



## PRESS RELEASE

Founded in 1991, Equality Illinois is the state's oldest, largest and most effective organization advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Illinoisans.

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**April 5, 2013**

#### **RENOWNED CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER JULIAN BOND URGES PASSAGE OF ILLINOIS MARRIAGE BILL**

CHICAGO -- Julian Bond, Chairman Emeritus of the NAACP National Board of Directors, today is urging the Illinois House of Representatives to pass the bill guaranteeing the freedom to marry.

In Bond's letter sent to supporters of the bill by the Illinois Unites for Marriage coalition, of which Equality Illinois is a founding member, he says that "marriage strengthens families and communities" and "is a universal right."

"Julian Bond's endorsement of the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act sends a strong statement to Illinois House members that the desire of couples to express their lifelong love and raise their families through the bonds of marriage knows no boundaries," said Bernard Cherkasov, CEO of Equality Illinois, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization for lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual Illinoisans.

"We urge the Illinois House to act promptly and pass the bill when it returns from its spring break next week," Cherkasov said.

Bond's letter was sent the day after a group of African-American clergy members also urged lawmakers to support the measure, saying it is a matter of equal protection under the law and not a religious issue.

Bond made a similar point in his letter, writing that gays and lesbians "deserve the same protection that my wife and I have. It's just that simple."

"The arguments made on Thursday by the ministers and on Friday by Julian Bond should resonate throughout the churches that were the organizing force behind the civil rights movement," Cherkasov said.

The full text of Julian Bond's letter is below:



Dear Supporter,

I've spent my life as a civil rights activist, working to make our society more just and fair for all of us. It is that commitment to equality that has led me to support marriage for all committed couples.

I believe that marriage strengthens families and communities. I believe that marriage provides the protection and security that every loving couples needs and deserves. I believe that marriage is a universal right, guaranteed equal protection under the law.

**That's why I'm urging the Illinois House of Representatives to extend the freedom to marry to all families. Will you join me?**

**[Click here to send a message to your Representative, asking for a "yes" vote on marriage equality.](#)**

I've experienced the joys of marriage for more than 20 years. My wife Pamela and I stood before our friends and family and made a lifelong commitment to one another. We've taken care of each other ever since.

My gay and lesbian brothers and sisters simply want the freedom to make that same commitment. And they deserve the same protection that my wife and I have. It's just that simple.

All across the state, fair-minded Illinoisans like you are coming together to move us closer than we've ever been to securing the freedom to marry in the Land of Lincoln. But we have to keep pushing until we win approval on the House floor.

**[Make sure your Representative hears from an outpouring of constituents before our next critical vote. Send a message now.](#)**

Thank you for making this one of the strongest grassroots movements Illinois has ever seen.

Julian Bond

Chairman Emeritus

NAACP National Board of Directors

P.S. Not only will SB10 protect thousands of Illinois families, but it protects churches too by ensuring that no clergy or faith organization will be forced to recognize marriages for same-sex couples if it violates their beliefs. **[Take action now and ask for your Representative's support.](#)**

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