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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**New Poll Shows Growing Support for Marriage Equality in Illinois**

SPRINGFIELD - Given the drumbeat for equality in Illinois and across the nation, Equality Illinois calls on lawmakers to recognize the growing support for marriage equality shown in the Illinois survey released today by Public Policy Polling.

“The results of this poll should ring loud and clear under the dome of the Illinois State Capitol,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state’s oldest, largest, and most effective LGBT advocacy organization.

Cherkasov noted the strong majorities favoring marriage equality among younger voters (58 percent in favor), Hispanics (70 percent), African-Americans (60 percent), and women (54 percent) in the Public Policy Polling survey as well as the majority of Illinois voters in an exit poll on Election Day.

“These poll results demonstrate that ending discrimination is a position that will only continue to grow in the state,” Cherkasov said. “Lawmakers looking at the future of the state should recognize the voices of the future and the strong statement of Illinois voters on Election Day.”

Equality Illinois officials Cherkasov and Randy Hannig, Director of Public Policy, have been in Springfield during the current lame duck session working with the organization’s bi-partisan team of lobbyists to talk to lawmakers about the bill to end marriage discrimination.

“Our legislative allies will determine the proper moment to bring marriage equality to a vote, but Equality Illinois expects all incumbent and incoming senators and representatives to answer the call represented by the election and these poll results,” Cherkasov said.

Civil unions are not doing their intended job of guaranteeing equal rights for gay and lesbian couples, and Illinois must take the next step of giving them the right to marry. “In area after area, whether tax law, health insurance, hospitalization, family issues, personal finance and actions by state and local officials, couples were either treated unequally or denied their rights, or singled out for discrimination. As we learned in history, separate does not make equal,” Cherkasov said.

In addition to the poll, Illinois lawmakers should take notice of what their constituents said with their votes on Election Day:

- President Barack Obama ran on his support for marriage equality, and that support translated into an excited electorate that was enthusiastic to vote for the President.
- Candidates running for office in tight races ran and won on LGBT issues, including Congressional candidates Bill Foster and Brad Schneider, who won in swing districts by touting a message of equality for all.
- Not a single Illinois incumbent lost an election because of support for civil unions, marriage equality, or other LGBT equality legislation.
- Candidates' sexual orientation and gender identity are not a negative issue for voters. Illinois elected its first openly-gay state legislator from outside Cook County in 2012, increasing the total number of Illinois' openly-gay state legislators to four.
- Voters split ballots across party lines to reject candidates with extreme, out-of-touch positions on LGBT equality.

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