



Obama backs same-sex marriage

By GoPride.com News Staff

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Obama: "Same-sex marriage should be legal."

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- President Obama on Wednesday became the first sitting U.S. president to back the right of gay and lesbian couples to marry.

A reversal from his own views stated in the 2008 campaign, Obama Wednesday official endorsed the right of same-sex couples to marry.

Obama [told ABC News](#) that, after reflection, he had "concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married."

The announcement comes just three days after Vice President Joe Biden [said](#) he was "absolutely comfortable" with gay and lesbian couples marrying. Education Secretary Arne Duncan joined Biden in support on Monday.

"It's a great day for the LGBT community," State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) told ChicagoPride.com. "A long time coming. I'm just very happy. It's a day of sunshine."

Gay activists and organizations, who have been vocal in their disappointment and frustration with the President's lack of support for same-sex marriage, cheered today's landmark announcement.

"Today, President Obama made history by boldly stating that gay and lesbian Americans should be fully and equally part of the fabric of American society and that our families deserve nothing less than the equal respect and recognition that comes through marriage," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese.

Incoming Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin said Obama's remarks would be "celebrated by generations to come."

"For the millions of young gay and lesbian Americans across this nation, President Obama's words provide genuine hope that they will be the first generation to grow up with the freedom to fully pursue the American dream," said Griffin. "...As President Obama recognized today, the fight to secure marriage equality is the defining element of our generation's search for greater freedom."

[Equality Illinois](#) CEO Bernard Cherkasov told ChicagoPride.com, "The President's support for marriage equality will change the conversation on the topic. He has now affirmed that loving, committed gay and lesbian couples and their families deserve the same recognition as heterosexual couples. Nothing less - no lesser institution, no second class citizenship - will do."

The interview with ABC News' Robin Roberts to appear on ABC's "Good Morning America" Thursday. Excerpts of the interview will air tonight on ABC's "World News with Diane Sawyer."

Here are some of the initial reactions to Obama's decision:

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey:

"President Obama's 'evolution' is now complete. Congratulations, Mr. President, for making history today by becoming the first sitting president to explicitly support marriage for same-sex couples. Who benefits? Millions of families who now know that their

country's leader believes in fairness for all. This is a great day for America.

"We celebrate this moment and also remember that the right of loving, committed couples to get married is just one of many issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. It is heartening to know the president stands with our families in the pursuit of full equality, economic security and justice."

Center on Halsted CEO Modesto Tico Valle:

"I am overjoyed that President Obama has declared publicly that he supports full and unequivocal equality for LGBT people. It's a proud day to be an LGBT person, a proud day to be a Chicagoan and a proud day to be an American."

The Civil Rights Agenda executive director Anthony Martinez:

"I'm proud to be an Illinoisan today. The State that promoted Abraham Lincoln may now also claim the President who will work to end government sanctioned discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. He understands that his legacy rests on the basic issues of civil rights. Like President Lincoln, President Obama knows this is what makes our country great.

"Today's announcement by President Obama is not only historic, but is a major step forward for LGBT Americans who everyday live with the idea that we are supposed to be equal citizens and are supposed to have the same rights as everyone else, but that is not the case. We are second class citizens in the land of the free. Today, the President has taken a firm stand that all people should be equal. No matter who one loves, every citizen should be able to access the same rights and responsibilities of the civil institution of marriage."

The Civil Rights Agenda policy advisor Rick Garcia:

"This is an amazing moment. The President was a supporter of our issues since I worked with him in the Illinois Senate. Frankly, President Obama has been on record supporting gay marriage, when he ran for Senate. This just shows us that politically, LGBT issues are not the wedge issue they once were. We are in a new era and we must continue to build the momentum towards full and equal rights for all LGBT Americans. Now we just have to make sure LGBT folks get out and vote in this upcoming election."

U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-Illinois):

"On this historic day, I applaud President Obama for demonstrating his commitment to equality for all. His affirmation of support for marriage equality today is incredibly meaningful, and I look forward to another day soon, when all Americans can enjoy the full civil rights guaranteed to each of us. As another great leader once said, 'the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.'"

