



*EQIL INSIDER SCOOP  
FEBRUARY 2013*



**AFFECTING YOU NOW:**

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[FIRST VOTE FOR MARRIAGE](#)

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**A SIGNIFICANT MONTH** = The Illinois General Assembly is back in action, and high on the agenda is the marriage bill. This is a fight years in the making, and the sponsors, Sen. Heather Steans and Rep. Greg Harris, believe we will come out victorious. Falling right in the middle of the battle is the Equality Illinois *Justice for All Gala* on Saturday, Feb. 9, when we will celebrate all that has been accomplished and gird for the battle ahead. Following is a breakdown of these two important developments:

**MARRIAGE BILL CAMPAIGN** = The House returned this week, and the Senate reconvenes next week. Equality Illinois and our allies are meeting with legislative leaders and the bill's sponsors, and we're aggressively pursuing senators and representatives whose votes are needed to win passage of the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act.

We are also mobilizing YOU, whose voices need to be heard by our lawmakers. Here are some things you can do:

1. [Email](#) or call your senator and representative. You just need to enter your zip code and address on our form.
2. Write a short letter to the editor. For message tips and contact information to publications, please click [THIS LINK](#).
3. Urge family and friends in Illinois to also communicate with their legislators and write letters to the editor.
4. Volunteer for one of our phone banks, working with our Illinois Unites for Marriage coalition to contact voters to get them to get in touch with their legislators. To sign up and check dates and times, please email or call Rachel Skyllis at [rskylis@eqil.org](mailto:rskylis@eqil.org) / [630-468-4068](tel:630-468-4068).
5. Get "I DO" support marriage equality postcards signed, or let us know of events where we can get them signed. We deliver them in batches to legislators. For information, please email Caroline Staerk, our field director, at [cstaerk@eqil.org](mailto:cstaerk@eqil.org). If you already have signed postcards, please send them to:

Equality Illinois, Attn: Caroline Staerk;  
3712 N. Broadway, #125  
Chicago, IL 60613

One of the developments of the last few weeks was the release of a letter from 50 leading executives and companies voicing support for the marriage bill, saying that it's good for business and good for Illinois. Read the letter and see the list of supporters [here](#).

As the campaign heats up, there will be more messages from us in the days ahead to keep you informed of the latest developments and suggest steps you can take to do your part.



**GALA = The Equality Illinois 2013 Gala: *Justice for All* will take place on Saturday, February 9, 2013**, starting at 6:00 pm in the Hilton Chicago, 720 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. There are still some single and group tickets available for the most elegant and fun LGBT event of the year. With well over 1,000 guests in attendance, including elected officials, candidates, and other VIPs, the Gala is one of the most impactful ways to support full equality for LGBT people. [Learn more and purchase your tickets today HERE](#). If you have questions, call [773-477-7173](tel:773-477-7173).

As always, Gala night will feature a glamorous Silent Auction, where you'll be able to bid for trips, spa treatments, art, wine, entertainment and sporting events and many other items. You get the benefit of winning an auction item, and Equality Illinois benefits so it can do its work all year long.

Renowned Chicago chef Art Smith (on right in picture) and his husband Jesus Salueiro (on left) are the co-chairs of the 2013 gala. Smith has cooked for everyone from Oprah Winfrey and Lady Gaga to President Obama, authored cookbooks, and with his husband launched Common Threads, a charity that teaches kids from low-income families how to prepare healthy and delicious food. In Chicago, his signature restaurant is Table Fifty-Two.



The Hilton is creating a menu inspired by Chef Smith's Southern-influenced recipes. Please join us for a unique evening, whose proceeds will help the battle to pass the marriage bill.

At the Gala, Equality Illinois will be presenting the 2013 Freedom Award to **Sen. Heather Steans** (on left), the Senate sponsor of the marriage bill, for her indefatigable work on behalf of LGBT equality. "Sen. Steans has been one of the General Assembly's most vocal and passionate supporters of full equality for LGBT people," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. "From defending civil unions from successive attacks in the legislature to fighting hate crimes to advocating for safe schools, Sen. Steans powerfully represents the LGBT community's needs. She embodies the reason the Equality Illinois Freedom Award was created." Congratulations, Sen. Steans!

**TAX RELIEF** = Couples in civil unions have two new tools to help them file their 2012 state income taxes, courtesy of the Illinois Department of Revenue. First, you can now file an electronic IL-1040, which was previously unavailable to same-sex couples in a civil union. Second, there is a new Schedule CU required for all civil union couples in Illinois, which will actually streamline how couples figure their taxes. EQIL has been working closely with the Department of Revenue since the enactment of the civil union law, and we are pleased by the

development. There's more at <http://tax.illinois.gov/Publications/Bulletins/2013/FY-2013-09.pdf>.

