



Happy New Year! ¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

EQUALITY ILLINOIS JANUARY 2011 E-NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

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ALL ABOUT CIVIL UNIONS – Upcoming Civil Union Community Forums

The Illinois civil union bill, championed by EQIL and our fearless supporters over many years, is one of the most robust in the country! Because of this, our community and supporters have many questions about what it means to be in a civil union and the ins-and-outs of the bill.

EQIL has organized Civil Union Community Forums all across the State. The cities and dates of the community forums can be found at http://eqil.org/Civil_Union_C_F.html. (Please note that we will continue to update the information on dates, times, and locations.) In the meantime you can get answers to your frequently asked questions at http://eqil.org/cmsdocuments/Civil_Unions_FAQs.pdf.

Entering into a civil union is a decision that is not to be taken lightly. *How do we enter into a civil union? What if we already got married in another state or country that recognizes same-sex*

unions? What happens if we enter into a civil union and then move? Can I get a divorce? These are some of the many questions we have been hearing from our community since the passage of the civil union legislation a few weeks ago.

As we move forward to educate and inform the public about the importance of civil unions in Illinois, EQIL will continue to build strong coalitions with pro-equality community partners. We will continue to be the driving force in Illinois working to protect the citizens of this State from anti-equality foes, such as the so-called Illinois Family Institute and NOM, who are already looking to repeal or weaken civil unions. Stay tuned as we unroll over the coming weeks our aggressive agenda to protect civil unions.

Feel free to contact the EQIL office at 773-477-7173 or info@eqil.org with further questions. We look forward to seeing you at our next Civil Union Community Forum!

IT ONLY TOOK 17 YEARS! – “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” Repeal Passes

Seventeen long years after the military’s discriminatory “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” (DADT) was implemented, the policy’s repeal has finally been authorized. EQIL, along with an army of volunteers and other supporters, advocated the policy’s repeal for years. We are grateful to hundreds of EQIL supporters and phone-bankers for their tremendous efforts, especially in convincing newly-elected Senator Mark Kirk to vote in support of the repeal.

It is important to note that the passage of the repeal does not result in the immediate repeal of DADT. Under the terms of the new law, the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must certify in writing that they have reviewed the Pentagon’s report on the effects of DADT repeal and that the repeal will not compromise the military’s readiness. Once certification is issued, DADT will be formally repealed following a 60-day waiting period.

Polls show that over 77% Americans support the right of gay and lesbians to serve openly in the U.S. military. The repeal had previously been included in a Defense Authorization Bill, but the Senate was unable to muster 60 votes to break a threatened filibuster. However, on December 15, US Representative Patrick Murphy (PA) proposed a stand-alone bill for repeal. The bill passed the House by a vote of 250-175. The Senate took up the identical bill on December 18, and the bill passed by a vote of 65-31.

President Obama, who championed the repeal of DADT, signed the repeal into law on December 22. Both Illinois Senators, Dick Durbin, a sponsor of the bill, and Mark Kirk voted in favor of repeal. If you have not called the Senators to thank them for their vote in favor of the repeal of DADT, please do so. Senator Durbin can be reached at 202-224-2152, and Senator Kirk can be reached at 202-224-2854.

WHERE DO THEY STAND? – Chicago Mayoral Race and the LGBT Community

EQIL has partnered with numerous LGBT organizations and community leaders to engage in the contest for the next mayor of the City of Chicago in a non-partisan process.

We take seriously the need to educate the mayoral candidates on our community’s concerns, as well as educating our community on the candidates’ LGBT equality positions. Because of this, the coalition has already included a series of community forums to identify the LGBT community’s key concerns and priorities for the mayoral candidates. EQIL and our partners are assessing the candidates’ positions on LGBT issues via issue questionnaire (see below). This non-partisan coalition that will not make candidate endorsements.

You can read all about the issues at http://eqil.org/cmsdocuments/LGBT_Mayoral_Committee_Issues.pdf.

