

# EQUALITY ILLINOIS SEPTEMBER 2010 E-NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

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## 1) WHITE HOUSE CENTRAL – White House briefing on LGBT Issues

Equality Illinois CEO Bernard Cherkasov and Director of Public Policy Rick Garcia were among some forty leaders of statewide organizations that participated in an unprecedented meeting with top Obama Administration officials in August at the White House. The four-hour meeting included sessions with top officials in the White House, the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

Each Department highlighted the changes from previous administrations with regard to the LGBT community. And participants were urged to communicate with the White House about issues of importance and concern to us. Specific details on substantive advances in LGBT equality, as highlighted at the meeting, will be available on Equality Illinois website in the coming weeks.

Also, earlier last month Rick Garcia and Field Director Caroline Staerk had a lengthy conference call with Labor Secretary Hilda Solis on rules changes with regard to LGBT employees and the Family Medical Leave Act.

## 2) STRONGER TOGETHER – LGBT Immigration Developments

Equality Illinois is committed to including bi-national same-sex couples in immigration reform. Earlier this summer, EQIL co-hosted a press conference with U.S. Representatives **Luis V. Gutierrez** (IL-4), **Mike Quigley** (IL-5) and **Jared Polis** (CO-2) to press for inclusion of same-sex couples and their families in comprehensive immigration reform efforts in Congress this year. Now EQIL is joining forces with prominent LGBT community organizations in forming a coalition to educate about the need for fair and inclusive immigration reform and to advocate for Congressional action.

The next meeting of the coalition will take place on Wednesday, September 8 at 7:45 am at Nookies Tree in Chicago. Join us.

CIR ASAP (H.R. 4321), the current comprehensive bill cosponsored by 97 other members, does not currently include a specific provision extending legal immigration benefits to bi-national same-sex couples and their families. However, at the press conference mentioned above, the attending members of Congress committed to inclusion of a specific provision that would allow an American citizen in a committed same-sex bi-national relationship to petition for an immigrant visa for her or his permanent partner in the same manner as an opposite-sex couple can. This would ensure that *all* American families can remain together through the immigration process. As many as 40,000 couples – many with American citizen children – would benefit from the provision. Other key provisions of CIR ASAP, including legalization provisions for undocumented residents, asylum policy reforms, and treatment in detention, already apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

### 3) MARRIAGE IS HARD WORK – Update on Prop 8 and Congressional initiatives

California families are fighting hard to preserve recent marriage equality ruling in the federal court. Many of Equality Illinois' supporters have inquired about the consequences of the recent Prop. 8 decisions in California and what it means in Illinois and nationwide. Equality Illinois has put together a brief Q&A guide for you to answer questions such as:

- What actually happened in the federal courts?
- How would those rulings affect us in Illinois?
- Can same-sex couples in California get married now?
- What are the next steps in Prop 8 case?

The Equality Illinois Q&A guide to the Prop 8 ruling is available on our website at:  
[http://www.eqil.org/cmsdocuments/Prop\\_8\\_Q&A.doc](http://www.eqil.org/cmsdocuments/Prop_8_Q&A.doc).

Support for marriage equality is at all-time high across the country. According to a CNN poll released just in August (and made instantly available at EQIL Facebook page), a clear majority of Americans support marriage rights for same-sex couples. Opposition to marriage equality is at a clear low, at 46%.

Still, in Congress some die-hard right-wing opponents of marriage refuse to heed the voice of the people, and introduced a resolution condemning recent federal court rulings on marriage equality. The resolution has garnered 18 Congressional supporters so far.

At the same time, efforts to repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act in Congress have stalled. Respect for Marriage Act, which already has over 100 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives, has not yet moved further.

Equality Illinois continues to work across the State to educate Illinoisans, including our elected representatives, about the importance and urgent need for equal marriage rights. Stay tuned for more details.

### 4) RESPONSIBLE LAWYERING – 2010 Law Firm Survey Results Released

Equality Illinois announced its selection of **Top Ten Law Firms Leading the Way toward LGBT Workplace Equality**, as a result of its fifth annual comprehensive survey of over 150 largest law firms doing business in Illinois. The firms were scored based on personnel policies, domestic partnership benefits, diversity training, and engagement with the LGBT community, among other factors. The full recognition brochure is available on Equality Illinois website at:  
[http://www.eqil.org/cmsdocuments/Eqil\\_RaisingTheBarProgram.pdf](http://www.eqil.org/cmsdocuments/Eqil_RaisingTheBarProgram.pdf).

