



Illinois Pushes to Legalize Gay Marriage

By [Kevin Wayne](#)

Springfield, IL - Illinois could become the second state in the nation to allow gay marriage.

State Representative Greg Harris (D-Chicago) introduced legislation Thursday that will permit same-sex couples to get married. Although four states recognize civil unions among gays, only Massachusetts provides for gay marriages.

The Democrat says it's about giving basic human rights to gays and lesbians in Illinois. "It would extend the same rights and obligations of marriage to same-sex couples in Illinois as are previously enjoyed, or not enjoyed, by heterosexual couples," Harris said.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois Thursday welcomed the introduction in Springfield of House Bill 1615, the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act.

"We are heartened to see that legislators in our state recognize the real harm and unfairness faced by loving, committed same sex couples," said John A. Knight, Director of the ACLU of Illinois Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Project. "Our friends, neighbors and colleagues who face the everyday challenges of life without these basic legal protections must be pleased to see this legislation introduced in the Illinois General Assembly."

House Bill 1615 also protects all religious denominations across Illinois, reinforcing the constitutional rights of all religious organizations to determine those marriage ceremonies that denomination will recognize or perform. If adopted, Illinois joins Massachusetts as the only state recognizing same sex marriage in the United States.

The Illinois Family Institute, an anti-gay conservative group, spearheaded an effort last year to place a referendum on the November ballot asking voters if they wanted the state Constitution amended to ban gay marriage. Illinois elections officials struck down the referendum because the group failed to collect enough valid signatures.