



**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

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EQUALITY ILLINOIS HONORS CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE *2014 Freedom Award Recognizes Leadership on LGBT Issues*

CHICAGO – Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest organization advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Illinoisans, announced today that the first of its annual Freedom Awards to be presented at the 2014 Equality Illinois Gala is going to the Chicago Urban League for spreading the message of fairness and equality.

"We deeply appreciate all public figures and organizations who support LGBT issues. It is still another thing to be a torchbearer of freedom on behalf of LGBT families in Illinois and nationally," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. "Equality Illinois is proud to recognize the Chicago Urban League with our 2014 Freedom Award for its stalwart leadership on marriage equality."

For nearly a century, the Chicago Urban League has opened the doors of opportunity for African Americans, other minorities and the poor, and the Chicago Urban League includes in its vision the city's diverse LGBT community.

An active partner with Equality Illinois and other organizations in the pro-marriage coalition, the Chicago Urban League committed valuable resources and talent and even the use of its headquarters to the marriage campaign. When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled this summer that same-sex married couples cannot be denied federal rights, the Chicago Urban League applauded the decision "as a civil rights organization that has, for nearly a century, fought for equality for the undeserved and disenfranchised."

The Chicago Urban League is also involved with the Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus and supports activities at the Center on Halsted in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

"The Chicago Urban League does not allow itself to be narrowly cast. Its vision of a just America and Illinois embraces all who feel the sting of discrimination. And

its contributions during the marriage fight have been invaluable," Cherkasov said.

“We are honored to receive the 2014 Freedom Award,” said Chicago Urban League president and CEO Andrea L. Zopp. “For nearly a century the Chicago Urban League has been a fearless advocate for educational, economic and social justice for African Americans and all who are discriminated against. At our core, we are a civil rights organization that believes in fairness and equality for all, including the LGBT community. We are grateful to Equality Illinois for bestowing this honor on us and look forward to a lasting partnership with them and all organizations who believe in opportunity and equality.”

More recipients of the 2014 Equality Illinois Freedom Award will be announced in the weeks ahead. The Equality Illinois Freedom Award is given annually to individuals and organizations who demonstrate remarkable vision, courage, and leadership in the effort to achieve full equality for LGBT individuals in Illinois. The 2014 Freedom Awards will be presented at the Equality Illinois Gala on Saturday, February 8, at the Hilton Chicago. Past Freedom Award winners include Illinois Senate President John Cullerton, state Rep. Greg Harris, former state Rep. Constance “Connie” A. Howard, the late state Comptroller Dawn Clark Netsch, the late state Rep. Mark Beaubien Jr., and state Sen. Heather Steans.

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