

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two Dozen Law Firms Recognized for Commitment to LGBT Equality

CHICAGO – Equality Illinois, the state’s oldest and largest organization advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) equality, announced the results of its annual Law Firm Survey, recognizing 23 local and international firms for their treatment of LGBT employees.

The results were announced at the 7th annual Lawyers for Diversity Barbecue, underwritten by dozens of Chicago’s largest law firms and businesses, taking place on Thursday, July 28, at Sidetrack (3349 N. Halsted Street, Chicago).

“The broad range of firms on this list – from local to global firms, from small firms to the world’s largest – just underscores the fact that equal treatment of LGBT employees is both the fair thing to do and is good business,” Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, said. “There is no better way to recruit and retain top talent and to engage new clients than by respecting the diversity of all employees.”

Equality Illinois also plans to release a Best Practices Manual in September, highlighting the workplace practices of the leading firms, with the goal of helping other firms adapt their policies to be more LGBT-inclusive.

The key speaker at the event this year is Laura M. Ricketts, co-owner of the Chicago Cubs and the Chair of Chicago Cubs Charities. Past speakers have included Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke, Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, Director of the Department of Insurance Michael McRaith, and Illinois Appellate Court Justice Sebastian Patti.

The leading law firms are:

Bryan Cave
Chapman and Cutler LLP
Clark Hill PLC
DLA Piper
Greenberg and Traurig
Jenner & Block
K&L Gates
Katten Muchin Rosenman
Kirkland & Ellis

McDermott Will & Emery
Neal Gerber Eisenberg
Perkins Coie
Quarles & Brady
Schiff Hardin
Seyfarth Shaw
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom
Wildman Harrold
Winston & Strawn

Equality Illinois recognized the following 5 firms for their strengthened commitment to LGBT equality: Baker & McKenzie, Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, McGuireWoods, ReedSmith, Yearwood & Associates.

Recognized law firms welcomed the honor and publicized it with their employees, clients, and media.

“McDermott has a long-standing commitment to LGBT equality and inclusion within our firm and the broader legal and LGBT communities,” Lisa A. Linsky, Partner, Trial Development, said. “We have implemented best practices such as comprehensive domestic partner benefits, a tax gross-up and gender transition guidelines to create a culture supportive of our LGBT lawyers and staff. The Firm's policies and practices are consistent with our overall commitment to workplace equality and inclusion. We appreciate Equality Illinois' recognition of our Firm's diversity accomplishments.”

“Quarles & Brady understands the importance of incorporating diversity in the workplace because it is beneficial to our clients and the firm,” Janine Landow-Esser, Chair of the firm's Diversity Committee, said. “We continually develop and refine our policies to address the needs of our diverse employees -- racial minorities, women, LGBT or physically challenged. It is who we are as a firm.”

“We are honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois as one of the top LGBT-friendly law firms in Illinois,” Susan C. Levy, Jenner & Block's Managing Partner, said. “This recognition reflects the Firm's longstanding dedication to maintaining an inclusive workplace environment and furthering LGBT civil rights.”

“Since day one, Kirkland has embraced and valued my perspective as an openly gay attorney and shown unwavering support for our LGBT community,” Jordan Heinz, Chicago Litigation Associate and Member of the Firmwide Diversity Committee and LGBT Subcommittee, said. “The Firm is proud to support the great work of Equality Illinois in its mission of achieving equality for the LGBT community in Illinois and beyond.”

“As a growing firm with international reach and global clients, Clark Hill PLC understands the importance of a diverse and inclusive culture,” Ray Koenig,

Member, Litigation Practice, said. "Clark Hill PLC believes in promoting diversity and inclusion in our firm, fostering a collegial and respectful working environment in which each person is encouraged and supported to reach his or her highest potential. Clark Hill PLC will continue to aggressively pursue workplace equality for all, including members of the LGBT community."

Statements from other firms include:

BAKER & MCKENZIE:

"As the first truly global law firm, Baker & McKenzie embraces diversity among our lawyers, staff and clients. We know from experience that having a variety of backgrounds and perspectives leads to practical solutions and innovation."

BRYAN CAVE

"We are honored to be named among the most LGBT-friendly firms in Illinois. We are proud to be part of this thriving legal community. And, we are excited at the rapid progress we see and help happen every day for LGBT families across the country."

CHAPMAN AND CUTLER

"Chapman and Cutler is a leader in equal opportunity employment because we value excellence. Excellence has no color, no gender, no sexual orientation, but rather is found in cultivating the talents and unique perspectives of each individual employee."

