



EQIL INSIDER SCOOP JULY 2013

In the July EQIL Insider Scoop:

AFFECTING YOU NOW	UP NEXT	JUST HAPPENED
Marriage Report: -The Supremes -Fight Back -Strengthening the Coalition -Chicago Pride Recap Immigration Voting Rights Welcome, Margaret	First Friday T.G.I.F. Out at the Sox Illinois State Fair Save the Date for the 2014 Gala	Everest for Equality Capitol Club Spring Wine Tasting Religious Outreach Illinois Fests Speaking of Equality Thank You, Volunteers The 2013 Justice for All Gala

MARRIAGE REPORT = June, 2013 will be remembered for emotional lows and highs. We began the month hurting from the snub from the Illinois House of Representatives after it skulked out of town having failed to vote for the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act. But within days we regrouped and pressed forward with renewed determination. More on that below.

By the end of the month we were celebrating the historic destruction of the legal premise for discriminating against Americans because of sexual orientation when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act. The country also saw marriages return to California, the largest state, bringing the freedom to marry to about 30 percent of the U.S. population, after the court refused to consider appeals to Proposition 8. And on the last day of June, an estimated one million people came out on a beautiful summer day to hail Chicago Pride Day.

Here's how it all broke down in June:

THE SUPREMES SING OUT FOR EQUALITY = Last Wednesday was an exciting day for everyone who believes in America's promise of equality, which the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed by ruling that the federal government cannot ignore constitutional principles when it comes to gay and lesbian couples and their marriages. It was a moment to celebrate. But the historic victory overturning the Defense of Marriage Act was bittersweet in the states like Illinois where couples are still denied the right and recognition of marriage.

We explain why in a succinct set of FAQs that explain both the court's action on DOMA and also the decision that restores marriages for all loving couples in California. [Read the FAQs HERE](#). In brief, here are the two key takeaways from the rulings:



- **Are same-sex marriages legal in Illinois?** No. The status of marriage in Illinois has not changed, and civil unions are still recognized only as civil unions.
- **My wife/husband and I married in another state that allows same-sex marriage. What does this mean for us?** Your out-of-state marriage will continue to be recognized in Illinois as a civil union. We are working with our national partners and federal Administration officials to ensure that all marriages that were validly performed are recognized by the federal government regardless of where the couple now resides. Some federal benefits may be available to you right away, with more details yet to come.

For anyone who doubts that civil unions in Illinois created an unacceptable second-class status, the court's ruling is a powerful message that the state

House urgently needs to join the Senate and pass the freedom to marry. It is crystal clear now that by failing to act the House denied gay and lesbian couples equal access to the federal protections that married couples in other states will now enjoy.

FIGHT BACK FOR MARRIAGE = And to accomplish that, Equality Illinois last month announced its half-million dollar [Fight Back for Marriage](#) campaign leading to the 2014 election. EQIL has pledged to use half of the fund toward an educational campaign focusing on the collar counties, downstate areas and Chicago neighborhoods where there is a need to strengthen the advocacy for and defense of the freedom to marry. Our political action arm, Equality Illinois Political Action Committee (EQIL PAC), has pledged the other \$250,000 in order to match marriage opponents dollar-for-dollar on the political battlefield.

"We will not shy away or be outraged in fighting for our freedom," **Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois**, said in announcing the campaign.

Our fundraising for this monumental effort continues today with you. [Please make a donation today of \\$25, \\$50 or \\$100 or sign on to make a monthly donation to keep the campaign moving forward.](#)

Contributions of \$50 or more will earn the donor a **Fight Back for Love** T-Shirt. First seen on the Equality Illinois contingent at Sunday's Chicago Pride Parade, the gray T-shirts were wildly popular. "Fight Back for Love" is the slogan that will carry us into the next phase of our campaign for the freedom to marry in Illinois. It embraces what we've been saying all along—the state should extend the right to marry for all loving couples—but it also recognizes that we have to fight for our rights.



