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Illinois Unites Congratulates Delaware on Enacting Marriage Equality, Looks Forward to Minnesota Win

As Delaware Gov. signs marriage equality into law and Minnesota stands poised to become 12th state extending freedom to marry, all eyes are on Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – May 8, 2013 – In another national triumph for marriage equality, Delaware became the 11th state yesterday to extend the freedom to marry to gay and lesbian couples. The Delaware Senate passed the bill in a 12-9 vote, and Gov. Jack Markell signed it minutes later, saying, “we must use the momentum and the evidence of growing support on this subject to take another historic step toward true equality.”

“More and more Americans support the freedom to marry for all couples. The public’s evolution on this issue has been remarkable,” said Rep. Greg Harris (D-Chicago), the chief House sponsor of the Illinois marriage bill, the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act.

“The eyes of the nation now look to Illinois. Each of us who are called upon to cast this vote must decide how we wish to be remembered by history,” Harris added. “I believe my colleagues will want to be on the right side of history, remembered among those who stood for fairness and equality.”

Also today, the Minnesota House of Representatives announced it would vote on its freedom to marry bill (HF1054) on Thursday, May 9. Just last week, Rhode Island became the 10th state to enact marriage equality legislation. The Rhode Island bill drew support from every Republican in the Rhode Island Senate, echoing increased GOP support across the country from figures that include U.S. Senators Mark Kirk (R-Illinois) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio.)

“It is gratifying that we are celebrating another national victory so soon after Rhode Island recognized the freedom to marry for all,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. “Legislators across the land are recognizing that marriage is about a commitment two people share, regardless of who you are.”

Two weeks ago, the Nevada Senate passed a resolution late Monday in a 12-9 vote repealing the state's heterosexual definition of marriage, the first step in recognizing the freedom to marry for all couples.

“Governor Markell said he signed the Delaware bill because he didn’t want any citizen to have to wait one moment longer for equality,” said Jim Bennett, Midwest Director of Lambda Legal. “We agree. It is time for the Illinois House of Representatives to act.”

This week’s news comes against a backdrop of national and statewide polling showing steadily increasing support for marriage equality. Poll after poll shows that a majority of Americans and a majority of Illinoisans support extending marriage to gay and lesbian couples.

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.

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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*For additional information, contact Mitchell Locin at Equality Illinois:
773-477-7173; info@eqil.org*