

## Governor Signs Civil Union Bill Into Law, Equality Illinois and Lambda Legal Launch Civil Union Tracker

Couples can register online through Civil Union Tracker to get their questions answered, share stories, and gain direct access to information related to their new rights and responsibilities.

(Chicago, IL, January 31 2011)—Today Governor Quinn will sign the *Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Unions Act*, which will go into effect June 1, 2011. To support families protected by the new law, Lambda Legal and Equality Illinois launched Civil Union Tracker.

“We have had a surge of calls to our Legal Help Desk since November when the law passed the legislature,” said Camilla Taylor, Senior Staff Attorney at the Midwest Regional Office of Lambda Legal in Chicago. “By launching Civil Union Tracker with our partners at Equality Illinois, our goal is to provide a much needed service to same-sex and different-sex couples in civil unions, and to their children. Many will have questions about what the law means. We also know from experience in other states with civil unions that many families will encounter difficulties in getting respect for their status as legally recognized families after the law goes into effect. Our goal is to help these families navigate Illinois’ new legal landscape with as few challenges as possible.”

Illinois’ new law provides that couples in civil unions will receive the responsibilities, protections, and benefits available to married couples under state law, and also establishes that out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples will be treated as civil unions automatically. Lambda Legal has already responded to a flood of questions about civil unions by providing a civil union FAQ. Couples can register online through Civil Union Tracker to get their questions answered, share stories, and gain direct access to information related to their new rights and responsibilities. Civil Union Tracker can be found at <http://www.lambdalegal.org/take-action/il-civil-union-tracker/>.

In addition to same-sex couples seeking to protect their families, civil unions provide protections for different-sex couples, including widowed senior citizens who want state-level recognition for a new relationship. Civil Union Tracker is available to any Illinois couple that chooses to enter into a civil union, or whose relationship will be treated as a civil union under the new law.

“As we continue to fight for marriage equality, Civil Union Tracker is a way for Illinois residents to communicate their unique experiences,” said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois. “Through these stories, we can provide a necessary service to the community while we celebrate the progress we are making. At the same time, we need to document the harms that result from excluding lesbian and gay couples from marriage and relegating them to a separate status.”

### NEWS RELEASE

[www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org)  
[www.equalityillinois.org](http://www.equalityillinois.org)

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Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.

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The Mission of Equality Illinois is to secure, protect and defend equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Illinois



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