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**EQUALITY ILLINOIS DECRIES REPUBLICAN PLATFORM
LGBT Rights Organization to meet with Illinois Republicans in Tampa**

CHICAGO—As it prepares to meet with Illinois Republicans at the GOP National Convention next week in Tampa, Equality Illinois, the state’s oldest and largest LGBT civil rights advocacy organization, today criticized the party’s platform committee for calling for a constitutional amendment prohibiting marriage equality.

The platform committee is also recommending enforcement of the Defense of Marriage Act, which the Obama Administration has refused to do, citing its belief that it is unconstitutional.

“The proposed Republican platform flies in the face of the growing national consensus behind equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in general and marriage equality specifically,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois.

“The language shows that the Romney-Ryan ticket, whose anti-LGBT positions are well known, has allowed the far right in the Republican Party to hijack the convention process,” Cherkasov continued. “If they think that independent, fair-minded Americans will ignore that language as they focus on other issues, they are misreading the swing voters that they will need to win in November.”

Equality Illinois plans to bring its message of fairness to the GOP convention at the invitation of the Illinois Republican Party. “Some Illinois GOP leaders have learned that they cannot succeed as a statewide party unless they are more inclusive,” Cherkasov said.

Equality Illinois is hosting a Beachside Cocktail Hour at the Tampa convention. The Illinois GOP leadership invited Equality Illinois, a non-partisan organization, to sponsor the event on Tuesday, August 28 as part of a state delegation luncheon at the Sheraton Sand Key Beach Resort.

Working with Illinois Republicans is not unusual, despite the obvious differences between Equality Illinois and the national Republican Party on matters of equality for LGBT Americans.

“We have to take a bipartisan approach to secure the legislative majorities we need to advance equality, and there are statewide Republican officeholders who support us regardless of what the national party says,” said Randy Hannig, Director of Public Policy of Equality Illinois.

“Every successful effort on behalf of the LGBT community in the Illinois legislature and every other state legislature across the U.S. has depended on stand-up Republican lawmakers who vote for what is right,” Hannig said.

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

Art Johnston, a founder and board member of the organization, will lead the Equality Illinois event in Tampa along with Hannig. “We appreciate the chance to talk and mingle with important stakeholders in the GOP to discuss legislative priorities, to strengthen relationships with allies and to foster new friendships.” Hannig said.

At the Democratic National Convention the following week in Charlotte, Equality Illinois will also host a party, Midnight Martinis, the night of Wednesday, September 5 at the Omni Charlotte Hotel.

At both conventions, supporters and allies of Equality Illinois will be given passes to attend some of the convention floor sessions.

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