

## MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Gay Rights Group Launches “Vote Naked Chicago” to Get Out the Vote for Municipal Elections**

*Builds on the success of Vote Naked Illinois with a social media driven campaign effort*

**CHICAGO** – Equality Illinois, the state’s largest organization advocating for full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (“LGBT”) people, has launched an interactive online campaign to encourage Chicagoans to vote by mail... naked. The campaign hinges on a custom Facebook application that allows voters to share their views with a personalized naked voter cartoon. Users can upload their own photo, select a naked cartoon body and create a sign stating what s/he votes naked for.

“It is imperative that Illinois voters cast their ballots this February, regardless of how they vote, where they vote, or what they wear,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of the Equality Illinois Education Project. “With vote-by-mail, it is so easy to cast a ballot in the privacy of one’s own home, you can do it naked.”

This effort comes on the heels of the group’s successful Vote Naked Illinois campaign, which distributed more than 500,000 absentee ballot request forms to 30 counties across Illinois in November 2010 elections. Vote Naked Chicago is being launched as partnership between Equality Illinois, Lambda Legal, Affinity Community Services, Chicago House, PFLAG and other organizations throughout the city.

Equality Illinois maintains that social media engagement plays an increasingly large role in modern politics, and Vote Naked Chicago’s Facebook application responds to voters’ need to make their voices heard---and does so in a fun, whimsical and engaging manner. “It’s no longer a question of if we use social media; it’s a matter of how,” said Kevin Hauswirth, Equality Illinois board member. “Equality Illinois understands that we need to meet voters where they are, on and offline to build impactful coalitions.”

An unprecedented 70,000+ voters cast ballots by mail in the City of Chicago and Cook County alone in November 2010. With just over 19,000 ballots separating incumbent Pat Quinn from Republican opponent Bill Brady, absentee ballots played a critical role in the Illinois gubernatorial election last November.

**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.**

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