[Please make your donation today.](#)

RECOMMITTED TO MARRIAGE COALITION = After the failure of the House to call and pass the marriage bill by its May 31 summer recess, anger and disappointment among marriage bill supporters quickly gave way to a determination to regroup and reconfigure our campaign without delay. In

addition to launching the Equality Illinois "Fight Back" initiative, within a week we went to work with our Illinois Unites for Marriage co-founders Lambda Legal and ACLU of Illinois to broaden our active coalition of organizations including Citizen Action/Illinois, The Human Rights Campaign, the Chicago Urban League, Freedom to Marry, The Civil Rights Agenda, Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, Anti-Defamation League, Service Employees International Union, AFSCME Council 31, Unite Here Local 1, Illinois Nurses Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 881.

The expanded marriage coalition is hiring a full-time campaign manager that will oversee and coordinate the statewide advocacy campaign, including grassroots/field work, communications/media, lobbying and coalition outreach.

The coalition's first major public initiative was to coordinate our efforts at Sunday's Pride Parade to make it one ongoing demonstration for the marriage bill, all under the banner "We Are Committed to Winning the Freedom to Marry." Thousands of the posters were carried in the parade as volunteers worked to sign up supporters along the parade route. We are urging everyone to print out the poster and post it on your car, home, business, everywhere! [Just click HERE to get a downloadable image.](#)



The coalition efforts continue with a series of community meetings, the first one in Springfield on Thursday, July 11. Watch for details on that and other events.

CHICAGO PRIDE PARADE = When an estimated one million people turn out on a beautiful Sunday to celebrate LGBT Pride, that should be a powerful message to our Springfield lawmakers that it must act to recognize the freedom to marry for all loving Illinois couples. Click on our photo galleries [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) to recall the celebration.



beckermedia.com

Scores of volunteers marched with the Equality Illinois float as many others worked the crowd signing up people to become involved in the campaign for marriage equality. In addition to our "Fight Back to Love" message, we were part of the Illinois Unites coalition carrying the "We Are Committed to Winning the Freedom to Marry" message. [See more pictures of the parade here \(beckermedia.com\)](#) and [here](#).



*Prior to the parade, many dignitaries stopped by the Equality Illinois reception at Crew Bar & Grill in Uptown, including **Gov. Pat Quinn**, and (pictured above) marriage bill sponsor **Rep. Greg Harris** and Cook County Board President **Toni Preckwinkle**, and many others. [See more pictures of the reception and media coverage here.](#)*

IMMIGRATION REFORM = Thanks to the Supreme Court decision on DOMA, for many binational same-sex couples it will no longer matter that the immigration reform bill passed by the Senate did not fully include of gay and lesbian families. As described by **EQIL CEO Bernard Cherkasov** in [this column written for Crain's Chicago Business](#), the court's ruling means that the U.S. can no longer exclude a U.S. citizen from sponsoring a same-sex spouse for immigration. Still, as he points out, there remain two classes of citizens in Illinois. And for hundreds of thousands of same-sex couples who do not live in marriage equality states and cannot easily get lawfully married, lack of comprehensive immigration reform will still be a difficult-to-overcome injury.

VOTING RIGHTS = While praising the Supreme Court rulings on marriage equality, we are equally dismayed at the court's gutting of a key provision of the voting rights act. As one of our partners put it: "The Chicago Urban League stands with all organizations and individuals who work for equality in declaring that the Supreme Court, by striking down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, made the wrong decision."



In June we **welcomed Margaret Smilowitz** as our Operations/Administration Coordinator, working with the Finance, Field and Development departments.

With years of experience in both non-profit and private sector administration, Margaret brings a keen understanding of organizational systems and procedures to our administrative team. She has worked with LGBT organizations across the country and firmly believes in the ability of community organizations to initiate and accomplish change.

