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**EQUALITY ILLINOIS CELEBRATES DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM
LGBT Rights Organization to Host Illinois Democrats at Charlotte Event**

CHICAGO—With national Democrats prepared to embrace marriage equality in their platform, Equality Illinois today praised the leadership that the party is showing on the issue.

The tenor at the quadrennial Democratic National Convention opening today is expected to be markedly different than what LGBT Americans experienced at the Republican National Convention last week when delegates adopted a GOP platform that endorses a constitutional amendment prohibiting marriage equality.

“President Obama is leading the way to a national consensus in favor of equal treatment and fairness for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. “The first-time endorsements of the freedom to marry for all Americans by a sitting president and in a major party platform are milestones in the fight for equality.”

To thank Democrats for their support and to translate those policy positions into action on the issue in Illinois, Equality Illinois, the state’s oldest and largest LGBT advocacy organization, is hosting a convention party, Midnight Martinis, Wednesday night (September 5) at the Omni Charlotte Hotel for the Illinois delegation.

“While we appreciate their endorsement of marriage equality and thank them for their past support on LGBT issues, we still need to work with Democrats to successfully move the marriage bill through the Illinois legislature” said Randy Hannig, Director of Public Policy at Equality Illinois. “This event gives us a chance to strengthen our relationships, share our priorities and build new friendships with the Democrats.”

Cherkasov and Hannig, along with Dalila Fridi, Chair of the Equality Illinois Education Project, and Art Johnston, a founder and board member of the organization, will lead the Equality Illinois event in Charlotte. As at the GOP convention, supporters and allies of Equality Illinois will be given passes to attend some of the Democratic convention floor sessions.

Despite the cold shoulder from national Republicans at their Tampa convention last week, Equality Illinois, a non-partisan organization, co-hosted a luncheon for the Illinois GOP delegation and received a cordial reception.

“We achieved what we set out to do in Tampa, and that was to show centrist Republicans that we appreciate the help they give us on many LGBT initiatives despite the ill winds emanating from the party’s ultra-conservative wing responsible for authoring the Republican platform,” Hannig said. “It is important



Mailing Address

3318 N. Halsted Street
Chicago, IL 60657

Phone

773-477-7173

Fax

773-477-6912

E-mail

info@eqil.org

Web

www.equalityillinois.org

for us to carry our message to all corners of Illinois and to reach out to all potential allies.”