

FIGHT BACK, ILLINOIS!



EQIL INSIDER SCOOP JUNE 2013

In the June EQIL Insider Scoop:

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MARRIAGE REPORT = Fight Back, Illinois! That's our battle cry in the aftermath of the outrageous inaction of the Illinois House of Representatives to vote for the freedom to marry in the closing hours of the spring session last Friday. We thought you should hear from the Equality Illinois leaders on the front lines of the fight.

WHAT HAPPENED; WHAT'S NEXT? by Bernard Cherkasov, Chief Executive Officer = I've written no sadder message in my career than the one I wrote to you on Friday night after Rep. Greg Harris announced that he would not call the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act for a vote.

The entire House failed in meeting its historic obligation to enact the freedom to marry. We believed that all of you deserved to know where the House members stood on recognizing our right to marry, particularly which Representatives stood in the way. Also deserving to know were the gay and lesbian couples, some with their children, who had been waiting years and, in some cases decades, to have their love recognized as equal to any other. They had staked out the House gallery for days waiting for that moment that never came.

I still feel as I felt that evening: "We are bitter. We are disappointed. We are frustrated. AND WE ARE ANGRY. **BUT WE ARE NOT DONE.**"

That is why I promise that we will be back demanding a



Equality Illinois CEO Bernard Cherkasov speaks at the marriage equality rally last Friday in the Capitol rotunda before the House failed to act on the marriage bill.

vote the next day the legislature is back in session, whether a special session is called to deal with unfinished business this summer or the veto session in November.

Your Equality Illinois team immediately began assessing what went wrong with the campaign and how to build on what went right. Just hours after the non-vote, EQIL was on the way to places like Rockford and Quad Cities to take our case directly to Illinoisans in crucial areas of the state. In addition we have already met with our coalition partners to begin the planning for this summer.

So many of you contributed with your time and treasure to the effort. We thank you so much for that, but, sadly, because of the inaction of the House, we'll have to be asking much more from you in the days and months ahead. Please stay tuned to our Facebook page and to your email inboxes as the strategy for this new phase in the marriage campaign unfolds. There is nothing more important than the role you will play.

Still, we have accomplished a lot. Together, we all transformed the dialog so that a majority of Illinoisans agree that all loving couples should be allowed to marry so they and their children have the same respect and legal protections. We moved the bill to bipartisan victory in the Illinois Senate and got it to the floor of the Illinois House.

And from there, we will get it to the Governor's desk, I assure you. Here, from the Equality Illinois team, is how we got to this point:

LEGISLATIVE STRATEGY by Randy Hannig, Public Policy Director = Last fall, after racking up a number of victories at the ballot box, we were certain that Illinois was on a trajectory to becoming the next state to offer same-sex couples the freedom to marry. We reached out to allies to form the Illinois Unites for Marriage coalition, and we were off. After assembling a stellar team to execute our strategy, we hit the ground running in Springfield to make sure legislators knew just how essential it was for them to act quickly to ensure that our state ended its practice of discriminating against same-sex couples and treating us like second-class citizens. We went to work lobbying each and every member of the General Assembly who would listen, and we had a great deal of success telling our stories and creating an effective narrative.

Our efforts paid off on February 14th when the Illinois Senate agreed to end discrimination against same-sex couples with a 34-21 vote for the marriage equality bill. After the Senate vote, we immediately turned our attention to the House of Representatives, which we already knew was going to be a tougher battle than the more progressive-minded Senate.

While we passed the bill out of a House committee in good time, our battle for the hearts and minds of House members hit a snag when our opponents began to ramp up their efforts to scare legislators with lies and distortions about the bill. As much as we tried to dispel the deceptions that our opponents were spreading to legislators, the damage had already been done, and quite a few firm "yes" votes slipped away, especially after our opponents continually threatened House members with electoral defeat if they supported our freedom to marry.

