



## **John Kerry, Mike Quigley push to end gay blood ban**

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June 11, 2012

<http://chicago.gopride.com/news/article.cfm/articleid/30307009>

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Massachusetts Senator John Kerry and Illinois Rep. Mike Quigley on Monday opened a new push to end a ban on gay men donating blood.

In 2010, Kerry led an unsuccessful fight to reverse the ban.

The FDA currently imposes a lifetime ban on men who have had a sexual relationship with another man since 1977 from donating blood. But the agency only excludes people who have engaged in heterosexual sexual activity with a person known to have HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, for one year.

Gay rights groups have said the policy creates an unfair double standard and that it stigmatizes gay men.

Kerry and Quigley on Monday wrote to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) voicing support for a new pilot study reviewing the policy.

"We've been working on this a long time and I applaud Secretary Sebelius for taking this important step toward ending the lifetime ban on gay men donating blood, and instead relying on the science of today not the myths of twenty years ago. I'm confident that the findings of these new studies will pave the way to get this policy off the books," said Senator Kerry in a statement. "We'll at last have an informed evaluation of the final roadblocks to ending a ban against healthy, responsible Americans donating blood."

"Patients across the country desperately need life-saving blood transfusions, yet perfectly healthy would-be donors are turned away based solely on sexual orientation," said Rep. Quigley. "Equality for the LGBT community is closer than ever but outdated and discriminatory policies like this must evolve to match advancements in science and technology."

The letter is also signed by 10 Democratic senators – Michael Bennett, Mark Udall, Frank Lautenberg, Carl Levin, Maria Cantwell, Jeanne Shaheen, Kirsten Gillibrand, Daniel Akaka, Mark Begich, and Patty Murray – along with independent Senator Bernie Sanders.