

WINDY CITY MEDIA GROUP

Pols join with Illinois Unites pride contingent

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Illinois Unites for Marriage, working in support of The Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act, is bringing its diverse, statewide coalition to Chicago's 2013 Pride Parade this Sunday to emphasize the unity of the LGBT community and allies and our message that "We Are Committed to Winning the Freedom to Marry."

Parade units from numerous member organizations, who in the past have marched on their own at the Pride Parade, are working together for the 2013 event. Units will be carrying the "We Are Committed" poster; meanwhile, scores of Illinois Unites volunteers will be walking among the hundreds of thousands of parade spectators asking them to get involved in the statewide marriage campaign.

In addition, many of the political figures in Chicago and Illinois who support the freedom to marry will be marching with the Illinois Unites contingents. The bipartisan lineup includes Atty. Gen. Lisa Madigan, a Democrat, and state Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka, a Republican; Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel; Illinois Senate President John Cullerton, and the marriage bill's two chief sponsors, Rep. Greg Harris in the House and Sen. Heather Steans in the Senate.

"In the aftermath of the historic Supreme Court rulings on Wednesday declaring an end to federal discrimination against gay and lesbian married couples and restoring marriage fairness in California, there is renewed energy and determination to bring marriage equality to Illinois, and we hope to channel the spirit of the Pride Parade into the marriage campaign," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois.

"The breadth of the expanding Illinois Unites coalition will be reflected in the numbers and diversity of the unified marchers," said Ed Yohnka, director of communications and public policy at ACLU of Illinois. "We are big and diverse and represent all parts of the state."

Among the organizations that are working together at the parade are Equality Illinois, Lambda Legal, ACLU of Illinois, Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus, Anti-Defamation League, The Civil Rights Agenda, Illinois State Bar Association, Human Rights Campaign, Illinois Department of Human Rights, Service Employees International Union, AFSCME Council 31, Unite Here Local 1, Illinois Nurses Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 881 and Citizen Action/Illinois.

"Many political leaders who support the LGBT community and are fighting with us for the freedom to marry are marching with us. This is one big coalition, and only by working together can we win the freedom to marry in Illinois," said Lynne Bowman, HRC Regional Field Director.

The list of officials marching with Illinois Unites continues to grow, but as of now includes, in addition to the names above, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky; state Sen. Mike Frerichs; state Reps. Kelly Cassidy, Sara Feigenholtz, Robyn Gabel, Lou Lang, Deb Mell, and Ann Williams; Chicago Ald. James Cappleman, Joe Moore, Ameya Pawar, Joe "Proco" Moreno, Michele Smith, Tom Tunney, and Scott Waguespack; and Cook County Commissioners John Fritchey and Bridget Gainer.

During the parade, Illinois Unites volunteers will be distributing thousands of palm cards asking spectators to sign up for Illinois Unites text alerts to stay up to date on developments in the marriage campaign.

The volunteers will also be asking parade watchers to sign postcards to join the marriage campaign and send messages to Illinois lawmakers urging them to support the bill.

Parade spectators and everyone in Illinois are encouraged to download the "We Are Committed" poster image, print it out and bring it to the parade, post it in home, office and car windows and spread the word throughout the state. The downloadable image can be found at www.illinoisunites.org/committed-to-win.

The Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act, having passed in the Illinois Senate in February, has been extended to August 31, 2013, with possible further extension into the veto session in late October and early November.

The contingent will also hand out stickers and cards promoting the March on Springfield, scheduled for the first day of the fall veto session, Oct. 22, 2013.