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MEDIA RELEASE

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**STATEWIDE GAY RIGHTS GROUP PUSHES BACK AGAINST  
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MARRIAGE'S INVASION OF ILLINOIS  
General public overwhelmingly supports proposed civil unions bill.**

**CHICAGO** - Equality Illinois ("EQIL"), the state's largest organization advocating for full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender ("LGBT") people, pushed back aggressively against National Organization for Marriage ("NOM"). NOM announced last week that it is targeting Illinois and the proposed Religious Freedom Protection & Civil Unions Act, which is being considered by the Illinois General Assembly. This week, the Catholic Conference of Illinois echoed NOM's tactics.

"NOM's attacks on proposed civil unions are as misleading as they are predictable," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. "I am appalled at the length to which NOM would go to harm our families."

**The Civil Unions bill has been considered by the Illinois General Assembly for more than three years.** The current bill provides urgent protections for same-sex and opposite-sex couples, while addressing any concerns about the law's impact on religious institutions. We are especially disturbed at the misleading statements by the Catholic Conference of Illinois and Cardinal Francis George that the law would force churches to recognize civil unions. The bill explicitly states that: "Nothing in this Act shall interfere with or regulate the religious practice of any religious body. Any religious body, Indian Nation or Tribe or Native Group is free to choose whether or not to solemnize or officiate a civil union."

"The Cardinal is either misinformed on the nature of the bill or is lying," –said Rick Garcia, Director of Public Policy. "The bill has nothing to do with adoption, foster care or the status of marriage, and has everything to do with fairness for same-sex couples."

**Civil unions legislation is a moderate measure broadly supported by voters across the entire State.** An October 2010 poll by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute of likely Illinois voters shows 67.5% approve of civil unions or marriage for same sex couples, with only 26.5% opposing any recognition.

**The proposed law is widely supported by people of faith.** More than 300 ordained clergy have signed our Faith Petition to legislators to pass the civil unions bill. The signers of the Faith Petition represent over 270 congregations and seminaries from nearly 80 cities in Illinois. The Equality Prayer Breakfast held earlier this year featured clergy from a broad array of religious denominations, including, among others, Lutheran, Episcopal, Methodist, Conservative Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Jewish – all of whom called for relationship recognition for same-sex couples.

**This is the right time to pass the civil unions bill.** Every single day, loving, committed same-sex couples across the entire State of Illinois are being denied nearly 650 protections that are otherwise available to married heterosexual couples. These include emergency medical decision-making power, access to domestic relations laws, state spousal benefits, tax relief, estate-sharing and inheritance rights, and the right to control disposition of remains. These are not protections that we take for granted.

Learn more facts and myth busters at Equality Illinois' website: [www.eqil.org/civil.html](http://www.eqil.org/civil.html).

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**Equality Illinois was founded to secure, protect, and defend the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Illinoisans. It is one of the Midwest's largest gay civil rights organizations.**