While our community was impeded from claiming victory on May 31, we have no doubt that we will be victorious in the very near future. Legislators know that it is only a matter of time before marriage equality is the law of the land, and when the time comes to vote on our freedom to marry, we will have more than enough votes to make sure that Illinois' sad chapter of unfounded discrimination against a whole segment of society will finally be closed

BUILDING SUPPORT by Caroline Staerk, Field Director = Our effort is aimed at building the broadest possible coalition and translate that unity into action by our supporters throughout Illinois in order to

build momentum for marriage that is heard and seen by legislators.

The Illinois Unites for Marriage coalition led by Equality Illinois, Lambda Legal and ACLU of Illinois built a broad alliance of over 50 community groups – both LGBT and non LGBT, plus numerous other groups of supporters that were announced during the course of the campaign, including top business executives and companies, labor unions, African American and Latino leaders, as well as athletes and country music artists.

One formidable group was the coalition of over 300 members of the clergy from 95 different cities and 21 denominations) who signed the faith letter in support of the bill. Separately, a group of African American clergy signed on to a letter written by Rev. Otis Moss III and Rev. Herbert Martin, Sr. Clergy and congregations participated in everything from rallies to writing letters to the editor to getting postcards signed to legislator office visits and more.

We also built a fantastic network of volunteers who staffed phone banks and numerous events. Over the last five months, 500 Illinois Unites volunteers made about 230,000 dials via a network of at least 200 phone banks throughout the state to 38 districts represented by targeted lawmakers.

We hand delivered 12,289 marriage postcards collected at innumerable events to every House member in addition to generating thousands of emails from supporters through social media and email blasts.

Our challenge now is to build on that energy in the next phase of our marriage campaign. We'll be in touch with volunteers in the days ahead for how everyone can pitch in.

THE GOOD FIGHT = The Equality Illinois team was at full force anticipating a House vote on marriage:





(Top left) The EQIL team in Springfield with the bill's sponsor, Rep. Greg Harris: Field Director Caroline Staerk (l-r), Rep. Harris, Public Policy Director Randy Hannig and CEO Bernard Cherkasov.

(Top right) The marriage rally in Springfield: Field Organizer Charlie Rice Minoso (on left) holding the EQIL banner.

(Bottom left) The EQIL war room in our headquarters. NBC dropped by as we tracked the Springfield action and fed media reports: Media Liaison Mitchell Locin (in forefront), volunteer Michael Crowley (going clockwise), intern Rob Cameron, Director of Development Michael Nordman and intern Naina Desai. [See the NBC report.](#)

THE MESSAGE by Mitchell Locin, Media Liaison = Our ultimate media audience for the marriage vote is pretty small – 59 senators and 118 representatives – but to reach them Equality Illinois engaged old-fashioned mass media and practically every kind of new media in an attempt to mobilize the public, shape the debate and ultimately influence the thinking of the Illinois General Assembly. It's incumbent on us now to retool the messaging for the next phase.

Working with our Illinois Unites partners and on our own initiatives, we issued scores of news releases highlighting new endorsements, sought and received editorial support in all of the state's major newspapers, motivated supporters to contact their legislators and volunteer for phone banking, and, most importantly, publicized couples and families and the reasons they should not be denied marriage equality.

	<p>Fight Back, Illinois! It's the new Equality Illinois Facebook cover photo, which you can download for your own Facebook page or other uses. You can save it by right clicking on the big image above.</p>
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HIV DISCRIMINATION AGAINST YOUTH = One legislative success came when the General Assembly voted to repeal the state requirement that the HIV status of a child be reported to school principals when the Illinois Department of Public Health or local health departments learn of a positive status. Equality Illinois supported the strategy of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago on the issue. Final action came on May 23 when the Senate voted 38-13 on the measure previously passed by the House 61-55. It now awaits action by Gov. Pat Quinn.

Illinois was the only state in the country where health authorities were required by law to notify school principals of the names of students that test HIV-positive. School principals then had the authority to notify other school personnel as they see fit, which put students' medical privacy at risk.

