



EQIL INSIDER SCOOP
April 2013

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MARRIAGE = We are all eager for a swift victory on the marriage bill, and we are close.

By historic Illinois legislative standards, the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act is moving through the General Assembly at warp speed. The two-year session of the current legislature began only three months ago in January, and by the end of February the bill had passed the Senate and moved to the House, where the House Executive Committee approved it and sent it to the House floor for final action. This is the first time an LGBT-rights bill has moved this far this fast in a regular legislative session in Illinois. The legislature is now on its spring break, due to return to Springfield on Monday, April 8.



Doing the House-work in Springfield (l-r): Jim Bennett of Lambda Legal, EQIL CEO Bernard Cherkasov, and EQIL Public Policy Director Randy Hannig

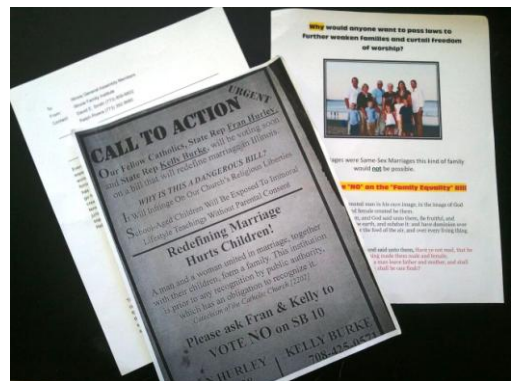
Support for the freedom to marry is growing, reflected in a new national poll and more endorsements. In Illinois, famous athletes such as Mr. Cub Ernie Banks and Chicago Bears Super Bowl champion Richard Dent have joined the campaign. President Obama's Organizing for Action made support for the Illinois bill its first local agenda item, and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Republican Sen. Rob Portman added their voices. Prominent members of the African-American clergy issued a letter of support that was circulated by Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, and Rev. Dr. B. Herbert Martin of the Progressive Community Church of Chicago.

Our collective job is to translate the swelling demand for the freedom to marry into legislative action. In our meetings with legislators, more and more of them are telling us they want to be on the right side of history. But we have to help them get there. Keep calling and writing them at www.illinoisunites.org/letswin. Volunteer for a

phone bank at www.illinoisunites.org/events. And write a letter to your local paper.

With the leadership of the House sponsor, Rep. Greg Harris, we're closing in on the 60-vote majority. We are always impatient for justice, but we also have to let the legislature work at its own pace. We're confident that the House of Representatives will reflect the views of a majority of Illinoisans -- and pass the bill.

FIGHTING HATE = What's important at this stage is to remember that no one expected easy passage. Our quick ascension at the beginning of the session caught our opponents off guard, but now they've had time to rev up the hateful lies and defamatory slurs about the bill and those who support it, such as those pictured here. That is why we launched the [Equality Illinois Hate Watch and Rapid Response Hub](http://www.equalityillinois.org). Marriage equality supporter Rev. Dr. L. Herbert Jakes wrote last month, "People of faith must call out these scare tactics for what they are: lies and distortions." If you see or hear a hateful message, let us know at info@eqil.org.





"WE WERE ... THIRD-CLASS CITIZENS" = As the marriage battle continues, Equality Illinois co-founder and board member Art Johnston (on right with his partner of 39 years Jose Pena) marvels at how far the community has come. Art has been fighting for LGBT rights for decades. In a Chicago Tribune article, he remembers "when the highest thing most gay people could aspire to was to get home at the end of the day and not be fired or beaten up." [Read the fascinating column by Dawn Turner Trice.](#)

ORDER IN THE COURT = You need a scorecard to keep track of all the action for marriage equality in the states and at the national level. Our push for the marriage bill in the Illinois General Assembly has been part of a dual-track strategy to achieve the freedom to marry whether through legislative action or through the courts.

While we're continuing the fight in Illinois, in Washington, the U.S. Supreme Court held two days of arguments on cases that seek to overturn the federal Defense of Marriage Act and California's Proposition 8.

Even if the courts ultimately remove all the barriers to marriage for gay and lesbian couples, which most analysts believe is unlikely in the near term, we would still need a new Illinois law to clarify how to transform a civil union into a marriage and guarantee the protection of religious freedoms.

MARRIAGE MESSAGES = Working with our partners in the Illinois Unites for Marriage coalition, we've shared wonderful messages over the last month on Facebook and Twitter. Here is a sampling:





IMMIGRATION REFORM = Equality Illinois worked with the LGBT Immigration Working Group, a national group of over 50 LGBT and allied organizations pushing for LGBT-positive comprehensive immigration reform, to draft a critical letter to Congress and the President which presses for comprehensive immigration reform legislation that is inclusive of LGBT families and the Uniting American Families Act.