DLA PIPER

"At DLA Piper, we believe that we are enriched by the diversity, creativity and multiple points of view that we contribute to each other and to our clients. We value diversity and respect for the individual, and we are committed to building a culture that is inclusive of all people and where our colleagues can bring their whole selves to work." -Bill Rudnick, Chicago Office Co-Managing Partner

GREENBERG TRAURIG

"Greenberg Traurig has always been proud of its leadership in recruiting a diverse workforce, and remains committed to the equal treatment of all professionals and business staff. For us, diversity is about taking the right action, and that's what we have done both in our hiring and in setting our policies." -Gregory Ostfeld, a Shareholder in the firm's Chicago office.

HINSHAW & CULBERTSON

"Our firm values diversity and inclusion. In light of these core values, we have devoted significant resources to strengthening our diversity and inclusion efforts. Additionally, we believe that our diversity and inclusion efforts enhance the firm's attractiveness to clients and our ability to deliver excellent results." -Leslie

Richards-Yellen, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

K & L GATES

“We are proud to have been recognized by organizations like Equality Illinois and the Human Rights Campaign for our efforts to create and sustain a vibrant, diverse and inclusive work environment. We take pride in the diversity of our employees and the varied perspectives and experiences that they contribute to the K&L Gates community.”

KATTEN MUCHIN ROSENMAN LLP

“We are pleased that Equality Illinois has recognized Katten's long-standing commitment to workplace equality. We continually strive to grow and maintain an inclusive and supportive work environment that provides equal protections, benefits and resources to all employees.” -Vincent A.F. Sergi, Katten's National Managing Partner

MCGUIRE WOODS

“At McGuireWoods, we work hard to be inclusive and create an environment of mutual respect. As part of this focus, our LGBT Affinity Group has provided us with key insights that have helped us achieve recognition from Equality Illinois for our commitment to LGBT equality.” -Thomas E. Cabaniss, Managing Partner

NEAL GERBER EISENBERG

“Neal Gerber Eisenberg is proud to again be ranked by Equality Illinois as a top 10 LGBT-friendly law firm. This honor underscores our ongoing commitment to the LGBT community specifically and to diversity in general. We recognize that diversity is a vital component of our culture, strategic planning and overall well-being.”
William Choslovsky, partner and co-chair of the firm's Diversity Committee

PERKINS COIE

“Perkins Coie deeply values diversity as an integral part of our culture and we are committed to supporting the growth and development of a workplace that reflects the richness of the communities in which we live and work. We are honored to be recognized by Equality Illinois as one of the top LGBT-friendly law firms in Illinois.”

REED SMITH

“Reed Smith leads in providing equal treatment for LGBT lawyers and staff not only because it's the right thing to do, but because we value inclusion and understand the positive impact it has on the provision of legal services to our clients. Equality Illinois' recognition of our firm's inclusion efforts helps sustain Reed Smith's commitment to maintaining a workplace that welcomes and supports everyone.” -Tyree Jones, Reed Smith's Director of Global Diversity

SCHIFF HARDIN

“We are gratified to be recognized by Lawyers For Diversity. There is a long history

of inclusiveness at Schiff Hardin. We are proud to have been among the first major law firms to provide health care benefits to same-sex partners of our attorneys and staff and our pro bono work on behalf of LGBT individuals during the course of the past three decades is in the highest traditions of the firm.” -Clay Tillack, Partner

SKADDEN, ARPS, SLATE, MEAGHER & FLOM

“We are honored to be named among the most LGBT friendly firms in Illinois. Our commitment to the LGBT communities is central to the core values that are a fundamental component of Skadden’s success as a global law firm.”

WILDMAN HARROLD

“Wildman Harrold believes that excellent lawyers bring all of themselves to their professional work. We are proud of our LGBT colleagues and want to see them -- and all of our lawyers -- grow to their fullest professional potential.” -Sarah "Sally" L. Olson, Partner and Professional Development and Diversity Director

WINSTON & STRAWN

“We are honored to be named by Equality Illinois as one of the leading law firms doing business in Illinois. Diversity and inclusiveness are core values at Winston & Strawn. Ours is a global practice that, we believe, should reflect the diverse world that we serve. To us, diversity involves a commitment to understand, confront, and seek out differences. We are convinced that a sense of inclusiveness adds depth to our lives, informs our work within the firm and with clients, and allows us to become more engaged as citizens of the larger community. In sum, everyone benefits from a culture that recognizes and respects an inclusive workforce.”
Amanda L. Groves, Partner and Chair, Diversity Committee

Survey results and statistics are available on request.

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Equality Illinois was founded to secure, protect, and defend the rights of lesbian, gay bisexual, and transgender Illinoisans. It is the state’s largest organization advocating for full equality for LGBT people in Illinois.