Log Cabin Republicans Executive Director R. Clarke Cooper:

"That the president has chosen today, when LGBT Americans are mourning the passage of Amendment One, to finally speak up for marriage equality is offensive and callous. Log Cabin Republicans appreciate that President Obama has finally come in line with leaders like Vice President Dick Cheney on this issue, but LGBT Americans are right to be angry that this calculated announcement comes too late to be of any use to the people of North Carolina, or any of the other states that have addressed this issue on his watch. This administration has manipulated LGBT families for political gain as much as anybody, and after his campaign's ridiculous contortions to deny support for marriage equality this week he does not deserve praise for an announcement that comes a day late and a dollar short."

GLAAD President Herndon Graddick:

"The arc of history today bent a little closer to equality for every American. After hearing the stories of countless couples and families, President Obama has drawn the same conclusion shared across party lines and by a majority of Americans today: everyone deserves the opportunity to marry the person they love. As our nation draws closer to a more perfect union in which every person is created equal, we are left deeply encouraged by this truly watershed moment."

Aubrey Sarvis, executive director, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network:

"This is a great day for gay and lesbian service members, who are living with the daily reality that while they are now be able to serve openly, they and their families are treated as second-class citizens under laws like the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Certainly, the President's leadership in repealing 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' laid the foundation for his reaching this positive outcome. We welcome the President's support for marriage and will work with him to repeal DOMA and all laws that

undermine equality and treat our service members unfairly."

Freedom to Marry president Evan Wolfson:

"Today, President Obama added his voice to the growing chorus of Americans who believe that all loving and committed couples should share equally in the freedom to marry. Like so many others who have made this journey – from Bill Clinton to Laura Bush, most recently Vice President Biden, and a majority of the American people – President Obama has come to know loving and committed gay couples. Through thought and conversation about these families and their dreams and challenges, President Obama has reflected on his own values of fairness and respect for others, and completed his journey to support for the freedom to marry. He now becomes the first sitting President to join the majority of Americans whose hearts have opened and minds have changed in favor of the freedom to marry.

"The President's support marks a historic turning point for the freedom to marry movement. Yet there is much left to be done. Forty-four states continue to exclude same-sex couples from marriage and because of the federal so-called Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), the civil marriages of thousands of same-sex couples are not respected by the federal government, thus depriving families of a crucial safety-net of federal protections and responsibilities. It is time to repeal discriminatory laws that hurt families and help no one and speed passage of freedom to marry laws throughout the country.

"Government has no business putting obstacles in the path of loving and committed couples and their families who simply seek to care for one another and for whom marriage matters. We call on the President, members of Congress, and state legislators from both sides of the aisle, to act together to bring an end to marriage discrimination and put government at every level on the side of families, fairness, and freedom. "

Founder & Moderator Emeritus of [Metropolitan Community Churches](#) Rev. Dr. Troy D. Perry

"Today, May 9, 2012, marks another red letter day for equality for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender persons. As an activist who has worked for more than 40 years for same-gender marriage rights, I am thrilled with President Obama's support for marriage equality for all people.

"My husband, Phillip Ray De Blicke, and I were guests of President Obama at the White House on our 25th anniversary in 2009, and we spoke with the First Lady about the depth of our relationship. Like so many other LGBT couples, we salute the president for hearing and respecting the stories and journeys of our country's LGBT citizens, and are honored to have contributed to the evolution of the President's thinking on marriage equality.

"Today's announcement by President Obama parallels the evolution taking place in the hearts and minds of citizens across the U.S. Polls now consistently show that a majority of U.S. citizens support marriage equality for LGBT people and this percentage of support continues to grow.

"President Obama's announcement is historically important for another reason: Throughout our nation's history, every time a U.S. President has announced personal support for civil rights measures, those rights have ultimately become law.

"Forty years of activism has taught me that the journey towards equality under the law is one of steps forward, and occasionally steps backward. Today's announcement by President Obama marks a giant leap forward for all of our citizens, and for the cause of equality under the law."

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