RE-ENGAGING AGAINST HIV/AIDS = Equality Illinois is among 34 national HIV and LGBT advocacy groups marking Pride Month by vowing to reengage our organizations and the greater LGBT community in the fight against HIV/AIDS. HIV continues to ravage the gay community, with gay and bisexual men accounting for more than 63 percent of new HIV infections in 2010. Yet attention to the epidemic has waned and needs to be reinvigorated. [Read more about the campaign and watch a video.](#)

IMMIGRATION REFORM = Equality Illinois joined other LGBT-rights organizations and allies in decrying the omission of same-sex couples from the so-called reform bill for immigration making its way through Congress. Even longtime supporters of marriage equality and non-discrimination laws seem willing to jettison gay and lesbian Americans and our foreign-born life partners just because they are not straight.

Among those who wouldn't stand up to the pressure from right-wing opponents was Illinois' own Sen. Richard Durbin, who said, "I believe this is the wrong moment, that this is the wrong bill." Yet, as **Equality Illinois CEO Bernard Cherkasov** pointed out to WBEZ-NPR Radio, "This is the right bill and this is the right time. You know, this is a comprehensive immigration reform. This could be the only chance we have in a decade, if not in a generation, to fix all the problems of our broken immigration system."

Equality Illinois issued a statement, noting the endorsement of the **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights** for marriage equality. "As the Illinois immigration coalition says, recognition of same-sex families should also extend to immigration laws," Cherkasov said in the press release. "This is a rebuke to those who say that partial immigration reform is sufficient even if it affirmatively excludes gay and lesbian families. Family reunification is bedrock principle of our immigration laws. We're all in this together."



Sen. Dick Durbin speaking in the Senate Judiciary Committee for the immigration bill, which he said can exclude same-sex bi-national couples.



SPRING WINE TASTING = The Spring Wine Tasting event is **TONIGHT!** Please join Equality Illinois at Sidetrack (3349 N. Halsted St., Chicago) at 6 - 9 pm. [Click HERE before 2 pm to purchase tickets before they run out.](#)

After that tickets will be available at the door. For just a \$20 donation to Equality Illinois PAC, you have access to more than 99 wines from around the world and hors d'oeuvres provided by J&L Catering! This super-popular and

always fun event caters to all palates and budgets.



FIRST FRIDAY = GET NETWORKING at our First Friday Networking Social.

Join Equality Illinois PAC on Friday, June 7 for the always popular and fun monthly social! This month, we are inviting the Illinois Unites for Marriage coalition members of ACLU & Lambda Legal to join us. Both groups are working hard alongside EQIL to help bring the freedom to marry to Illinois. We can't wait to see you there!

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, June 7, 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.



MIDSOMMARFEST = Andersonville welcomes Chicagoland to its annual Midsommarfest on Clark Street between Foster and Catalpa on **Saturday and Sunday, June 8-9**, 11 am to 10 pm. Equality Illinois will be on hand to enjoy what is annually one of the city's best street fairs. Please drop by our booth, say hi, register to vote, get an EQIL sticker and learn about all the important LGBT issues including the ongoing marriage battle. We'll be just north of Summerdale Avenue, at about **5341 N. Clark**. [Learn more.](#)

SPEAKING OF EQUALITY = LGBT Pride month is here! When your organization, company or religious institution celebrates Pride and you are looking for a way to show it – why not ask someone from Equality Illinois to speak at your event? We can speak about diversity in the workplace, the importance of LGBT equality, the marriage bill and other key developments in the news. We can bring a broad message or tailor a program to your needs.

The Equality Illinois Education Project touches individuals all across Illinois. Our programs range from educating the LGBT population on legal protections to empowering individuals to use their rights, from helping employers adopt LGBT-inclusive workplace practices to assisting businesses in positively engaging with the LGBT community, from bridge building with other groups to registering and getting out voters. **Contact us at info@eqil.org or call [773-477-7173](tel:773-477-7173).**

OUT IN THE SUBURBS = Join EQIL Field Director Caroline Staerk at a panel discussion about the LGBTQ community on Thursday, June 20 in the Wilmette Public Library, 1242 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, hosted by Links - North Shore Youth Health Services.

