



**EQUALITY
ILLINOIS**

PRESS RELEASE

Founded in 1991, Equality Illinois is the state's oldest, largest and most effective organization advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 2013

Midwest LGBT Rights Organizations Gather to Plan Next Steps, Celebrate Recent Victories

Equality Illinois Convenes Chicago Conference

CHICAGO – Equality Illinois is convening delegates from Midwestern lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) equality organizations to a conference this week to celebrate victories securing the freedom to marry in several states and to share strategies for tackling numerous serious challenges that remain.

For some states marriage equality is still a distant dream where opponents are trying to throw up new barriers. In states where gay and lesbian couples and their families have won the protections and benefits of marriage, opponents may be trying to weaken the law and unseat supportive lawmakers. In all the states issues such as school safety, transgender rights, workplace equality, immigration and caring for LGBT elderly are at the forefront.

"While we can take pride in the string of successes the movement has enjoyed, we are by no means complacent about the challenges that remain," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual Illinoisans.

Equality Illinois, the largest LGBT advocacy group in the Midwest, is hosting the Midwestern Cohort of the Equality Federation, the national association of state-based LGBT organizations, which is meeting Thursday and Friday, Nov. 14-15, in the Hilton Chicago Hotel.

"For the LGBT movement, America's heartland poses exciting opportunities and unique challenges," said Equality Federation Executive Director Rebecca Isaacs. "Our Midwestern Cohort convenes to learn from each other and develop shared strategies. Together, we're creating a body of knowledge for winning equality in the middle of the country."

In addition to offering training, guidance and collaboration for the organizations' leaders, the meetings will also focus on communications and messaging, fundraising and development, strategic planning, board management, and legislative campaigns on a variety of issues from marriage to nondiscrimination.

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