



## 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**

**August 8, 2013**

### **THIRTY-EIGHT ILLINOIS LAW FIRMS TOP EQUALITY ILLINOIS 'RAISING THE BAR' SURVEY**

*Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel to Honor the Firms*

CHICAGO – Equality Illinois today recognized 38 Illinois law firms for "Raising the Bar" and leading the way in providing a safe and fair work environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees and engaging with the LGBT community.

**Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel** honored the firms at the Equality Illinois Raising the Bar Recognition Breakfast today in the JW Marriott Hotel in Chicago's Loop.

"Lawyers, as defenders of the law, are at the forefront of what we have accomplished in securing and protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans, and their work environments should reflect that same commitment," said **Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois**, the state's oldest and largest LGBT advocacy organization. "The law firms that Equality Illinois is recognizing exceed that criteria, and we are pleased to honor them in the 2013 Raising the Bar report." The full report was issued at the breakfast, and is available online at [http://issuu.com/eqil/docs/raisingthebar\\_2013](http://issuu.com/eqil/docs/raisingthebar_2013).

With the information gathered from the 2013 Equality Illinois Law Firm Survey, Equality Illinois identified the law firms in Illinois that are leading the way to LGBT workplace equality and community engagement. One hundred percent of the firms have an equal employment or non-discrimination policy that expressly includes sexual orientation, and 92 percent have an equal employment policy or non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity and/or gender expression. Over 80 percent of the firms have a diversity council or group that includes LGBT issues, provide diversity training, and support LGBT issues through making financial donations, doing pro bono work, and participating in community events.

This annual report of corporate responsibility in the legal profession, built from our survey of the largest law firms doing business in the state of Illinois, will be distributed at the Raising the Bar Breakfast.

“Highlighting these lawyers and their best practices should spur the development of fair LGBT policies at every law firm and every business in the state. Equality Illinois will provide the tools for any Illinois company to strengthen its LGBT-friendly policies in order to retain top talent and remain competitive,” Cherkasov said.

The recognition and the work to achieve it is significant for these firms. For example, **Lisa A. Linsky, Chair of McDermott Will & Emery’s LGBT Diversity & Inclusion Committee**, said, “We work hard at McDermott to create a culture of inclusion and equality for all LGBT attorneys and staff, and to promote equality for LGBT people around the world. We are enormously proud that we received Equality Illinois’ ‘Business Leadership Award’ last year.”

And at Kirkland & Ellis, “We are honored that Equality Illinois has recognized Kirkland among the top law firms for LGBT inclusiveness for the fourth-straight year,” said **intellectual property partner Jordan Heinz, a member of Kirkland’s LGBT Subcommittee of the Firmwide Diversity Committee**. “At Kirkland, you find not only the passion and commitment to building a vibrant LGBT community, but also the policies and programs to provide support on a Firmwide level.”

The law firms being recognized, in alphabetical order, are listed here. Also, following the list, many of the firms commented on the meaning of this recognition:

Aronberg Goldgehn	Kirkland & Ellis
Baker & McKenzie	Latham & Watkins
Bryan Cave	Mayer Brown
Butler Rubin Saltarelli & Boyd	McDermott Will & Emery
Chapman and Cutler	McGuireWoods
Dentons	Morgan, Lewis & Bockius
DLA Piper	Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg
Drinker Biddle & Reath	Nixon Peabody
Dykema	Perkins Coie
Edwards Wildman Palmer	Quarles & Brady
Erickson & Oppenheimer	Reed Smith
Foley & Lardner	Schiff Hardin
Franczek Radelet	Schopf & Weiss
Goldberg Kohn	Sedgwick
Hinshaw & Culbertson	Seyfarth Shaw
Holland & Knight	Sidley Austin
Jenner & Block	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom
Johnson and Sullivan	Winston & Strawn
Katten Muchin Rosenman	Yearwood and Associates

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**Equality Illinois  
2013 Raising the Bar Survey**

**Statements by Honored Law Firms**

"At Aronberg Goldgehn, our personal approach to the practice of law applies both internally and externally, and we view a commitment to diversity in the workplace as an extremely important component of that approach. Having recently celebrated the firm's 120-year anniversary, we understand the vital role of a welcoming and supportive work environment, and we are very honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois for our dedication to LGBT inclusion."

