



**EQUALITY
ILLINOIS**

PRESS RELEASE

Founded in 1991, Equality Illinois is the state's oldest, largest and most effective organization advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2013

POLL SHOWS DRAMATIC SUPPORT FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN ILLINOIS

Key demographic groups favor bill by wide margins; Equality Illinois urges House passage of Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act

CHICAGO – Releasing a new statewide poll showing dramatic majority support for the freedom to marry in Illinois, Equality Illinois today urges that the House approve the *Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act* during its fall session, which begins on Tuesday.

A strong majority of 52 percent of Illinois voters support legalizing marriage for gay and lesbian couples, and the figure grew to 54 percent support when pollsters shared information about the summer's U.S. Supreme Court ruling that overturned federal restrictions against recognizing same-sex marriages.

Some of the most notable majorities were among women, minority voters, Catholic voters and younger voters. Voters who identified as Catholic favored the freedom to marry by a 2-to-1 margin, and actually offered more support for marriage equality when told that some public figures, including Catholic bishops, oppose marriage between same-sex couples.

Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans, commissioned the poll of likely voters. It was taken by Fako & Associates of Lisle, IL, a national public opinion research firm, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.94 percent.

"With Illinois same-sex couples suffering because they cannot access federal benefits available to married couples, the time is now in the fall legislative session for the House to complete its unfinished business on the marriage bill," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois.

"With these poll results, there is certainly no political reason why representatives shouldn't pass it in overwhelming numbers," Cherkasov continued. "There are simply no excuses left. We expect every House member who has expressed support publicly or privately for marriage equality or who has been leaning in favor of it to vote 'aye.'"

"This is the time for courage and leadership, and not political calculations. And those who stand in the way of the clear majority of Illinoisans will be held accountable by their

constituents." Cherkasov said.

Some of the major findings from the statewide poll, taken October 8-10, 2013 include:

- 52 percent supported legalizing marriage for gay and lesbian couples; 40 percent opposed.
- Support grew to 54 percent, with opposition dropped to 39 percent, when voters contemplated that Illinois gay and lesbian couples still do not have access to over 1,100 federal rights and protections stemming from marriage after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a section of the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional.
- Support stayed solid at 53 percent, with 41 percent opposed, when pollsters read a balanced, factual statement about who supported the bill, including President Obama and Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Illinois), and who opposed it, including Catholic Cardinal Francis George of Chicago and Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield.
- Catholics supported marriage fairness 61 percent to 32 percent; Catholic support increased to 63 percent, 31 percent opposed, when read the balanced statement that included the bishops' opposition.
- Hispanic voters supported the freedom to marry 63 percent to 29 percent opposed, a level of support that increased to 70 percent when the Supreme Court decision was explained.
- African American voters favored the law by a 55 percent to 36 percent majority.
- Women supported the proposed marriage law 57 percent to 34 percent opposed.
- And the level of support among all the groups grew the younger the voter being interviewed: 63 percent of voters under 50 backed the law, and that grew to 78 percent support from voters under age 35.

"These results demonstrate wide and deep support for the freedom to marry for all Illinois couples," Cherkasov said. "We believe the bill should be passed by the House because it is the right thing to do. But Illinois political figures who want to be on the right side of history and who have an eye on the future should take note that every year support for this only strengthens and the electorate favors marriage equality with increasing fervor as the voters get younger. The time is now to pass the *Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act*."

Please see a memo from Fako & Associates explaining the poll in more detail at this link: http://eqil.org/cmsdocuments/EQIL_POLL_SUMMARY.pdf.

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October 17, 2013

**To: Bernard Cherkasov, CEO and Randy Hannig, Director of Public Policy
 Equality Illinois**
**From: Dave Fako, President and Jane Rayburn, Research Director
 Fako & Associates, Inc.**
RE: Equality Illinois Statewide Assessment Summary Memo

Illinois' Voters Support Marriage Equality

In a statewide survey of registered likely voters, the majority of the electorate says that they support legalization of marriage for gay and lesbian couples in the state of Illinois. Respondents were also given information about the Supreme Court's decision regarding the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), as well as balanced information both supporting and opposing marriage equality. In each case, support held steady, with the majority favoring legalization of same sex marriage. Demographic subgroups of interest voiced strong support in favor of a law that would permit gay and lesbian couples equal rights to marriage.

**Figure 1
 Opinion of Legalizing Marriage for Gay & Lesbian Couples**

Q3. Now, would you **support or oppose** [Rotate Choices] a law that would legalize marriage for gay and lesbian couples in Illinois? **(WOULD THAT BE STRONGLY SUPPORT/OPOSE OR SOMEWHAT SUPPORT/OPOSE?)**

A majority (52%) of registered likely voters across Illinois say they would support a law legalizing marriage for gay and lesbian couples, while 40% say they would oppose it. Just 8% of voters are undecided. Of the slightly more than half in favor of the law, nearly four out of ten (37%) say they would strongly support it.

