

Support Civil Unions in Illinois – House Bill 1826 (Harris)



SUPPORT CIVIL UNIONS – HB 1826

The Illinois Religious Freedom Protection & Civil Union Act ensures that religious denominations are not forced to recognize or sanctify relationships they oppose. It also establishes basic fairness for all committed adult couples in Illinois. Under the Act, civil unions would be open to adult couples (including same-sex and different-sex couples) and afford these couples the **state-level protections and responsibilities** essential to all families. In short, this Act carves a path to state recognition of and protection for same-sex couples.

What HB 1826 Does:

The House Bill 1826 ensures all couples:

- ▶ Emergency medical decision making power
Emergency room staff would not allow former-Rep. Larry McKeon of Chicago to make critical care decisions for his unconscious life partner when the hospital could not locate the durable medical power of attorney paperwork on file, forcing McKeon to leave his partner's bedside to retrieve another copy of the legal paperwork. During this delay, his partner passed away.
- ▶ Access to state spousal benefits
 - Workers' compensation
 - Spousal pension coverage
 - Privilege of sharing a nursing home room
- ▶ Access to domestic relations laws & procedure
 - Annulment/invalidity
 - Separation
 - Divorce/dissolution
 - Disposition of property
- ▶ Access to civil actions dependent on spousal status
 - Wrongful death actions
 - Emotional distress claims
- ▶ Wills, trusts, & estates
- ▶ Tax relief at State & municipal level
- ▶ Domestic violence protections
- ▶ Spousal testimonial privilege
- ▶ Right to control disposition of remains
Lynn S. of Champaign cared for her partner Linda as she battled a fatal liver disease. When Linda died, Lynn was denied the right to make arrangements for Linda's cremation, despite their long, committed relationship.

What HB 1826 Does NOT Do:

House Bill 1826 does NOT impact religious institutions, faith-based adoption agencies, or adoption procedures. The bill specifically and emphatically protects religious

institutions from being compelled to sanction a union that they oppose as a matter of faith. Section 103 states:

"Nothing in this Act shall interfere with or regulate the religious practice of any religious body. Any religious body, Indian Nation or Tribe or Native Group is free to choose whether or not to solemnize or not to officiate civil unions."

Moreover, the Act does not amend the Adoption Act. Nor does it require, under the Human Rights Act, that faith-based adoption agencies be open to all couples.

How to Get In & Out of a Civil Union:

The Act opens civil unions to all adult couples, whether of the same or different sex. Applicants for a civil union would have to obtain a license, exchange vows (before a secular or willing religious official), and register their union. All current procedures and rules applicable to annulment, divorce, and property division would equally apply to partners in a civil union.

Organizations Supportive of HB 1826

Access Living
ACLU of Illinois
ADL - Anti-Defamation League
Advocacy Council for Human Rights, Bloomington
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AIDS Legal Council of Chicago
Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches
Citizen Action Illinois
CTU – Chicago Teachers Union
EI – Equality Illinois
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
HRC – Human Rights Campaign
Howard Brown Health Center
IDHR – Illinois Department of Human Rights
IFT - Illinois Federation of Teachers
INCIL - IL Network of Centers for Independent Living
IPPC – Illinois Planned Parenthood Council
ISBA – Illinois State Bar Association
LAGBAC - Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago
Log Cabin Republicans of Chicago
NASW of IL - National Association of Social Workers of IL
Northwest Suburban NOW
PFAW - People for the American Way
PFLAG - Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians & Gays
PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois
PLFAG Sauk Valley
PLFAG DuPage
Protestants for the Common Good
QCAD - Quad Citizens for Diversity
SEIU -Service Employees International Union

For further information contact:

Mary Dixon, 815-462-5997
Jim Ferg-Cadima, 312-925-9394 (8/25/08)