



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Illinois Business Leaders Urge Legislators to Pass Freedom To Marry Bill**

*50 leading executives and companies voice support for marriage equality, citing fairness, economic boost and need to keep Illinois competitive*

CHICAGO – JANUARY 13, 2013 – Today, fifty Illinois business leaders and organizations joined in urging the General Assembly to pass the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act, which would grant gay and lesbian couples the freedom to marry.

The support represents a broad array of economic sectors, including manufacturing, financial services, energy, lodging, publishing and advertising. In a public letter to the General Assembly, the signers cite the economic and business reasons for passing marriage equality legislation. They contend marriage equality would strengthen the workforces of Illinois employers and attract additional economic development.

“To be competitive, a state must create an equitable, fair and respectful environment for all of its citizens,” the 50 supporters wrote. “For this reason – among others — it is vitally important that Illinois lawmakers enact marriage equality soon.”

The supporters include such companies as **Google Inc.** and **Orbitz Worldwide Inc.**, as well as many noteworthy business leaders, including:

**Lewis B. Campbell**, Chairman and CEO, Navistar International  
**Melody Hobson**, President, Ariel Investments, LLC  
**Mark S. Hoplemazian**, President and CEO, Hyatt Hotels Corporation  
**Joseph Mansueto**, Founder and CEO, Morningstar Inc.  
**Richard S. Price**, Chairman and CEO, Mesirow Financial  
**Desiree Rogers**, CEO, Johnson Publishing Co. LLC  
**John W. Rowe**, Chairman Emeritus, Exelon Corporation  
**Michael Sacks**, CEO, Grosvenor Capital Management, L.P.

Nine states allow gay and lesbian couples to marry, the letter notes. Illinois must compete against those states to attract the best and the brightest employees. In part because of the impact on their states’ competitiveness, business leaders played a crucial role in recent efforts to secure the freedom to marry in New York and Washington states.

Nationally, well-known brands such as **Alcoa, Inc.; Amazon.com, Inc.; The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., Morgan Stanley, Starbucks Corp. and Xerox Corp.** have stated their support for marriage equality.

In their letter to the General Assembly, the Illinois business leaders implore legislators to consider the financial benefits marriage equality would bring to Illinois' economy and the potential revenue for the State of Illinois. Studies show that marriage equality in Illinois would generate tens of millions of dollars in increased economic activity in tourism, hospitality and other sectors. According to the UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute, allowing same-sex couples to marry would generate between \$39 million and \$72 million in revenues for Illinois businesses, creating \$4.5 million to \$8 million in new sales and lodging tax revenues over three years.

"The American people are increasingly supportive of marriage equality, with a majority believing same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. We agree with them," the letter states. "Illinois simply cannot afford to be less competitive than other states. The Illinois legislature should act now. It's the right thing for Illinois."

In Illinois, a Paul Simon Public Policy Institute poll found the number of people who support same-sex marriage has increased ten points in two years, while the percentage of those opposing recognition of gay unions has declined by more than six points. Another poll, from May 2012, found that 54% of Illinoisans support marriage for gays and lesbians, compared to 40% opposed.

The Illinois Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act is sponsored by Representative Greg Harris (D-Chicago) and Senator Heather Steans (D-Chicago). Illinois Unites for Marriage – a coalition led by Equality Illinois, Lambda Legal and the ACLU of Illinois – released today's letter. Illinois Unites is marshaling statewide support for the bill. A copy of today's letter can be found below.

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*Individuals listed as signatories represent themselves only. For additional information, contact Eric Herman at 773.405.8124.*



## An Open Letter from Illinois Business Leaders on Marriage Equality

Many factors go into creating a state's business environment. Perhaps most important is a state's ability to attract top talent from around the world. Since human capital drives innovation and growth, a state must foster an environment where people want to live.

To be competitive, a state must create an equitable, fair and respectful environment for all of its citizens. For this reason – among others – it is vitally important that Illinois lawmakers enact marriage equality soon.

Marriage equality would strengthen the workforces of Illinois employers, who know there is no substitute for employees with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Companies must understand a changing marketplace and be able to connect with their customers; having a diverse workforce is a part of that. That's one reason many employers have adopted non-discrimination policies and offer domestic partner benefits.