As part of the process, we have developed a questionnaire based in LGBT issue priorities. The questionnaire has been sent out to all candidates for mayor. You can view the Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire at http://eqil.org/cmsdocuments/Next_Mayor_Questionnaire.pdf. As responses come in, we will post them to our Next Mayor web page at <http://eqil.org/nextmayor.html>. Please check back frequently to the page for updates.

Other completed questionnaires will be posted to the web page as they are received.

GET NETWORKING – First Friday Networking Social Featuring TPAN

Join Equality Illinois PAC for the super popular monthly First Friday Networking Social, featuring Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN). TPAN empowers people living with HIV through peer-led programming, support services, information dissemination, and advocacy. TPAN also provides services to the broader community to increase HIV knowledge and sensitivity, and to reduce the risk of infection.

TPAN publishes the nationally distributed HIV treatment magazine, Positively Aware, and the Chicago Area HIV Services Directory. More than 21,000 people receive HIV/AIDS-related care from TPAN each year. In 2010, TPAN launched new programs including In Care, The Life Program, and Housing Opportunities, secured additional funding through the Elton John AIDS Foundation and others, produced spectacular community events like Chicago Takes Off and the Ride for AIDS Chicago. Visit the TPAN website at www.tpan.com for more information.

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 Social Featuring TPAN
Friday, January 7, 2011, from 6:00pm to 8:00pm
Sidetrack – Glass Bar, 3349 North Halsted Street, Chicago
(21 and over, with ID)

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.

REASON TO CELEBRATE – 2011 JUSTICE FOR ALL GALA – Get your tickets now!

Excited about the newly passed civil union bill? Join us at Equality Illinois' 20th Anniversary Justice for All Gala to celebrate! This event is sure to sell out this year, so do not delay – buy your tickets now at www.equalityillinois.org or by calling our office – 773-477-7173.

Equality Illinois 20th Anniversary Justice for All Gala will 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 1,200 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. Save the date now and plan on joining us for an extraordinary evening. Tables and individual tickets are available at 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 11th.

Call our office at 773-477-7173 (or email) with questions regarding the Gala:
Gala Sponsorship – Bernard Cherkasov (bcherkasov@eqil.org)
Table & Ticket Purchases – Joey McDonald (jmcdonald@eqil.org)
Program Book Advertising – Kevin Mork (kjmork@eqil.org)
Silent Auction Donations – Bill Trude (btrude@eqil.org)
Gala Table/Ticket purchases are tax-deductible as provided by law.

SPRING IS IN THE AIR – EQIL Spring Women's Social Set for April 9

The EQIL Spring Women's Social, with **presenting sponsor Olivia Cruises** is set for Saturday, April 9. Please mark your calendar, BlackBerry, iPhone, or any other device you may use to track your packed schedule!

Join us for a fabulous ladies' event that is sure to be a highlight on that busy your spring social calendar of yours. We are in the process of planning the specifics of the event, so stay tuned to our emails and www.eqil.org for more details to come. If you would like to be involved with the planning of the Spring Women's Social, please contact Kevin Mork, EQIL Development Associate, at kjmork@eqil.org.

WHAT DOES CRYSTAL BALL TELL US? – Calendar of Upcoming Events

January 2011

Jan. 7 – EQIL First Friday Networking Social Featuring TPAN

Jan. 25 – Civil Union Community Forum in Carbondale

February 2011

Feb. 4 – EQIL First Friday Networking Social

Feb. 11 – 2011 Justice for All Premier Reception at A New Leaf

Feb. 12 – 2011 Justice for All Gala at Hilton Chicago

Feb. 26 – Civil Union Community Forum in Chicago (South Side)

March 2011

March 4 – EQIL First Friday Networking Social Featuring AIDS Foundation of Chicago

April 2011

April 1 – EQIL First Friday Networking Social

April 9 – EQIL Spring Women's Social

THEY DID IT! – Howard Brown To Continue Full Operations

Great news from Howard Brown! The organization, which serves over 36,000 people each year and has been a pillar of the LGBT community since 1974, will be celebrating its 37th year in 2011 thanks to many generous individual and corporate donors. In an effort to save the organization's vital programs at the end of 2010, Howard Brown launched its Lifeline Appeal to raise \$500,000 in 50 days. Almost \$660,000 was raised!