In addition to pressing for LGBT family inclusion, the letter calls for immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented, reform of the family immigration system to end backlogs, humane enforcement of immigration laws including due process and detention reforms, and a lifting of the one-year filing deadline for asylum - all critical reforms for LGBT immigrants.

erikson **PARENTING HELP** = Families headed by gay and lesbian parents often feel underserved by, or even invisible to, child care and school systems. In order to create a healthy home-school connection and properly include all children, care providers and teachers must become better informed about the wide range of variables that impact gay and lesbian parents and their children. On Thursday, April 4 at 10:30 am, this free, one-hour webinar offered by the Erikson Institute explores current research in the developmental and educational outcomes of children from gay- and lesbian-headed households. Participants will be encouraged to consider changes in their practice that can be easily made in order for all children and their families to feel safe and fully included. [Find](#)

[more information and register HERE.](#)

FIRST FRIDAY = Join Equality Illinois PAC from 6 to 8 pm this Friday, April 5, for the always popular and fun monthly First Friday social!

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, April 5, 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, 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 = Join Equality Illinois and our supporters for our fun monthly party, Women Wednesdays at Mary's Attic on Wednesday, April 10 at 7 pm. For a \$10 admission, you will get two free drink tickets, entry into a door prize, 10% off menu items, and more fun times! All funds directly support our advocacy work for the LGBT community. Don't miss it! Bring a friend, and support LGBT equality with Equality Illinois.

Women's Wednesday, April 10, 7-9 pm at Mary's Attic in Andersonville (5400 N. Clark St., Chicago, above Hamburger Mary's).

SAY HELLO = Find Equality Illinois booths at these April events:

-Dundee-Crown High School's Youth Labor Committee Activism Expo, Friday, April 5, 7:40 am-3 pm, 1500 Kings Rd., Carpentersville

-The College of Lake County's Day of Silence, Wednesday, April 17, 11 am-1 pm, 19351 W. Washington St., Grayslake

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS = Calendar of Upcoming Events

APRIL 2013

4 APRIL – Parenting Help webinar – 10:30 am @ Erikson Institute online

(<http://www.erikson.edu/continuing-education/offerings/including-gay-and-lesbian-parents/>)

5 APRIL – First Friday – 6 pm @ Sidetrack (3349 North Halsted Street, Chicago)

5 APRIL – Dundee-Crown High School Activism Expo – 7:40 am (1500 Kings Rd., Carpentersville)

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

17 APRIL – College of Lake County's Day of Silence (19351 W. Washington St., Grayslake)

MAY 2013

3 MAY – First Friday – 6 pm @ Sidetrack (3349 North Halsted Street, Chicago)

5 MAY – Hinsdale PFLAG meeting – 2-4 pm the Unitarian Church of Hinsdale (11 West Maple, Hinsdale)

8 MAY – Women's Wednesday – 7 pm @ Mary's Attic (5400 N. Clark St., Chicago)
18 MAY – Springfield Pride – Noon-9 pm @ Downtown Springfield (Capitol Avenue between 4th & 6th Streets)



SENIOR HOUSING = Plans for the Midwest's first LGBT-friendly, affordable senior housing facility moved forward last month, as the Chicago City Council passed legislation to provide a land transfer and city funding for the project. The 79-unit, affordable housing senior building will be developed on the corner of Halsted and Addison streets, and includes the historic 23rd District Town Hall police station. The ordinance authorizes the city to transfer ownership to Heartland Housing and Center on Halsted, the property's developers. [Read more here.](#)

PRISCILLA= A packed house filled with friends of Equality Illinois and the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago welcomed **Priscilla, Queen of the Desert**, to her Chicago premiere at the Auditorium Theatre last month. Afterwards, the Priscilla cast and the EQIL and ALCC ticket holders headed to the Downtown Bar and Lounge for a fantastic premiere party. Insider access is just one of the benefits of Equality Illinois events.



"Priscilla" star Wade McCollum, who plays the lead character Tick/Mitzi, enjoys the afterparty.
(Photos courtesy of chicagopride.com)



Chicago favorites Cyon Flare (left) and Miss Foozie welcomed the "Priscilla" guests.
(See more pictures at <http://tinyurl.com/ChiPriscilla>.)



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.

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