



## **Illinois Senate Approves Bill Extending Freedom to Marry to Gay and Lesbian Couples** *Momentum builds after historic vote; landmark legislation moves to House*

SPRINGFIELD – February 14, 2013 – Surrounded by dozens of couples and their families, the Illinois Senate passed Senate Bill 10 today – a vote that positions Illinois to become the 10<sup>th</sup> state to recognize the freedom to marry for gay and lesbian couples.

The vote on the bill – the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act – now moves to the Illinois House of Representatives.

"The momentum is building. More and more House members are telling me they want to be on the right side of history and that they intend to support the bill," said Rep. Greg Harris (D-Chicago), co-sponsor of the legislation with Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago.)

"Support for marriage equality is growing nationally and in Illinois, and we're seeing that reflected in the mood of the House," Harris added.

Today's legislative victory comes against a backdrop of national polling showing that a majority of Americans believe gays and lesbians should have the freedom to marry. Polls also show that a majority in Illinois supports it.

Marriage equality legislation has been endorsed recently by every major newspaper in Illinois, including the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Daily Herald*, the *Peoria Journal Star*, the *Springfield Journal-Register* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

Fifty of Illinois' most prominent business leaders and corporations have called on the General Assembly to pass the bill, as have nearly 300 clergy and religious leaders from a wide variety of faith traditions.

"History is happening before our eyes," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. "We have just one last hurdle to clear to ensure that all loving, committed couples in Illinois have the freedom to marry."

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.

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 and Hispanic leaders, Republicans and Democrats – continues to grow.

Expressing his support for the bill, Illinois GOP Chairman Pat Brady said in January, "giving gay and lesbian couples the freedom to get married honors the best conservative principles. It strengthens families and reinforces a key Republican value – that the law should treat all citizens equally."

Information about the legislation is available at [www.illinoisunites.org](http://www.illinoisunites.org), along with information about how citizens can make their voices heard, including contacting their legislators and signing a petition.

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*For additional information, contact Equality Illinois at 773.477-7173; [info@eqil.org](mailto:info@eqil.org)*