It's good that the state is trying to make things a little easier for civil union couples. But the easiest solution would be for the state and federal governments to recognize the freedom to marry for all couples.

**FIRST FRIDAY** = Join Equality Illinois PAC from 6 to 8 pm TODAY for the always popular and fun monthly First Friday social! This month's event is very special for two reasons. First, as mentioned, the legislature returned this week, so the battle on the marriage bill is on! You will be able to hear the latest updates on the fight for marriage equality in Illinois from our Policy Director, Randy Hannig. Second, with the 2013 Justice for All Gala just a week away, we will be raffling a pair of tickets, valued at \$600 and also doing a door prize drawing for a pair of tickets to the VIP Premiere Reception.

A big crowd always joins us for First Friday, so please come by for the fun, cocktails, and prize drawings. For a \$10 donation to the Equality Illinois PAC, you receive two drink tickets and a ticket for a door prize drawing. Friday, Feb. 1, 6–8pm @ Sidetrack, 3349 North Halsted Street in Chicago (21+ with ID).

*Contributions support Equality Illinois PAC. Paid for by Equality Illinois PAC. Contributions are not tax deductible. A copy of our report filed with the State Board of Elections is (or will be) available on the Board's official website, [elections.il.gov](http://elections.il.gov), or for purchase from the State Board of Elections, Springfield, Illinois. State law requires that we report the occupation and name of the employer of any individual who contributes over \$500.00.*

**WOMEN'S WEDNESDAY** = Our monthly social gathering for women has a special Valentine's theme. The next event is Wednesday, February 13, 7-9 pm at Mary's Attic in Andersonville (5400 N. Clark St., Chicago, above Hamburger Mary's), featuring live entertainment and plenty of fun.

The evening will include: 2 free drinks, a free door prize ticket, raffle prizes, entertainment, "Mary"-oke, and more, all for just \$10 admission. Don't miss it! Bring a friend, grab a drink, and banish the mid-week blues, all while supporting our work on marriage and LGBT rights in Illinois.

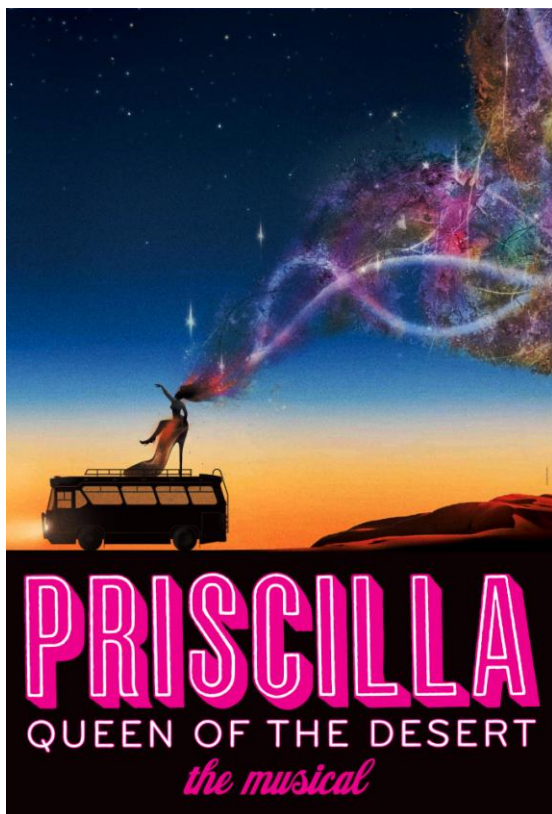
**LEARN ABOUT THE MARRIAGE BILL** = Equality Illinois field director Caroline Staerk will be speaking at two events about the push for marriage equality in Illinois.

1. At the monthly meeting of the Chicago Metro Chapter of PFLAG, Sunday, Feb. 17, 2 - 4 pm, at the Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, Chicago, second floor.
2. At the Chicago Regional Conference – A New Day for the Covenant Network and the Presbyterian Church USA, at 1 pm on Thursday, Feb. 21, the Fourth Presbyterian Church, 126 E. Chestnut St. (Chicago).

If you'd like an Equality Illinois speaker at your event, please contact us at [info@eqil.org](mailto:info@eqil.org) or call [773-477-7173](tel:773-477-7173).

**FREEDOM TO MARRY RECEPTION** = Join us and Illinois Unites for Marriage coalition partner Lambda Legal at the annual Freedom to Marry reception at 6-9 pm on Thursday, Feb. 21 at The National Museum of Mexican Art, 852 W. 19th St., Chicago. This year's reception holds particular significance in light of the ballot measure victories in Maryland, Maine, Washington, and Minnesota, and also the struggle taking place right here in Illinois. The Freedom to Marry reception attracts an incredibly diverse audience of over 400 people from across Chicago, the surrounding countries, and neighboring states.

