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Illinois Governor Signs Marriage Equality Bill Into Law

Illinois is now the 16th state, along with the District of Columbia, to legalize marriage equality. Same-sex couples will be eligible for marriage licenses beginning June 1. posted on November 20, 2013 at 5:40pm EST



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Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn signs the marriage equality bill Nov. 20. *Tony Merevick/BuzzFeed*

CHICAGO — With the addition of his signature, Gov. Pat Quinn made marriage equality the law of the land in Illinois Wednesday at a ceremony packed with nearly 3,000 people.

“Love never fails,” Quinn said. “In our state, part of our unfinished business is to help other states in the United States of America to achieve marriage equality. We want to have a new birth of freedom in America.”

Quinn signed the bill on a desk once used by President Abraham Lincoln shipped to Chicago from the state’s capital in Springfield. The room filled with applause, some wiping tears from their eyes.

Several leading elected officials were in attendance, including Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, House Speaker Michael Madigan, Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka, Cook County Clerk David Orr, several state representatives and senators as well as several Chicago city aldermen.

“With the governor’s signature today, there is no more straight marriage or gay marriage, there is only marriage in Illinois,” Emanuel said.



Longtime LGBT rights activist Rick Garcia and state Rep. Sara Feigenholtz tearfully embrace prior to the ceremony. *Tony Merevick/BuzzFeed*

Illinois now joins 15 other states — including neighboring Iowa and Minnesota — and the District of Columbia in offering marriage equality. Same-sex couples will be eligible for marriage licenses beginning June 1.

Quinn, a strong proponent of equal marriage rights for same-sex couples, made passing the bill a top priority in the legislature this year, calling it a “paramount” civil rights issue.

Just a day before he signed the bill, [Quinn called the victory](#) a “democratic triumph,” and said passing marriage equality puts Illinois on “the right side of history.”

Senate Bill 10, the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act, was finally [approved](#) by the Illinois General Assembly Nov. 5, after being stalled in the state House for nearly nine months. House lawmakers narrowly passed the bill in a 61-54 vote.

“Clearly, the sense of history and the direction of history has changed,” Rep. Greg Harris (D-Chicago), the bill’s chief sponsor in the House, told BuzzFeed.

“This was a victory because not only the most powerful people in the state like the governor and the the president of the senate and speaker of the house and both U.S. senators and the mayor and everyone all the way down the spectrum to people in Decatur organizing to change their lightbulbs to green to show support for marriage equality,” he said. “People from every walk of life from every part of the state stepped up and did their little part to make this happen and it was just remarkable.”

Harris said he hasn’t received any wedding invitations yet, but thinks they might be in the mail, he joked.

“I’ll have to go buy a truckload of toaster ovens and such.”

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