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Time for Illinois to pass gay marriage bill

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Is marriage equality finally going to become a reality in Illinois?

On Feb. 27, the Illinois House Executive Committee gave the green light to a bill that would legalize same-sex marriage in our state. However, the bill must now go for a full House vote — and pass — before Gov. Pat Quinn can sign it (a supporter of marriage equality, he has promised to sign the bill into law when given the opportunity).

While President Obama has stated that he personally believes in gay marriage, I believe it is time for him, safely in his second term, to express full support for a federal right of marriage equality. It is also time for the Illinois House to pass the law in front of it (a vote is expected this month). Chicago attorney and marriage equality advocate Jill Metz explains, "While the bill did advance last week, the vote was sadly far from a landslide (6-5), and we still have a hurdle to overcome before gay couples in Illinois are afforded the civil rights that they deserve. However, it's definitely a long-awaited step in the right direction."

Sadly there are still many misconceptions when it comes to the fight for gay rights, such as:

Gay people don't "need" to get married. Wrong. Marriage is a fundamental part of our society, and it is a time-honored and cherished act that offers a host of wonderful benefits from both a legal and financial standpoint. However, the benefits don't just end there — married people are healthier and happier than their unmarried peers, and numerous studies have linked marriage to a better quality of life. In denying gay people the right to marry, we are denying them these benefits, but more importantly, we also are maligning their relationships and "othering" them. We are telling them that their relationships and their rights are less important than ours, and that only heterosexual people deserve the right to fully commit as legal and life partners.

Gay people don't care about monogamy. Ridiculous! Monogamy is a concept that is older than modern civilization as we know it.

Early humans might not have mated for life, but they were generally serial monogamists who stayed together to raise and support children together, and monogamy is both deeply ingrained in our DNA and our society.

Gay people have these same instincts and these same desires to deeply and wholly commit to their partners, so when we deny them the right to marry, we are denying them more than chance to have a big party.

We are denying them the right to validate and sanctify their love in front of their loved ones, and we are denying them the right to establish themselves as an unbreakable family unit.

The fight for gay marriage is going to die out sooner or later. No way!

Gay marriage isn't going the way of the dinosaur. It's a fight that is only growing stronger and louder with each passing day.

My guess is that in the future we will look back at those who are obstructing of the right to gay marriage in the same way we remember those who fought against emancipation or integration.

It's time that the government stops holding our rights hostage and stops intervening in our relationships and our bedrooms. Love isn't a privilege, it's a right, and it's one that must be equally permitted among all citizens.

The fight for gay marriage is one of the most important civil rights issue of our time, and it will be shame for Illinois to be on the wrong side of history. Regardless of one's moral beliefs around homosexuality, and whether you have a judgment that homosexuality is "right" or "wrong," this is a simple human rights issue. It is time to treat gay people as equals, with all the same rights as heterosexuals. All people are created equal and its shameful that we still have to have that conversation.

Dr. Berman is the host of "In the Bedroom with Dr. Laura Berman."

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