Marriage equality promotes economic development, too. According to the UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute, allowing same-sex couples to marry would generate between \$39 million and \$72 million in revenues for Illinois businesses, creating \$4.5 million to \$8 million in new sales and lodging tax revenues over three years.

The American people are increasingly supportive of marriage equality, with a majority believing same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. We agree with them. States with the metro areas of New York City, Seattle, Boston, and Baltimore have already legalized marriage equality. Here in the Midwest, Iowa has granted full marriage equality, while Minnesota is poised to do the same later this year. Illinois simply cannot afford to be less competitive than other states.

The Illinois legislature should act now. It's the right thing for Illinois.

Signed,

**Curt Bailey**, President, Related Midwest

**Andrew Bluhm**, Founder and Principal,  
Delaware Street Capital

**Neil G. Bluhm**, Founder and Managing Principal,  
Walton Street Capital

**Norm Bobins**, Former CEO, LaSalle Bank;  
Chairman, PrivateBank and Trust Co.

**Bill Brandt**, President and CEO, Development  
Specialists, Inc.

**Carole Brown**, Senior Managing Director,  
Barclays Capital

**Lewis B. Campbell**, Chairman and CEO, Navistar  
International

**Chicago Urban League**

**Lance Chody**, CEO, Garrett Popcorn Shops

**Philip B. Clement**, Global Chief Marketing and  
Communications Officer, Aon plc

**Hon. William M. Daley**

**Laura Desmond**, CEO, Starcom Mediavest Group

**Fred Eychaner**, Chairman, Newsweb  
Corporation

**Paul S. Fisher**, President and CEO, CenterPoint Properties

**Albert M. Friedman**, CEO and President, Friedman Properties, Ltd.

**Google Inc.**

**Peter Gottlieb**, President, North Star Investment Management Corporation

**Groupon**

**David A. Helfand**, CEO, Helix Funds

**Carrie Hightman**, Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer, NiSource Inc.

**Melody Hobson**, President, Ariel Investments, LLC

**Fred Hoch**, CEO, Illinois Technology Association

**Mark S. Hoplamazian**, President and CEO, Hyatt Hotels Corporation

**Kym Hubbard**, CIO and Treasurer, Ernst & Young

**Ron Huberman**, Executive Chair, TransitPro Logistics, Inc.

**Illinois Science & Technology Coalition**

**Knight Engineers & Architects**

**William Lawless**, President, The Gage & Henri Restaurants

**Joseph Mansueto**, Founder and CEO, Morningstar Inc.

**Matt Moog**, Founder and Chairman, Built In Chicago

**Maura O'Hara**, Executive Director, IVCA

**Orbitz Worldwide Inc.**

**Sarah Pang**, Senior Vice President, Corporate

**Richard S. Price**, Chairman and CEO, Mesirow Financial

**Quintin E. Primo III**, Chairman and CEO, Capri Capital Partners, LLC

**J.B. Pritzker**, Co-Founder and Co-Lead, The Pritzker Group

**Gigi Pritzker Pucker**, OddLot Entertainment

**Doug Regan**, Midwest Regional Director, J.P. Morgan

**Judith C. Rice**, Senior Vice President, BMO Harris Bank

**Laura Ricketts**, Director, Chicago Cubs, Chairman of the Board, Chicago Cubs Charities

**Desiree Rogers**, CEO, Johnson Publishing Company

**John W. Rogers, Jr.**, Chairman and CEO, Ariel Investments, LLC

**John W. Rowe**, Chairman Emeritus, Exelon Corporation

**Michael Sacks**, CEO, Grosvenor Capital Management, L.P.

**Harrison I. Steans**, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Financial Investments Corp.

**Jay Stieber**, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, Inc.

**Rich Stoddart**, President, Leo Burnett North America

**Tribeca Flashpoint Media Arts Academy**

**Estelle Walgreen**, Founder, Hispanically Speaking News

**Tony Weisman**, Regional President, Digitas

Communications and Public Affairs, CNA Financial Corp.

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