Margaret received a Bachelor of Arts in art history from the University of Virginia.



FIRST FRIDAY = Join Equality Illinois PAC on Friday, July 5 for the always popular and fun monthly social! This First Friday we are partnering with the Chicago Gay Black Men's Caucus. The CGBMC works to improve the general livelihood of black gay/bisexual men, with specific attention to sexual health concerns, such as HIV/STI testing and treatment. They are also very involved in advocacy for the passage of the freedom to marry in Illinois.

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, July 5, 6–8pm @ Sidetrack, 3349 North Halsted Street in Chicago (21+ with ID). Find out more on [Facebook](#).

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](#), 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.

T.G.I.F. Rally and Picnic = Join the rally and picnic for **T.G.I.F. (Midwest Transgender, Gender non-conforming, and Intersex, Freedom)** on Sunday, July 28 in Union Park, 1501 W. Randolph St., Chicago, noon to 4 pm. [Click here for more details](#).



Saturday, August 24, 2013

4:30 PM Pre-Party; 6:10 PM Game

Join Equality Illinois at the **Chicago White Sox'** first official LGBT Pride Night! Mix and mingle with other LGBT sports fans while cheering on the Sox or at our Pregame Mixer at Bacardi at the Park. Enjoy drinks and lite bites, make a new sporty friend, and have your chance to win great Sox giveaways. A drawing among ticket purchasers will select 10 people to enjoy a complimentary ride to the game by Uber. Act now to purchase tickets online: eqil.org/sox.html



ILLINOIS STATE FAIR = Join Equality Illinois and Lambda Legal for our second year at the Illinois State Fair Aug. 8 - 18. We had a great time last year and reached thousands of Illinoisans who may not come to events such as a Pride fest. Please stop by our booth – which will again be near the Heartland Area by the west side of the Skyglider, close to Gate 2 at Peoria Road and Sangamon Avenue.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS = Calendar of Upcoming Events

JULY 2013

5 JULY – First Friday – 6 pm @ Sidetrack (3349 North Halsted St., Chicago)

28 JULY – T.G.I.F. Rally and Picnic – Noon @ Union Park (1501 W. Randolph St., Chicago)

AUGUST 2013

2 AUGUST – First Friday – 6 pm @ Sidetrack (3349 North Halsted St., Chicago)

8-18 AUGUST – Illinois State Fair @ The Equality Illinois/Lambda Legal booth (Springfield)

24 AUGUST – Out at the Sox – 4:30 - 9 pm @ U.S. Cellular Field (333 W. 35th, Chicago)

Joe Rudy's EVEREST4EQUALITY climb up Mount Everest to benefit Equality Illinois and the Human Rights Campaign was officially launched last week at a reception at Primitive gallery in Chicago, where he works when he is not undertaking his grueling training regimen. [Watch a video of his workout routine here.](#)

Joe also told his story and the reasons he is undertaking the 29,035-foot climb up Mount Everest next year in [this report on WBBM Newsradio.](#)

[Learn more about his climb and make a tax-deductible donation to support](#)

[his efforts HERE.](#)



CAPITOL CLUB = Equality Illinois friend and ally **Attorney General Lisa Madigan**, with **EQIL CEO Bernard Cherkasov** (left) and **EQIL Public Policy Director Randy Hannig** (right), stopped by our Capitol Club reception last month at the MillerCoors penthouse pub to lend her support and talk about strategy moving forward. Also present was **Rocco Claps**, director of the Illinois Department of Human Rights, representing **Gov. Pat Quinn**. Members of the EQIL Capitol Club premier donor group get access to exclusive private events such as this annual Friendship and Freedom reception. For more information on Capitol Club membership and benefits, please click [HERE](#).