The law firms of **McDermott Will & Emery**, **Jenner & Block**, and **Perkins Coie** ranked as the leading three on the Top Ten list. The remaining firms include (in alpha order): **Bryan Cave**, **Chapman and Cutler**, **DLA Piper**, **Greenberg Traurig**, **Kirkland & Ellis**, **Neal Gerber Eisenberg**, and **Sidley Austin**.

In addition to recognizing the leading firms, Equality Illinois will be releasing the *Best Practices Manual* in the fall of 2010 to enable all firms across the State to take competitive steps to create a more equitable workplace for their LGBT employees.

"We are enormously proud of the Top Ten firms' commitment to workplace equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees.," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. "It makes perfect sense that law firms competing for top talent would have practices to enable them to retain that top talent. And the fact that the Top Ten list is comprised of some of the country's leading law firms is further indication that this is the best practice for all law firms to emulate."

### 5) GET NETWORKING – First Friday Networking Event with Chicago NOW on September 3

Join Equality Illinois and Chicago NOW supporters and friends for our September First Friday networking event. The mission of the Chicago Chapter of the National Organization for Women is to be Chicago's feminist resource in the areas of economic equity, women's health, reproductive freedom, ending violence against women, and LGBTQ rights. In addition, Chicago NOW takes action through several key projects such as, but not limited to, panel discussions, essay contests, and fundraisers. The chapter also participates in community outreach, political activities, and political endorsements.

For a \$10 donation to the Equality Illinois PAC, you receive two drink tickets and a ticket for a door prize drawing.

Equality Illinois First Friday Networking Event  
Friday, September 3, 2010  
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Sidetrack – Glass Bar  
3349 North Halsted Street  
Chicago, Illinois  
(21 and over, with I.D.)

Contributions support the Equality Illinois Political Action Committee. Contributions are not tax deductible. Paid for by Equality Illinois PAC. A copy of our report filed with the State Board of Elections and the Cook County Clerk is (or will be) available for purchase from the State Board of Elections, Springfield, IL, or the Cook County Clerk's Office, 69 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60601. State law requires that we report the occupation and name of the employer of any individual who contributes over \$500.00

## **6) COMMUNITY FORUM – Federal Equality Agenda Updates on September 27**

Equality Illinois and HRC are teaming up to present an update on the state of LGBT equality issues on the federal level, featuring Congressman Mike Quigley (IL-5).

The community forum will feature Congressman Mike Quigley and cover a wide variety of issues, such as Employment Non-Discrimination Act, repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, inclusion of binational same-sex couples in immigration reform, and the status of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act.

This is one update you will not want to miss. No reservations required, but questions can be directed to [info@eqil.org](mailto:info@eqil.org) or (773) 477-7173.

### Event Details:

Date: Monday, September 27, 2010

Time: 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Location: Hoover-Leppen Theatre, Center on Halsted (3656 N. Halsted, Chicago, IL 60613)

## **7) LET'S EAT – Dining Out for Equality is back on September 29**

The second edition of Dining Out for Equality is set to take place on Wednesday, September 29. Based on the very positive feedback we received following our inaugural Dining Out for Equality, this event will now permanently take place in the fall. Remember that all you have to do is dine out at a participating restaurant anytime on September 29<sup>th</sup>. A portion of your total food and drink bill will be donated to Equality Illinois and put toward the fight for LGBT equality in Illinois. The most up-to-date information for the event can be found at [www.diningoutforequality.com](http://www.diningoutforequality.com).

## **8) OUR HISTORY – Educational Forum on LGBT History from Holocaust to Modern Days**

Equality Illinois is partnering with the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center to present an educational forum on the history of LGBT equality struggle from the Holocaust to modern days.

The program will explore the experiences of gay Holocaust survivors and the Nazis' attempts to find a "cure" for homosexuality, and discuss modern-day laws and actions that oppress LGBT people in the United States and around the world.

The forum is scheduled for Tuesday, October 26, 2010 from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, and will take place at the Center on Halsted. Please save the date and join us. Additional details coming soon.