- **Christopher J. Bannon, Co-Managing Member**

"We are honored to be named among the most LGBT friendly firms in Illinois. We are proud to be part of this thriving legal community. And, we are excited at the rapid progress we see and help happen every day for lgbt families across the country."

- **Coco Soodek, Of Counsel, Chicago, Bryan Cave LLP**

"At Butler Rubin, it's very important that every member of our firm feel a part of the team. We emphasize inclusiveness throughout the firm and in all areas of our recruitment process."

- **Michael P. Motyka, Chief Operating Officer and Management Committee Member**

"Chapman and Cutler is a leader in equal opportunity employment because we value excellence. Excellence has no color, no gender, no sexual orientation, but rather is found in cultivating the talents and unique perspectives of each individual employee."

- **Stacey Kielbasa, our Director of Professional Development, Attorney Recruitment and Diversity**

"Dentons is honored to receive this award, which recognizes the Firm's commitment to diversity. We remain laser-focused on harnessing the talent and experiences of our people to build a global community of inclusiveness and opportunity."

- **Mary G. Wilson, managing partner of Dentons' Chicago office**

"At DLA Piper, we are committed to developing a culture that is inclusive of all, where individual diversity is valued and everyone has the opportunity to succeed. This, of course, includes our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender colleagues and straight allies. This commitment to diversity and inclusion is key to our success as a firm and it defines who we are."

- **Genhi Givings Bailey, Director of Diversity & Inclusion**

"We're honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois, but we're even more thankful to have an organization like EQIL sharing best practices when it comes to promoting equal work environments for LGBT individuals. People want action as opposed to words when it comes to diversity and inclusiveness, and that's our focus at Drinker Biddle."

- **Steve Selna, Co-Chair, Drinker Biddle Firmwide Diversity Committee**

"Edwards Wildman is honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois, which reflects our long-standing commitment to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights in the workplace and on pro bono matters. Our firm is an inclusive workplace because it is the right thing to do and because it is good for our business and clients."

- **Matthew McTygue, Partner and leader of the firm's GLBT Affinity Group**

"Erickson & Oppenheimer, Ltd believes that the fight for equal protection and access to justice for our clients must begin with equal protection and equal access for our lawyers and staff. We succeed in fighting for the rights of our clients because we adhere to those principles in the way we run our business."

- **Jon F. Erickson, Erickson & Oppenheimer**

"Foley & Lardner LLP is proud of its commitment to supporting and advancing LGBT diversity in the workplace. We are honored to be recognized again by Equality Illinois for our continued efforts to provide an equal and inclusive workplace for *all*."

- **John Litchfield, Chicago Litigation Attorney, President, Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago**

"We are honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois for the second year in a row as one of the top Illinois law firms for LGBT inclusiveness and equality. This recognition is a direct result of our commitment as a firm—from the top down—to create a workplace where each of our attorneys and employees has the ability to succeed while being their self."

- **Michael J. Hernandez, Firm Diversity Officer at Franczek Radelet**

"Goldberg Kohn believes that to succeed in the long term, the principal motivation behind a diversity initiative must be a focus on creating a vibrant culture in which attorneys of all backgrounds can thrive. The firm is committed to building an environment that contributes in important ways to all facets of community life and reflects the diversity of Chicago."

- **Oscar Alcantara, Principal in Litigation Group and Chair of the Goldberg Kohn Diversity Committee**

"Hinshaw is proud to be recognized again as a law firm leading the way to LGBT equality. We work hard to ensure an inclusive environment and equal opportunity for our staff and attorneys to achieve their highest potential. This part of our firm culture is instrumental in helping us

provide our clients with the wealth of perspectives and experiences necessary to resolve their legal issues."