WINE TASTING = Despite the bitter taste left by May 31 setback in the Illinois House on the marriage bill, the Spring Wine Tasting at Sidetrack Chicago only a few days later was quite sweet. In fact, the record turnout of more than 500 guests may have reflected the desire for the community and supporters to gather together and

because the beneficiary of the event was Equality Illinois PAC, which received a significant boost to its campaign war chest.

"Given what happened.., it's encouraging to see energized people come out and support us," **Michael Nordman, director of development for Equality Illinois**, told [Windy City Times](#). "It's clear people are still committed to winning the freedom to marry by supporting events like this."

RELIGIOUS OUTREACH = Equality Illinois has always recognized the significant role that allies in the faith community play in carrying the messages of love, equality, fairness and inclusion throughout the state. So the awarding of the annual **Dignity/Chicago** community recognition to Equality Illinois for our **Faith and Freedom Initiative** was deeply appreciated. The award was accepted by **John Parro, vice board chair of Equality Illinois**, at Dignity's 41st annual liturgy and award presentation, held at Broadway United Methodist Church.

You can find more information about the **Equality Illinois Faith and Freedom Initiative** and learn how to get your faith institution involved in the fight for LGBT rights by [going to our website](#).

The work continued in June as Equality Illinois convened leaders of faith-based and community organizations in Oak Park to begin the visioning work for our movement's priorities, renewing and expanding partnerships, and strengthening the involvement of our Faith outreach network to win marriage equality. This was a follow up meeting to our convening in Bloomington-Normal in April!



ILLINOIS FESTS = In Springfield and Rockford, Quad Cities and Belleville, and, of course, in Chicago, we are meeting with the LGBT communities throughout Illinois and with our allies for the annual Pride celebrations, which all share a renewed fervor to pass the freedom to marry this year. [Take a look at some of the Pride Fests.](#)

Our visit to the Metro East Pride Fest a week ago gained attention in the [Belleville News Democrat](#).

We also go to other street fairs where we build our support, such as Midsommarfest in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood, [which you can see here](#).

The festivals are fun, but they're also about getting involved and informed about the issues important to LGBT Illinoisans. Be sure to take part at your local events.



Getting involved at the Rockford Pride Fest, one of the many local events Equality Illinois goes to each summer during Pride season.



SPEAKING OF EQUALITY = Equality Illinois also connects with people throughout the state by giving talks and participating in panel discussions, such as Out in the Suburbs, a forum hosted by LINKS, a North Shore LGBT youth support organization, as reported in [Progress Illinois](#). At the event, **EQIL Field Director Caroline Staerk** stressed the importance of allies working with the LGBT community to secure the freedom to marry in Illinois.

And, pictured at left, **EQIL CEO Bernard Cherkasov** spoke at the world headquarters of United Airlines at its annual Pride celebration.

Our speaking engagements continue this month when Caroline appears on a panel on marriage on Saturday, July 6 during the National NOW conference in Chicago. [Click here for details on the conference and the panel.](#)

Book an Equality Illinois expert for your community event at info@eqil.org or call [773-477-7173](tel:773-477-7173).

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS = Volunteers have and will continue to play key roles in the campaign for marriage, as well as all of our other initiatives. In the aftermath of the legislative session, we thanked all of those who are working so hard at a reception at Sidetrack. **Rep. Greg Harris**, House sponsor of the marriage bill, and cosponsor **Rep. Deb Mell** shared their appreciation, as did our **CEO Bernard Cherkasov** (standing left).



Relive the sounds and sights of the 2013 Justice for All Gala: [Gay Chicago TV](#); Photo albums [Gallery 1](#) [Gallery 2](#) [Gallery 3](#) [Gallery 4](#)

SAVE THE DATE = **Justice for All Gala-2014** is already set for Saturday, February 8, 2014 at the Hilton Chicago. Plan to attend the Midwest's biggest formal LGBT event of the year. It's always a fun-packed party.

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 or call [773-477-7173](tel:773-477-7173).

Stay informed of LGBT-equality matters by visiting us at 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.