



Thousands gather in Chicago to protest Proposition 8

By [Kevin Wayne](#)

Larger-than-expected crowd gathers downtown in support of same-sex marriage

Chicago, IL - Gay-rights supporters waving rainbow colors gathered in downtown Chicago by the thousands today as part of a series of nationwide rallies and marches to protest California's passage of Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage in that state.

Protesters stood shoulder to shoulder in Chicago's Federal Plaza carrying rainbow flags and signs that read "no room for H8" and "I'm not a second class citizen." Today's rally brought out a diverse crowd of old and young that included straight as well as gay families.

"It was an extremely moving event because it was clear that I was witnessing nothing less than the birth of our generation's civil rights movement," said [Todd Beeton](#), a Los Angeles-based political blogger visiting Chicago.

Organizers anticipated 200 participants, but the Chicago Police Department estimated that the crowd reached 2,000. Police - lining Federal Plaza on bike and horseback - had to close down a lane of traffic on Washington St. to accommodate the large crowd.

There was a small group of approximately 20 anti-gay protestors from Project Marriage Illinois stationed behind police barricades across Dearborn St.

"In my years of activism I don't recall such a massive outpouring of anger and determination," said Art Johnston, president of the board of Equality Illinois. "The vote in California has poked a sleeping giant and this giant will not accept second class treatment."

Following the rally at 3pm, the energized crowd poured into the Loop for an unplanned march that tied up traffic on State Street and Michigan Avenue. Smaller groups weaved through downtown Chicago and Michigan Avenue until 6pm chanting and carrying signs.

"People marched because they are sick and tired of their rights being disrespected," Andy Thayer, co-founder of Chicago's Gay Liberation Network, told the [Chicago Sun-Times](#).

Rally organizers did not have a permit to march from the city of Chicago and have reportedly been ticketed with disorderly conduct and demonstrating on the public street. "A small price to pay," said Thayer.

Chicago's protest was also focused on bringing full marriage equality to Illinois.

"Chicago politicians are allegedly gay friendly," Thayer told the *Sun-Times*. "We've gotten a lot of talk over the years but they act like they can't do anything about [gays being prohibited from marrying.]"

Police said no major incidents or arrests were reported.

Saturday's rally was part of a national effort aimed at pressuring the California Supreme Court to reaffirm its earlier pro-gay decision by striking down Proposition 8.

Nationwide, crowds gathered near public buildings in nearly 100 cities small and large including New York, Boston, San Francisco, and Los Angeles to express their frustration with the passage of Proposition 8 and opposition to equal rights. An estimated 1 million people are expected to have participated in the National Day of Protest.

Protestors also gathered in Champaign, Carbondale and in Springfield, IL.

"Today's rallies demonstrate that we will do whatever it takes to make sure that Illinois never enshrines bigotry and discrimination in our Constitution," said Rick Garcia, public policy director of Equality Illinois and an organizer of the Illinois protests. "We believe in one set of rules, one yardstick for everyone and that includes gay and lesbian people and our families."

The next action in Chicago is planned for Saturday, Nov 22 outside Century Theatre in Evanston, IL to protest Cinemark CEO Alan Stock's \$10,000 donation to Yes on 8. ([Full Story](#))

Massachusetts and Connecticut, which began same sex weddings this past week, are the only two states that allow gay marriage.

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