

LakeViewPatch

The Long Journey to Change Minds About Marriage Equality

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz has been a vocal advocate for changing Illinois marriage laws, and she sees change on the horizon. Sponsored by Grape-Nuts.

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Sara Feigenholtz changed one law so people could know more about their history, and now she's working to change another to help people achieve the future they've always wanted.

As an advocate for adoption reform, [she helped adopted people win the right to see their original birth certificate](#). "As an adopted person, I was prevented by the government the right to my original birth certificate," Feigenholtz said. "This law I changed in Illinois, changed the lives of so many people and continues to do so. In the last 18 months in the state, 8,600 people have gotten their original birth certificate." The representative for the 12th Illinois House District now has her sights set on helping the LGBT community secure the right to marry. She has been a staunch advocate on this issue.

"For me, the most precious thing I do as a lawmaker is giving people rights. We have a powerful opportunity as elected officials to do this."

Feigenholtz knows how hatred can grow and destroy people.

"Many years ago, I had an aunt who was packed in a synagogue with a lot of relatives. Doors were locked and the synagogue was ignited. I had family that was incinerated by hatred."

Rep. Feigenholtz is proud to stand up for equal marriage rights.

"It's been an honor to work with a community that is spirited and vibrant and committed to social justice as the LGBT community," she said. "There is amazing progress being made on marriage equality."

She looks forward to her vote on the issue.

"When you stand up on the floor of the House and talk about family values and what this means to push a green button, this will be the most meaningful vote I'll take in my tenure in the General Assembly on a personal and professional level."

Q. What inspired you to take this challenge?

A. My friends and constituents. For years I have represented one of the largest populations of LGBT people in the state, and for them to be denied a fundamental civil right, I knew it was my duty as their state representative to fight for them. And to be truthful, I feel this one in my heart.

Q. What's the biggest challenge you've taken on?

A. Trying to change public opinion. Getting one person at a time to broaden their views and foster more inclusive mindsets makes all the difference. It does not happen overnight, but what is notable is that when we look around, we have done an amazing job. We have finally reached the point where we have a majority of support statewide. It was only a few years back where we were at just 30 percent in support of marriage equality and now we are around 60 percent. The wind is at our back.

Q. What will you do when you succeed?

A. Although I will go broke buying wedding presents, this is going to be a great summer. I look forward to many weddings where couples and their children will finally have the right to have their love for each other recognized like everyone else under the law in this state.