EQIL was proud to contribute to this cause. Howard Brown was the featured community partner at EQIL's December First Friday Networking Social. Our supporters generously donated to the Lifeline Appeal because they understand the importance of a strong Howard Brown for the community. Thanks to all the EQIL members who contributed to this effort!

Howard Brown is one the nation's largest LGBT organizations. It is a multi-site operation based in Chicago and includes a main health and research center in the Uptown neighborhood, Triad Health practice at Illinois Masonic Hospital, the Broadway Youth Center, and three Brown Elephant resale shops in Chicago and Oak Park. Visit www.howardbrown.org for more information about this vital community organization.

PROGRESS – Obama's Marriage Equality Opinion "Evolving"

In a recent new conference, President Obama signaled that his opposition to marriage equality is evolving. He spoke candidly to the press about his feelings about the issue. "I struggle with this," the president said. "I have friends, I have people who work for me, who are in powerful, strong, long-lasting gay or lesbian unions. And they are extraordinary people, and this is something that means a lot to them and they care deeply about."

The president said in a news conference in December that his opinion on marriage equality for same-sex couples is not fixed and some believe he will announce a new position in the coming months. He also said, "At this point, what I've said is, is that my baseline is a strong civil union that provides them the protections and the legal rights that married couples have. I think that's the right thing to do. But I recognize that from their [gays and lesbians] perspective it is not enough, and I think is something that we're going to continue to debate and I personally am going to continue to wrestle with going forward."

This is perhaps the most candidly a U.S. president has ever spoken about his feelings toward marriage equality. EQIL will, of course, keep you updated on this developing story as we continue our fight for marriage equality in Illinois.

HATE IN UGANDA – Euro Parliament Firmly Denounces "Kill the Gays" Bill

On December 16, the European Parliament adopted an urgent resolution condemning the "Anti-Homosexuality Bill" which has been under consideration in the Ugandan Parliament since September 2009. The Strasbourg-based parliament repeated its opposition to a draft law that calls for fines, imprisonment, and even the death penalty for Ugandan lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Uganda and abroad.

The bill, introduced in the Ugandan Parliament by David Bahati MP, prescribes capital punishment in some cases, including engaging in sexual intercourse more than once with a person of the same sex. It also requires all parents, teachers and doctors to denounce LGBT children, students and patients to authorities.

Even though the Bill has not passed yet, the European Parliament noted a sharp increase in severe threats and violence against LGBT people in Uganda, including calls for violence and killings of people presumed to be homosexual.

The resolution further calls on other European Institutions to keep sending strong messages to the government and parliament in Kampala.

EQIL urges everyone to sign on to the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission petition condemning and demanding swift dismissal of this horrific anti-gay bill.
[http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1870/t/9644/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=1484]

U.S. LEADS THE CHARGE – U.N. Condemns Killing of LGBTs

The United States pushed to reverse a recent anti-LGBT decision at the U.N. Member states have restored a reference to sexual orientation that was dropped amid much controversy last month from a resolution opposing the unjustified killing of minority groups.

The removal of the reference, done at the committee level last month, alarmed human rights advocates who said gay people are among minority groups that need special protection from extrajudicial and other unjustified killings.

On December 21, the U.N. assembly voted 93 in favor of the United States' proposal to restore the previous language, with 55 countries against and 27 abstaining. The assembly then approved the amended resolution 122 in favor, with 0 votes against, and 59 abstentions.