



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **With Committee Success, Marriage Bill Moving to Next General Assembly**

SPRINGFIELD – Today, the movement for marriage equality achieved a milestone victory, with the adoption of the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act by the Senate Executive Committee. This was the first step of many. Today's victory builds on all the work we have done, adds to the momentum that the supporters have created, and puts us in great position to advance the freedom to marry in the coming months.

With just a handful of days remaining in the current lame duck session, time to move the bill through both chambers is not on our side. So we will act in the new General Assembly that convenes next week, on Wednesday, January 9.

"We have come so far. Just to be able to witness the historic public debate over the desire of all loving, committed couples to be able to marry in Illinois is a major accomplishment. And with the landmark action by the Senate Executive Committee in favor of the bill, for the first time ever an Illinois legislative body voted to extend the freedom to marry. Never before has the issue gone this far in the Illinois legislature," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest LGBT advocacy organization.

"Our opponents should not believe they have turned the tide against the growing national and Illinois consensus favoring marriage equality. The clock simply ran out, and our legislative supporters ran out of time," he said.

Equality Illinois and its allies are prepared to continue the battle in the new legislature with these tremendous positives in our favor:

- The new Illinois House and Senate are considered to be more supportive of LGBT issues.
- The fight for marriage equality brought together religious leaders, business, labor unions, African-American and Hispanic communities, Democrats and Republicans, representing themselves and millions of Illinoisans.
- A coalition led by Equality Illinois, Lambda Legal and ACLU of Illinois and including scores more organizations came together under Illinois Unites for Marriage to campaign for the bill.

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-The support of President Obama, U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, Gov. Pat Quinn, Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Illinois GOP Chairman Pat Brady and many more leaders and the endorsements by major newspapers including the Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune and the Daily Herald are behind the effort and are not going away.

-This battle has swelled our ranks, and our forces will be stronger than ever. We have shared thousands of messages with senators and representatives, and our supporters called and emailed lawmakers in phenomenal numbers.

"We are confident that the House and Senate sponsors, Rep. Greg Harris and Sen. Heather Steans, will successfully lead the bill to passage in the next General Assembly, and we thank them and all the other legislative co-sponsors and supporters for their efforts," Cherkasov said.

This battle begins again on Wednesday, January 9, and, Equality Illinois will be in the forefront.

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.

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