**Table 1
 Opinion of Legalizing Marriage for Gay & Lesbian Couples
 Among Demographic Subgroups of Interest**

Subgroups	Support	Strongly Support	Oppose	Undecided
Women	57	44	34	9
Independent Women	59	43	33	8
African Americans	55	39	36	9
Hispanics	63	51	29	9
Catholics	61	47	32	8

Considering DOMA, Support of Gay & Lesbian Marriage Increases

**Figure 2
Opinion of Legalizing Marriage for Gay & Lesbian Couples
With DOMA SCOTUS Decision Information**

Q4. As you may know, in June of this year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a section of the Defense of Marriage Act was unconstitutional, which now allows married gay and lesbian couples and their families to gain access to federal benefits associated with marriage. There are over eleven hundred (1,100) federal laws and protections based on marital status, including the ability to file federal taxes jointly; spousal benefits for federal employees, veterans, and military personnel; and the ability to take unpaid time off work to care for a sick or dying spouse. Gay and lesbian couples in Illinois do not have access to any of these protections and responsibilities for their families because same-sex marriage is not legal in Illinois.

Knowing this information, would you **support or oppose [Rotate Choices]** a law that would legalize marriage for gay and lesbian couples in Illinois? **(WOULD THAT BE STRONGLY SUPPORT/OPOSE OR SOMEWHAT SUPPORT/OPOSE?)**

When given information about the Supreme Court ruling designating the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional, support increases to 54% (+2%) and opposition falls to 39% (-1%). Undecided voters make up 6% of the electorate in this scenario.

**Table 2
Opinion of Legalizing Marriage for Gay & Lesbian Couples
With DOMA SCOTUS Decision Information
Among Demographic Subgroups of Interest**

Subgroups	Support	Strongly Support	Oppose	Undecided
Women	59	49	34	7
Independent Women	59	44	32	9
African Americans	61	49	33	6
Hispanics	70	59	25	5
Catholics	64	50	31	5

Majority support of legalizing marriage for gay & lesbian couples is maintained after hearing balanced information is favor of and against legalization

**Figure 3
Informed Opinion of Legalizing Marriage for Gay & Lesbian Couples**

Q5. Now, I'd like to give you a little more information about the issue of legalizing marriage for gay and lesbian couples in Illinois from the perspective of supporters and opponents.

Supporters, including President Obama, Senator Dick Durbin, Senator Mark Kirk, labor, business and civil rights organizations, and many clergy say all loving, committed couples should have the security and protections of marriage. Supporters say that since the United States Supreme Court ruled the federal government must treat married same-sex couples fairly, it is important that Illinois' gay and lesbian couples be allowed to marry so they have access to critical federal protections – like family and medical leave and spousal benefits for veterans and military personnel – that strengthen families.

Opponents, including Chicago Archdiocese Cardinal George, Springfield Bishop Paprocki, many clergy, business leaders and non-profit organizations say that marriage should only be between one man and one woman, and legalization of same-sex marriage redefines marriage. Opponents say legalizing gay marriage denies children a traditional family with a father and mother, validates the homosexual lifestyle, and will force acceptance of gay marriage through the power of government by forcing businesses and non-profits to provide services for gay couples.

Now, knowing this information, would you **support or oppose [Rotate Choices]** a law that would legalize marriage for gay and lesbian couples in Illinois? **(WOULD THAT BE STRONGLY SUPPORT/OPOSE OR SOMEWHAT SUPPORT/OPOSE?)**

In the scenario where voters are given balanced information about both positions on gay and lesbian marriage, a majority (53%) still say they would support legalization, while 41% of the electorate says they're opposed to legalization. Just 5% of the electorate is undecided.

**Table 3
Informed Opinion of Legalizing Marriage for Gay & Lesbian Couples
Among Demographic Subgroups of Interest**

Subgroups	Support	Strongly Support	Oppose	Undecided
Women	59	49	35	5
Independent Women	61	45	29	9
African Americans	58	46	36	6
Hispanics	68	61	26	6
Catholics	63	49	31	6

Notably, Catholics remain supportive after hearing arguments against legalization, which specifically mentions their Church leadership's opposition.

Methodology: Equality Illinois commissioned the survey. Fako & Associates, Inc., of Lisle, Illinois conducted the survey by telephone on October 8 – 10, 2013 using professional interviewers. F&A interviewed a random sample of 600 likely voters in the November 2014 General Election within the State of Illinois. A strict screening process was used to ensure that only likely General Election voters participated in the survey. The interviews lasted an average of 6 minutes.

Scientific sampling techniques using a listing of registered voters were used to give all voters living in a telephone-equipped household, or with a listed cell phone number within Illinois, an equal chance of being interviewed. Cellular phones were included within the sample and accounted for 130 (22%) of completed weighted interviews. The interviews were conducted in proportion to gender and regional shares of the vote based on known election turnout data and demographics. Weighting was applied to age and gender to bring these groups into closer proportion to known demographics. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.94% at the 95% level of confidence. This means that if the survey were replicated the results would be consistent for 95 out of 100 cases. The margin of error is higher among the various sub-groups.