

Illinois House, Senate Pass Same-Sex Marriage Bill

By **Tanveer Ali**, **Serena Dai** and **Darryl Holliday** on November 5, 2013
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CHICAGO — Local proponents of same-sex marriage are ready to celebrate after the **Illinois House of Representatives** and Senate Tuesday passed a measure that would make the state the 15th in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage. Boystown bar owner Mark Liberson said he plans to marry his partner of 25 years if the measure becomes law.

"There is much celebrating in store for Halsted," Liberson

said.

The House vote was 61-54. The Senate vote was 32-21. The bill now awaits the signature of Gov. **Pat Quinn**.

"What this bill is about is love. It's about family. It's about commitment," said Rep. **Greg Harris**, a Democrat from Ravenswood and the bill's main sponsor, moments before the vote. "At the end of the day, this bill is about the vision that the founders of our country had and wrote into our Constitution."

The bill had been stalled since May, when state lawmakers postponed a vote that would have legalized same-sex marriage.

That prompted **protests in June**, with many proponents of the measure blaming Illinois House Speaker **Michael Madigan** for not making the bill a priority.

Liberson said he was excited about taking down the white banners that have hung below four Halsted bars this summer: "Equality doesn't need a summer break! We want a vote!"

After the House failed to call a vote over the summer, he put them up on Replay, Elixir, Halsted's and Hydrate to express disappointment that the state failed to pass gay marriage. Now, he's ready to declare his pride for the state.

"It's time for us all to put up signs saying 'Welcome to the future of Illinois'," he said. "We're moving forward."

Hundreds came to celebrate the long-awaited milestone at Sidetrack bar, where Mayor Rahm Emanuel stopped by to congratulate guests.

At least one couple at Sidetrack were engaged to marry earlier in the day.

After the vote, Emanuel and President Barack Obama issued statements praising the Legislature.



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"Today is a critical moment in history for Illinois and for the entire LGBT movement," Emanuel's statement said. "Finally, gays and lesbians across our state are guaranteed the fundamental right to marry, and countless couples with children will be acknowledged for what they are under the law — families just like everyone else."

The president's statement said: "Michelle and I are overjoyed for all the committed couples in Illinois whose love will now be as legal as ours — and for their friends and family who have long wanted nothing more than to see their loved ones treated fairly and equally under the law.

Before the vote, several representatives took to the House floor in Springfield to debate the measure.

"Children of same-sex couples should not grow up wondering why their families are treated differently than other families," said Rep. **Sara Feigenholtz**, a Lakeview Democrat, adding that supporting equality for same-sex couples wasn't "brave," but smart. "We know that love is a human experience, not a political statement."

Rep. **Christian Mitchell**, a Democrat from Bronzeville, said that we "must continue to expand the cathedral of democracy."

But not all legislators from Chicago supported the measure.

Rep. **Mary E. Flowers**, a Democrat from the Ashburn neighborhood, said same-sex marriage "wasn't my issue," and the debate in Springfield "was a joke."

Flowers said same-sex marriage is a federal issue.

"What you do and who you love is your business. I really don't care," Flowers said. "Same-sex couples will never, ever be truly married in God's eyes."

The Rev. Leonardo Gilbert, pastor of Sheldon Heights Church of Christ in West Pullman, said he was disappointed by the news "because what it signals is no respect for the law of God."

Said Gilbert: "Marriage is one of the greatest institutions God created, and it was started with Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve."

But in Boystown, several bars showed their delight to the passage of the bill.

Sidetrack, 3349 N. Halsted St., had a banner all ready to go — all except for the date. It went up Tuesday evening as the bar awaited marriage advocates' arrival from Springfield.

Roscoe's, 3356 N. Halsted St., changed its outside TV screens

to congratulate the state, blasting a "rainbow IL" silhouette with fireworks in the background.

Despite the cheery graphic, Roscoe's marketing manager Shawn Hazen said the vote hadn't quite settled in yet.

Halsted Street was "business as usual," albeit a bit rainy, Hazen said. "I gotta say, it's a little bit anticlimactic. I expected something like doves in the air or balloons or something," he joked.

He said he expects glitter and confetti to come later.

"I think we'll get a parade out of it," said Hazen.

Contributing: *Wendell Hutson*