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Greg Harris says Illinois needs to move to gay marriage

By Carlos Santoscoy
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CHICAGO, IL -- Illinois State Representative Greg Harris, the highest-ranking openly gay elected official in the state, believes Illinois needs to move from civil unions for gay and lesbian couples to full marriage.

Appearing Thursday on Gay Chicago TV's *Critical Thinking*, Harris said the civil unions law which he authored does not offer full equality.

Gay rights advocates last month filed two legal challenges to the state's ban on equal marriage rights for gay couples.

Harris said the lawsuit – a judge last week combined the two – shows that civil unions, which took effect last June, are not good enough.

"I think the lawsuits that we are seeing move through the courts right now are showing clearly that ... all over the state, there are numerous instances where families are being denied their basic rights under civil unions," Harris said.

"So, what we are seeing is that separate is not equal. And that we need to move to full marriage equality so that people are treated equally under the eyes of the law. But more importantly, so that their community, their neighbors, their fellow congregants at church, or temple, also look at their relationship in the same way they would look at the relationship of another married couple."

Harris has introduced legislation which would legalized marriage in the state. The earliest lawmakers could take a vote on it is during the upcoming fall session.