WOMEN'S WEDNESDAY = Spice up your Pride Month at our monthly social gathering for the ladies! Our next event is on Wednesday, June 12, from 7pm to 9pm, at Mary's Attic in Andersonville (5400 N. Clark St., above Hamburger Mary's) with live entertainment and plenty of fun.

The evening will include: 2 Free Drinks, A Free Door Prize Ticket, Entertainment, "Mary"-oke and more, all for just \$10 admission. Don't miss it! Bring a friend, grab a drink, and banish the mid-week blues, all while supporting our work on marriage equality and LGBT rights in Illinois. Find out more on [Facebook](#).



*Equality Illinois was all over the state in recent weeks promoting the marriage bill and discussing other issues. Here, [the Southern Illinoisan reports](#) that **CEO Bernard Cherkasov** spoke in Carbondale last month.*



METRO EAST PRIDE = Equality Illinois will also see you in downtown Belleville at the annual Metro East Pride on Saturday, June 22, noon to 10 pm. [Find more info on the festival here.](#)

Please email **EQIL Field Director Caroline Staerk** at cstaerk@eqil.org if you want to volunteer at our booth. Please stop by our booth during the festival and learn more about EQIL.



CHICAGO PRIDE = The **Chicago Pride Parade** on Sunday, June 30 wraps up Pride Month with one of the biggest summer crowds seen anywhere in the state. Starting at noon at [Montrose and Broadway](#) and [winding south to Diversey and Sheridan](#), the parade is always festive. Look for the gayly decorated Equality Illinois float. Our theme this year will be demanding a vote on the marriage bill.

Last year's Pride Parade was fun and meaningful. [See more pictures here.](#)



Everest 4 Equality Kick Off Party: A Night at the Gallery

Join us on **Thursday, June 27th from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. for a night at Primitive gallery**, 130 N. Jefferson St., Chicago as we kick off the Everest for Equality effort. Learn firsthand about Joe Rudy's plan for a historic climb up the 29,035 feet of Mount Everest in support of LGBT rights. Enjoy wine, light bites, and an amazing gallery filled with art pieces from around the world. Your \$50 ticket donation also benefits two great organizations, Equality Illinois Education Project and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, as they work to secure and protect LGBT equality both regionally and nationally. [We look forward to seeing you there; purchase your tickets online today.](#)

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS = Calendar of Upcoming Events

JUNE 2013

- 5 JUNE – Spring Wine Tasting Party – @ Sidetrack (3349 N. Halsted St., Chicago)
- 7 JUNE – First Friday – 6 pm @ Sidetrack (3349 North Halsted St., Chicago)
- 8-9 JUNE – Andersonville's Midsommarfest – (Equality Illinois booth @ 5341 N. Clark, Chicago)
- 12 JUNE – Women's Wednesday – 7 pm @ Mary's Attic (5400 N. Clark St., Chicago)
- 20 JUNE – Out in the Suburbs – 7-8:30 pm @ Wilmette Public Library (1242 Wilmette Ave., W)
- 22 JUNE – Metro East Pride – Noon - 10 pm @ Downtown Belleville, IL
- 27 JUNE – Everest for Equality Kick Off Party - 5:30 - 8 pm @ Primitive (130 N. Jefferson St., Chicago)

30 JUNE – Chicago Pride Parade – 12 pm (Broadway and Montrose to Diversey and Sheridan)

JULY 2013

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

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



ATHLETIC SUPPORTERS = On **May 8** a [resolution](#) passed unanimously in the Chicago City Council that urged the commissioners of all five major sports leagues to PUBLICLY support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender athletes. **Equality Illinois' board member Christina Kahrl and Field Director, Caroline Staerk**, along with groups like the Center on Halsted, Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and Illinois Safe Schools Alliance testified at the hearing of the Human Relations Committee of the Chicago City Council the day before. This effort was lead by The Last Closet. Above, in a [video by Windy City Times](#), is **Christina Kahrl's** appearance before the council's Committee on Human Relations.



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.