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EQUALITY ILLINOIS RELEASES FIRM STATEWIDE CIVIL UNION NUMBERS FOR JUNE

Group Contacts All 102 Counties for Civil Unions Information, Feedback

CHICAGO – Equality Illinois, the state’s oldest and largest LGBT advocacy organization, announced today that during June, the first month that civil unions were available to couples in Illinois, 1,618 total civil union licenses were issued throughout the state. Of the state’s 102 counties, 83 counties reported issuing at least one or more licenses.

“Civil unions provide crucial protections to couples in Illinois, and the fact that so many couples jumped at the opportunity to receive licenses as soon as they became available shows just how important the new law is to the livelihood of families across our state,” Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, said.

In addition to 1,618 couples who applied for civil union licenses in June, thousands of other couples’ relationships were recognized as civil unions in the state. Same-sex couples who entered a marriage, civil union, or domestic partnership in another jurisdiction automatically had their relationships recognized as a civil union in Illinois on June 1st.

“I have close, personal friends from Illinois who were married in Iowa as soon as it was legal, and they are now automatically recognized under the Illinois civil union statute,” Randy Hannig, Director of Public Policy for Equality Illinois, said. “I wish there was an accurate way to track those couples whose marriages or civil unions occurred in other states. I am certain the total number of civil unions in Illinois is drastically larger than the 1,618 couples reported by county clerks.”

Equality Illinois contacted each county clerk (the official entity responsible for issuing civil union licenses) to assist in compliance with the new law and to gather feedback on its implementation. Many clerks offered stories about the excitement that permeated their offices, especially on the first day civil union licenses were offered.

“Our office in Waukegan was a busy place on the first day to issue licenses for civil unions,” Lake County Clerk Willard Helander said. “We were pleased to provide digital photographs of each couple we served. Applicants supplied their e-mail addresses for us to send their pictures, and the first couple to receive their license was presented a basket of delicacies to prepare an authentic Italian dinner.”

Other clerks in Illinois wasted no time opening their doors to grant civil union licenses. Macon County Clerk Stephen Bean personally granted licenses beginning at midnight on June 1st. “We were approached by several couples who wanted their licenses as soon as possible,” Bean said. “We have opened early or stayed open late in the past to accommodate military couples or those couples who work odd hours, so we had no problem opening right away to be a part of this historic event.” While some clerks dealt with minor glitches during the process, no major gaffes were reported. A few clerks took advantage of the new law to revamp their office policies.

“The enactment of civil unions allowed us to re-evaluate all of our processes for issuing both marriage and civil union licenses,” Champaign County Clerk Gordy Hulten said. “We worked closely with our local community to implement those changes and to anticipate demand for June 1st. The collaboration served our office and our customers very well.” Photos of different civil union ceremonies from across the state are available for publication on Equality Illinois’ Facebook page at www.facebook.com/equalityillinois. For additional stories or photographs, please call Equality Illinois at 773-477-7173.

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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.