## 9) CELEBRATE – 2011 JUSTICE FOR ALL GALA – Save the date!

Planning has begun for Equality Illinois' 2011 *Justice for All* Gala, to be held on Saturday, February 12, 2011, at the Hilton Chicago.

*Justice for All* is the largest and most fun annual LGBT black-tie gala in the Midwest, with over 1,000 people attending each year. Join attending elected officials, business executives, community leaders, as well as your next-door neighbors!

This event directly benefits the Equality Illinois Education Project, a 501(c)(3) organization, and funds raised help support our mission to secure, protect and defend equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Illinois. The Gala generates substantial media attention in the gay as well as mainstream Illinois media.

Join us for one important night, one important cause.

Equality Illinois 2010 Justice for All Gala  
Saturday, February 12, 2011  
Hilton Chicago

Save the date now and plan on joining us for an extraordinary evening. Tables and individual tickets will be available for purchase after October 15<sup>th</sup> online at [www.equalityillinois.org](http://www.equalityillinois.org), or by calling our office – 773-477-7173.

Guests who purchase Platinum or Premier Tables or Individual Tickets are also invited to the Premier Reception, Friday, February 11<sup>th</sup>.

Call our office at 773-477-7173 (or email) with questions regarding the Gala:  
Gala Sponsorship – Bernard Cherkasov ([bcherkasov@eqil.org](mailto:bcherkasov@eqil.org))  
Table & Ticket Purchases – Joey McDonald ([jmcdonald@eqil.org](mailto:jmcdonald@eqil.org))  
Program Book Advertising – Caroline Staerk ([cstaerk@eqil.org](mailto:cstaerk@eqil.org))  
Silent Auction Donations – Kevin Mork ([kmork@eqil.org](mailto:kmork@eqil.org))

Gala Table/Ticket purchases are tax-deductible as provided by law.

## 10) FAN BASE – Become a Fan of our Facebook and Twitter pages

Please show that you support equality in Illinois by becoming a fan of Equality Illinois' **brand-new** Facebook page. Organizations that oppose marriage equality have thousands of "fans" for their cause. Let's show them how strong we are!

<http://www.facebook.com/equalityillinois?ref=ts>

<http://twitter.com/equalityill>

## 11) UP NEXT – Calendar of Upcoming Events

### September 2010

Sept. 3 – Equality Illinois and Chicago NOW First Friday Networking Event

Sept. 6 – Labor Day

Sept. 15 – 730pm "Come Out For Change – A Gay-la For Charity 3.0." Comedy Show at Mary's Attic (5400 N. Clark, Chicago – benefits EQIL and PFLAG Northern IL Council)

Sept. 12 – Peoria Pride

Sept. 27 – Community Forum on Federal Equality Agenda  
Sept. 29 – Dining Out for Equality

**October 2010**

Oct. 1 – Equality Illinois and *We Are Voting Illinois* First Friday Networking Event  
Oct. 2 – Carbondale Pride Picnic  
Oct. 11 – Columbus Day  
Oct. 13 – 2011 *Justice for All Gala* Table Captain Reception  
Oct. 19 & 20 – Night of 100 Drag Queens  
Oct. 26 – Community Forum with IL Holocaust Museum and Equality Illinois  
Oct. 31 – Halloween

**November 2010**

Nov. 3 – Wine Tasting Event at Sidetrack  
Nov. 5 – Equality Illinois First Friday Networking Event  
Nov. 6 – Trans Event  
Nov. 11 – Veteran's Day  
Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving Day

**December 2010**

Dec. 1 – World AIDS Day and Equality Illinois Theater Event at *Wicked*  
Dec. 3 – Equality Illinois First Friday Networking Event  
Dec. 10 – Human Rights Day  
Dec. 25 – Christmas  
Dec. 31 – New Year's Eve & New Year's Eve Party @ Sidetrack

**January 2011**

Jan. 1 – New Year's Day  
Jan. 7 – Equality Illinois First Friday Networking Event  
Jan. 17 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

**February 2011**

Feb. 1 – National Freedom Day  
Feb. 4 – Equality Illinois First Friday Networking Event  
Feb. 11 – 2011 Justice for All Premier Reception  
Feb. 12 – 2011 Justice for All Gala  
Feb. 14 – Valentine's Day  
Feb. 21 – President's Day

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