

Victory! Civil Union Bill Passes the Illinois House & Senate

Today, the Illinois Senate followed the lead of the Illinois House of Representatives in passing Senate Bill 1716, the Illinois Religious Freedom and Protection and Civil Union Act. The measure creates civil unions in Illinois, permitting couples - including same sex couples in our state - to enter into a relationship that provides all the basic legal protections and responsibilities currently offered only to heterosexual couples who marry. Illinois now joins a growing list of states that provide recognition to same-sex partners, either through marriage, domestic partnerships or civil unions.

The following statement can be attributed to **Jill Metz, President of the ACLU of Illinois Board of Directors** in response to the legislature's action:

Today is an historic and proud day for Illinois. The Illinois General Assembly, in a step toward basic fairness, recognized the essential dignity of gay and lesbian relationships in our state by authorizing civil unions. We urge Governor Quinn to sign swiftly this historic legislation into law.

The votes in the House and Senate reflect the triumph of hope and fairness over division and hate. In a bi-partisan vote, legislators rejected the divisive and hate-filled language of opponents to SB1716, who sought to elevate their ideology over the best interests of same-sex couples - and their families -- across Illinois. Thousand of couples will now breathe a bit easier and enjoy fewer worries in facing everyday life complications because of the courage and decency of every legislator who voted yes on SB1716.

Of course, this is only one step on the way to fairness. We look forward to the day when Illinois joins other states across the nation who enacted equal marriage for all persons. The action of the General Assembly reminds us that the day of equality is not far away in the Land of Lincoln.



Jill Metz with Representative Greg Harris, chief sponsor of the civil union legislation