- **Todd Young, Hinshaw Partner and Chair of Hinshaw's LGBT Affinity Network**

"At Holland & Knight, we believe our opportunities are without limitations, and we strive to make our firm an inclusive and respectful place to work for our diverse team of lawyers and staff."

- **Grant McCorkhill, Partner, Holland & Knight**

"The firm has long been committed to maintaining a diverse and inclusive workplace environment and furthering LGBT rights, and we are proud that Equality Illinois has recognized our efforts in again honoring us as one of the top LGBT-friendly law firms in Illinois."

- **Susan C. Levy, Jenner & Block's Managing Partner**

"At Johnson & Sullivan we are proud to be an openly gay owned and operated firm. Our staff is reflective of the diverse community we serve and we are committed to increasing diversity in the legal profession."

- **Mario A. Sullivan**

"Katten has long been committed to ensuring that our firm provides a working environment that is inclusive and that respects and values diversity."

- **Vincent A.F. Sergi, Katten Chairman**

"We are honored that Equality Illinois has recognized Kirkland among the top law firms for LGBT inclusiveness for the fourth-straight year. At Kirkland, you find not only the passion and commitment to building a vibrant LGBT community, but also the policies and programs to provide support on a Firmwide level."

- **Intellectual property partner Jordan Heinz, a member of Kirkland's LGBT Subcommittee of the Firmwide Diversity Committee**

"Latham has been a leader in developing, promoting and implementing processes that ensure lawyers, paralegals and professional staff are hired, trained and promoted fairly, consistent with our goals of equal opportunity and diversity in the practice of law. Lawyers of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, and sexual orientations have long been represented on the firm's management committees responsible for promotions to partnership, recruiting and training (among other management responsibilities). Our commitment to equal opportunity enables Latham to draw from a remarkable wealth of talent to recruit and retain the best lawyers, professional staff and paralegals to create one of the world's leading law firms."

- **Brad Kotler, Managing Partner of the Chicago office of Latham & Watkins LLP**

"Mayer Brown is very proud to be recognized by Equality Illinois as a leader in creating an inclusive workplace for all of our LGBT colleagues, and we are committed to continuing to

promote the civil rights of our LGBT friends and colleagues.”

- **Brian May, Partner and Co-Chair, Committee on Diversity and Inclusion**

“We work hard at McDermott to create a culture of inclusion and equality for all LGBT attorneys and staff, and to promote equality for LGBT people around the world. We are enormously proud that we received Equality Illinois’ ‘Business Leadership Award’ last year as well as our eighth consecutive 100% rating on the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index.”

- **Lisa A. Linsky, Chair of McDermott Will & Emery’s LGBT Diversity & Inclusion Committee**

“One of McGuireWoods’ most important core values is our commitment to diversity within our law firm and in the legal profession generally. We support organizations like Equality Illinois, the National LGBT Bar Association, the Human Rights Campaign and the Minority Corporate Counsel Association in direct furtherance of those objectives.”

- **Mike Graff, Member, McGuireWoods Diversity Committee, and Chair, McGuireWoods LGBT Attorney Network**

“Our firm will be most successful if we are able to attract and retain the most talented people and permit them to work in an organization that is motivating and supportive. Our goal is to create a welcoming environment where anyone with talent, energy and desire can succeed.”

- **Francis M. Milone, Chair, Morgan Lewis**

“Neal Gerber Eisenberg is proud to again be recognized by Equality Illinois as one of the top Illinois law firms Raising the Bar by leading the way to LGBT equality for the fourth year in a row. This honor underscores our ongoing commitment to the LGBT community specifically and to diversity and inclusion in general. We recognize that diversity is a vital component of our culture, strategic planning and overall well-being.”

- **William Choslovsky, partner and co-chair of the firm’s Diversity Committee**

“Equal treatment for LGBT lawyers and staff is not an aspiration, it is an imperative. We believe a diverse environment fosters an inclusive atmosphere that benefits everyone within it. Nixon Peabody’s supportive work culture makes the firm more interesting and stimulating, and it enables us to respond with greater agility to the challenges faced by our clients in a diverse world.”