Enjoy an evening of food, drinks and entertainment and make a statement of your support for the Freedom to Marry! Get more information and RSVP [here](#).



**PRISCILLA** = As a supporter of Equality Illinois, you are able to see the **Chicago premiere of the Tony Award-winning and international sensation, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert!*** Our supporters have a limited opportunity to join Equality Illinois and AIDS Legal Council of Chicago for the Chicago premiere performance **on Tuesday, March 19, 2013**, all while supporting our work on marriage and equal LGBT rights for all Illinoisans. There is limited availability; please use [this link](#) to buy your tickets. Your ticket makes you eligible to attend a post-show **VIP RECEPTION**.

An international hit with over 500 dazzling, 2011 Tony Award-winning costumes, PRISCILLA features a hit parade of dance-floor favorites including "It's Raining Men," "Finally" and "I Will Survive." The Hollywood Reporter calls PRISCILLA "funny and fabulous! Joyous entertainment with eye-popping visuals and unexpected heart!"

**WHAT:** First night performance of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, benefiting Equality Illinois Education Project and AIDS Legal Council of Chicago

**WHEN:** Tuesday, March 19, 2013 (7:30pm curtain)

**WHERE:** Auditorium Theatre (50 E. Congress Parkway, Chicago)

Tickets for this event are extremely limited, so don't delay in [purchasing your tickets](#).

Please note that EQIL will notify you on how you can receive your tickets before the show. Purchases directly benefit Equality Illinois Education Project and AIDS Legal Council of Chicago, 501(c)(3)

organizations, and are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law, and are not appropriate for re-sale.

## **WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS = Calendar of Upcoming Events**

### **FEBRUARY 2013**

1 FEB – First Friday – Sidetrack (3349 North Halsted Street, Chicago)

9 FEB – Justice for All Gala – 6 pm-Midnight @ Hilton Chicago (720 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago)

13 FEB – Women's Wednesday – 7 pm @ Mary's Attic (5400 N. Clark St., Chicago)

21 FEB – Freedom to Marry Reception – 6 pm @ National Museum of Mexican Art (852 W. 19th Street, Chicago)

### **MARCH 2013**

1 MARCH – First Friday – Sidetrack (3349 North Halsted Street, Chicago)

13 MARCH – Women's Wednesday – 7 pm @ Mary's Attic (5400 N. Clark St., Chicago)

19 MARCH – Priscilla, Queen of the Desert – 7:30 pm @ Auditorium Theatre (50 E. Congress Parkway, Chicago)

**THE FIRST VOTE FOR MARRIAGE** = As you know, the campaign for the marriage bill got off to a rousing start with passage in the Senate Executive Committee during the previous General Assembly's closing days. On the day the new General Assembly was sworn in on January 9, the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act was promptly reintroduced.

Equality Illinois officials were working side-by-side last month with our Illinois Unites for Marriage allies to successfully secure the **historic first vote** for marriage freedom in Illinois. Even though time ran out to move the bill to the Senate floor, it created the energy and momentum to take the campaign into the new General Assembly. We also began dropping off thousands of signatures of marriage supporters to lawmakers to reinforce the popular support for the bill.





Equality Illinois team and allies working for the marriage bill in the Capitol in Springfield: (l-r) EQIL Public Policy Director Randy Hannig, Rev. Kim Beckmann, a witness for the bill, EQIL Field Director Caroline Staerk, PFLAG parent Bonnie Garneau, and EQIL CEO Bernard Cherkasov. See more pictures on [Facebook](#).



**TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY SOCIAL** = One of our favorite winter events, the 2013 Transgender Community Social, was held at Mayne Stage in Chicago on Saturday, Jan. 19. A great turnout enjoyed a fun afternoon of tasty light bites, drink specials, and great raffle giveaways.

[See the photo gallery](#) courtesy Katie Sikora Photography, [www.katiesikora.com](http://www.katiesikora.com)

**If you would like an Equality Illinois speaker at your event at work, a local civic organization, on campus, a union meeting, your religious group, a home EQIL fundraiser, or wherever, please contact us at [info@eqil.org](mailto:info@eqil.org) or call [773-477-7173](tel:773-477-7173).**

**Stay informed of LGBT-equality matters by visiting us at [www.eqil.org](http://www.eqil.org). Also, please follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).**

**We can only succeed in our mission if you stand with us, so please [make a financial contribution](#) today.**

If you no longer wish to receive updates on LGBT-rights issues, click [here](#) to unsubscribe.