members of Illinois Congressional Delegation Urge Illinois House Members to Pass Marriage Equality Bill

Luis Gutierrez, Danny Davis and five others urge legislators to “join us in being on the right side of history”

CHICAGO – March 14, 2013 – As a final vote in the Illinois House of Representatives looms, influential members of Illinois’ congressional delegation called on lawmakers in their home state to support the freedom to marry for gay and lesbian couples. The Congressional members voiced their support in an open letter to lawmakers asking them to approve the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act, saying the bill “will strengthen Illinois families by allowing individuals who love each other to enter into the joys and benefits of a legal marriage.” The seven U.S. House members signing the letter include:

- Danny K. Davis
- Luis Gutierrez
- Mike Quigley
- Jan Schakowsky
- Tammy Duckworth
- Brad Schneider
- Bill Foster

“For many years, we have fought together for what we believed was in the best interests of our districts, our state and our country,” the Representatives wrote. “You have the chance to provide recognition as well as basic legal protections to all Illinois families across our state.”

The letter references the strong support for marriage equality in Illinois; a recent *Crain’s/Ipsos* poll shows Illinoisans supporting marriage equality, with 50 percent in favor and only 29 percent opposed. Of the 50 percent in support, 37 percent “strongly” support the freedom to marry.

“From public opinion polls to letters and conversations with constituents, we are seeing a clear and rapid shift toward support for marriage equality. Put simply, the public has turned a corner on this issue,” the members of Congress stated in the open letter. “Most Illinoisans believe we should not impose second-class status on one group of

citizens – and they believe that government should treat all families with equity, fairness and respect.”

The letter also comes at a time when major newspapers serving Illinois – including the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Daily Herald*, the *Peoria Journal Star*, the *Springfield Journal-Register*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *Quad City Times* – have endorsed the marriage equality bill.

“For some time now, people have been talking about the problems we face in Illinois, but it is time that we start celebrating what Illinois is doing right,” the letter concludes. “Please join us in being on the right side of history – and vote to include all Illinoisans in the freedom to marry.”

Illinois Unites for Marriage – a coalition led by Equality Illinois, Lambda Legal and the ACLU of Illinois – is continuing its statewide campaign in support of the bill, marshaling support and urging allies to step up contacts with their legislators as the House vote approaches. The coalition supporting the freedom to marry for all loving, committed couples – already strong with business, labor and community leaders, civic organizations, faith institutions and members of the clergy, African-American leaders, Republicans and Democrats – continues to grow.

A copy of the open letter can be found at: <http://bit.ly/YbvS4I>. Information about the legislation is available at www.illinoisunites.org, along with information about how citizens can make their voices heard.

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