- **Kendal Tyre, partner and co-chair of Nixon Peabody’s Diversity Action Committee**

“We are proud to be a leader in supporting equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in Illinois. Perkins Coie shares in Equality Illinois’ commitment to the values of inclusiveness, respect and fairness.”

- **Debra Bernard, Partner, Chair of GLBT Affinity Group**

“Quarles and Brady has a long-standing commitment to provide equal treatment to all of its employees. In particular, the firm was one of the first to offer "gross-up" salary matching to

offset discrepancies in health insurance coverage costs. Additionally, the firm is adamant about supporting LGBT causes by sponsoring countless events in the community, hosting events at the Quarles & Brady offices, donating attorney time to perform work on behalf of LGBT organizations, and consistently making an effort to recruit and maintain LGBT talent.”

- **Nicole Bashor, Associate**

"Reed Smith strives to be an employer of choice for all, and is particularly proud of its efforts to build an inclusive environment supportive of our LGBT lawyers and staff. Doing so is not only the right thing to do, but embracing diverse perspectives in our business is one of our core values that positively impacts our service to our clients. Equality Illinois' recognition of our firm's inclusion efforts helps sustain Reed Smith's commitment to maintaining a workplace that welcomes and supports everyone."

- **Tyree Jones, Reed Smith's Director of Global Diversity**

“Years ago, Schiff Hardin was among the first major law firms in the United States to provide employee benefits to same-sex partners of employees. Schiff Hardin continues to be at the forefront of efforts to provide LGBT lawyers and staff a workplace that is inclusive, supportive, and diverse.”

- **Clay Tillack, chair of the LGBT Diversity Subcommittee at Schiff Hardin**

"Schopf & Weiss is honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois. This is a recognition of everyone who works here—attorneys and staff alike—all of whom are committed to making our firm an inclusive and diverse workplace."

- **Jason M. Rosenthal, Managing Partner**

“Sedgwick demonstrates its profound support of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community by the firm’s leadership, regardless of their sexual orientation, attending LGBT events, mentoring LGBT attorneys, leading LGBT pipeline initiatives, and creating a culture in which everyone’s perspective is heard and respected."

- **Jim Holmes, Sedgwick Partner & Chair of the LGBT Action Committee**

“Seyfarth Shaw has a strong commitment to fostering and developing relationships with the LGBT community. We strive to promote workplace equality for every employee at our firm, and we are honored that our efforts have been recognized by Equality Illinois.”

- **Gerald Pauling, Chicago Partner and National Diversity Action Team Co-Chair**

“We are able to show leadership in LGBT equality because our commitment to all forms of diversity is embraced both by senior management and by our partnership as a whole.”

- **Carter Phillips, Chair of Sidley’s Executive Committee**

“This attitude is reflected in recruiting and mentoring, in the selection of colleagues for leadership positions and in policies.”

- **Chuck Douglas, Chair of Sidley's Management Committee**

"We are honored to be named by Equality Illinois as one of the leading law firms doing business in Illinois. Diversity and inclusiveness are core values at Winston & Strawn. Ours is a global practice that, we believe, should reflect the diverse world that we serve. To us, diversity involves a commitment to understand, confront, and seek out differences. We are convinced that a sense of inclusiveness adds depth to our lives, informs our work within the firm and with clients, and allows us to become more engaged as citizens of the larger community. In sum, everyone benefits from a culture that recognizes and respects an inclusive workforce."

- **Amanda C. Sommerfeld, Partner and Chair, Diversity Committee**

"For 26 years my Firm has always served everyone with respect and integrity while specifically marketing to LGBT persons. We do that because it is the right thing to do. I have always been the owner/manager, and whether we were three attorneys plus support staff or simply myself and a paralegal, the principles of fairness and dignity for everyone remained the same."

- **Ellen A. Yearwood, Yearwood and Associates**