



Emanuel backs gay marriage bill, Gov. Quinn support in question

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CHICAGO, IL -- Mayor Rahm Emanuel said Wednesday that he would support and lobby on behalf of a gay marriage bill introduced last week in the Illinois General Assembly.

"I'll push for it because it is consistent with the values base, and the practical values base, that I think it is right as a city, as a state and as a country," Emanuel told the [Chicago Tribune](#).

The Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act, [filed last week](#) by openly gay state Representatives Greg Harris, Deb Mell and Kelly Cassidy, would eliminate part of the state law that prohibits same-sex marriages.

"I support both the civil union and ultimately, gay marriage, because I think discrimination is embedded deeper than just recognizing a marriage or recognizing a civil union," Emanuel told [WBBM-AM](#). "We need that recognizing the love between two adults also has a series of rippling effects through a series of policies, public and private, that we all take as a given, and is not true for gay and lesbian couples."

LGBT rights advocates applaud Emanuel's support.

"The Mayor's comments demonstrate an understanding that while civil unions were an important milestone in the state, they do not offer all loving and committed couples the full access to the rights and responsibilities that marriage would," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of [Equality Illinois](#).

In January Emanuel [joined](#) Mayors for Freedom to Marry, a bipartisan coalition of over 75 U.S. mayors in support of same-sex marriage.

Emanuel's support for the pending legislation follows a statement Tuesday by Gov. Pat Quinn indicating that he wants time to study issues surrounding same-sex marriage before committing. Quinn's staff [confirmed to ChicagoPride.com](#) Wednesday that the Governor is "looking to the Legislature to see what happens next."

"The Governor has stated in the past that he was supportive of civil unions and has dodged the question of marriage repeatedly," said Anthony Martinez, Executive Director of [The Civil Rights Agenda](#).

Martinez told ChicagoPride.com that his is "pretty confident" the Governor will show support after he studies the bill.

"As the Governor continues to consider the needs of gay and lesbian couples in loving, committed relationships, I hope that he will become a champion of their full marriage equality," said Cherkasov.

Cherkasov added that the Governor has been an advocate for same-sex couples, led the efforts to pass civil unions in Illinois and has fought to ensure that same-sex couples in a civil union receive all the benefits intended for them to receive.

"We believe in civil rights, and we believe in civil unions," Quinn said after [signing](#) the Illinois Religious Freedom and Protection and Civil Union Act last year. Civil unions became legal in Illinois last June.

Quinn strongly backed efforts to approve civil unions during his 2010 re-election campaign against Republican state Senator Bill Brady, who supported an amendment to the Illinois constitution banning same-sex marriage. Quinn narrowly defeated Brady and

the gay community was [credited](#) with giving Quinn the edge in Chicago.

The Illinois Democrat has since come under increased pressure from conservative lawmakers and religious leaders, including the Catholic Church, for his support of civil unions and his pro-choice stance.

Advocates say the November elections will be crucial for allies to LGBT community.

"We see that this issue is something that many elected officials are still 'evolving' on, including the President," said Martinez.

If passed, the bill would make Illinois the eighth state to legalize gay marriage. Same-sex marriage is legal in Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, Washington state as well as the District of Columbia.