



**EQUALITY
ILLINOIS**

www.EqualityIllinois.org

Mailing Address

3712 N. Broadway
PMB 125
Chicago, IL 60613

Voice

773-477-7173

Fax

773-477-7173

Email

info@eqil.org

PRESS RELEASE FROM EQUALITY ILLINOIS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 4, 2011

For more information or interviews, please contact: Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, at 312-520-4919.

CENSUS: MORE THAN 32,000 SAME-GENDER COUPLES IN ILLINOIS

There were 32,469 same-gender couples living in Illinois, according to 2010 U.S. Census figures released today for the state.

"The fact that there are tens of thousands of people in self-identified same-gender couples demonstrates why equal and fair treatment for all couples is so important," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state's largest organization advocating for full equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender ("LGBT") people.

"The successful effort to legalize civil unions in Illinois was only one important step. We must make sure that the thousands of same-gender couples have the same rights as opposite-sex couples in all areas, including laws relating to families, property, taxes and inheritance, on both the state and federal levels. That is why the fight for same-sex marriage must continue," Cherkasov said.

Many same-gender couples who participated in last year's census did so not just to be counted but also to try to dispel certain stereotypes. "We have been in a stable relationship since 1997, and we wanted the government to know that committed families like ours are everywhere," said Hanover Park residents Lisa and Brenda Link, who were among the first couples to receive a civil union license on June 1. "Just like everyone else, we pay our taxes, we send our children to school, and we deserve to have the same rights as heterosexual couples. We need legal protections not just for our own well being but for the well being of our children."

The 32,469 same-gender couples in the state were about evenly split among men and women; there were 16,416 female couples and 16,053 male couples. The significant presence of same-gender couples is not limited to big urban centers. There were substantial numbers reported in suburban Chicago and downstate Illinois. And last week the census reported that there were 13,630 same-gender couples in largely rural Wisconsin. "In fact, we believe that the figures for all states are underreported because some couples may not be comfortable sharing the information about their relationship. We hope that this analysis helps them understand that they are part of a vast and diverse community of same-gender couples," Cherkasov said. "At the same time, this should also make it clear to policy makers at all levels and branches of government why we continue to press for full recognition of the rights of same-gender couples."

The 2010 census was taken before the new Illinois civil unions law went into effect earlier this year on June 1. The same-gender couples identified in the census can now take advantage of the law, and an Equality Illinois survey of all 102 Illinois counties found that 1,618 civil union licenses were issued in the first month of its implementation.

###

Equality Illinois was founded in 1991 to secure, protect, and defend full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. It is the state's largest LGBT advocacy organization.