



Fourth openly gay state representative sworn in to Illinois legislature; Feigenholtz elevated

by [Tony Merevick](#) on January 9, 2013 in [News](#)

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Illinois LGBT history was made Wednesday as the state's fourth openly gay member of the House of Representatives was sworn in to the 98th General Assembly.

Sam Yingling, 32, a Democrat from Grayslake, now joins Representatives Kelly Cassidy, Deborah Mell and Greg Harris of Chicago in the caucus of openly-gay and lesbian state representatives.

"I am elated and incredibly appreciative to have the opportunity to serve not only the citizens in the 62nd District, but the whole state," Yingling told *Chicago Phoenix*.

He is the first openly gay candidate to be elected outside of Chicago — in the 62nd Legislative District, which comprises the Round Lake communities, including Hainesville, Wauconda, Grayslake and a swath of unincorporated Lake County.

He is the fifth out gay Illinois lawmaker in the state's history. Larry McKeon, another Chicago Democrat, also served openly before passing away in 2008.

Shortly after the inauguration, Cassidy said Yingling's swearing in is one of many significant events for the LGBT community Wednesday, and said "he is a talented public servant."

Formerly the supervisor of Northeastern Illinois Avon Township, Yingling took in 55 percent of the vote, a significant win over Republican incumbent, Sandy Cole, who represented the district for two terms.

Another significant event for the LGBT community is the elevation of longtime ally, Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), who was elevated to the leadership body of the House, Cassidy said.

Feigenholtz will join the Speaker of the House, Michael Madigan, in shaping policy and leading other lawmakers, which is especially critical as a second shot at legislation that would legalize same-sex marriage in the state will soon be reintroduced, Cassidy added.

Feigenholtz is staunch proponent of the measure, which will be introduced in both the House and the Senate by chief sponsors Harris and Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago) — as soon as the new General Assembly officially convenes.

"Marriage is at the precipice in Illinois," Feigenholtz said. "I am very grateful to be here at such an enormously important moment."

Feigenholtz also applauded the growing representation of the LGBT community among her colleagues and said she is delighted that Yingling will be joining them.

"He is going to bring so much knowledge from his experience as Avon Township supervisors," she said. "Sam is going to be a bright star."

In related news, Cassidy became engaged Tuesday night, after her girlfriend of nearly three years proposed steps away from the Capitol building.