



**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

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EQUALITY ILLINOIS SEEKS IMMEDIATE STATEWIDE MARRIAGE EQUALITY IMPLEMENTATION AFTER COURT RULING

Marriage advocates score second victory by turning back legislative repeal effort

CHICAGO – Equality Illinois on Sunday called on county clerks throughout Illinois to consider and follow the ruling of U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman that marriage equality is a fundamental right and denying immediate access to it is unconstitutional.

Equality Illinois also announced another victory in confirming that the sponsor of a bill seeking to repeal the *Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act* is halting his effort.

"The federal court's ruling responded to a lawsuit filed in Cook County and applies initially only to the Cook County Clerk's office, but clerks in the other 101 counties can take official notice of the decision and its reasoning," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans. "We will be reaching out to county clerks all around the state hoping that they will also be persuaded by the judge's rationale. After all, the federal court said that it is unconstitutional to deny same-sex couples marriage licenses."

Cherkasov added that the new marriage bill adequately provides county clerks with the guidance they need to move forward. "With the passage of the marriage equality bill, the legislature has already set forth procedures for the clerks to follow and strong protections for religious freedom, so there is no reason to delay the benefits and recognition of marriage to loving, committed couples and their families," Cherkasov said.

Meanwhile, state Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon) on Friday night acknowledged the futility of continuing to try to overturn the marriage law and announced he was ending his effort to repeal it. The bill had been scheduled for a hearing on Wednesday before the Senate Executive Committee. And in his statement, McCarter, too, said he expected actions in other counties to force them to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples sooner than the June 1 effective date of the law.

"The developments on Friday again reinforce the successful dual-track legislative and

judicial strategy for attaining marriage equality in Illinois," Cherkasov said. "But our work is not done. We have seen in other states that marriage opponents have tried to carve out more exemptions and weaken the law, and we must remain vigilant that does not occur in Illinois."

All of the marriage license offices of Cook County Clerk David Orr will be open Monday to issue the licenses for same-sex couples. With the swiftness of Friday's ruling, only the Loop office could react immediately.

There are many questions about implementation of the new marriage law; the Equality Illinois guide *Marriage Rights in Illinois* seeks to answer them and can be read and downloaded here: http://www.equalityillinois.us/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Marriage_Rights-5.pdf.

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