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**Gay marriage passes**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD - Gays and lesbians wanting the right to marry in Illinois won big Tuesday.

Finally.

Defying Bible-quoting critics, the Illinois House narrowly approved legislation to make Illinois the 15th state to allow gay and lesbian couples to wed.

The measure passed 61 to 54, with two voting present. The Senate then wasted no time in backing the amended bill 32 to 21, clearing the way for the expected approval by Gov. Pat Quinn, who was on the House floor for Tuesday's vote.

"This is huge," President Barack Obama tweeted. "The Illinois House just passed marriage equality."

When the historic House roll call was finalized, cheers from the crowded House galleries erupted, and its main sponsor, state Rep. Greg Harris, D-Chicago, was swarmed by fellow House members who supported his cause.

"This bill will give them a better future," Harris said, referring to same-sex couples across the state. "It'll help families to show their love and commitment to each other and give all families a chance to live as fully equal citizens in the greatest country on the face of the earth."

House Speaker Michael J. Madigan was one of the final speakers in the debate, giving the bill his blessing, pledging to vote yes and quoting [Pope Francis.](http://www.nexis.com/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T21308977520&returnToId=20_T21309361703&csi=11064&A=0.1250506666518557&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000DAZW%23&searchTerm=Pope%20Francis.&indexType=P)

"My thoughts regarding this legislation were formulated before the quote I'm going to offer to all of us," Madigan told colleagues, as the packed House chamber fell silent. "And the quote that I offer is a quote from [Pope Francis](http://www.nexis.com/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T21308977520&returnToId=20_T21309361703&csi=11064&A=0.1250506666518557&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000DAZW%23&searchTerm=Pope%20Francis%20&indexType=P) of the Roman Catholic Church, who is quoted as saying, 'If someone is gay, and he searches for the Lord, and he has good will, who am I to judge?'

"[Pope Francis](http://www.nexis.com/search/XMLCrossLinkSearch.do?bct=A&risb=21_T21308977520&returnToId=20_T21309361703&csi=11064&A=0.1250506666518557&sourceCSI=162599&indexTerm=%23PE000DAZW%23&searchTerm=Pope%20Francis%20&indexType=P) has spoken, and he has articulated the basis of my thinking on this issue," said Madigan, who later acknowledged having personally lobbied between five and 10 House Democrats to support Harris' bill.

But on Tuesday evening, the head of the Archdiocese of Chicago was anything but conciliatory toward the pivotal votes at the Statehouse earlier in the day.

"It's no enormous surprise. There was a lot of effort placed into passage of this legislation. I think it's bad legislation, but we've lived with bad laws before. It'll make some people happy ... but it will also, I think, change the nature of our society over a period of time," Cardinal Francis George told the Chicago Sun-Times after speaking at Holy Name Cathedral.

The cardinal also rejected the possibility of gay or lesbian married couples, who are Catholic, from eventually being allowed to take communion in Chicago-area parishes.

"If someone is living in a lifestyle that is publicly against the Gospel as interpreted in the church, whether heterosexual or gay, no, they don't take communion," he said. "But that's the discipline of the sacrament that applies to everybody, not just to gays."

Sounding a far more upbeat tone about passage of the bill, Quinn released a statement hailing Harris, Madigan, Senate President John Cullerton, state Sen. Heather Steans (D-Chicago) and others "who have worked day and night to get this bill to my desk."

"Today the Illinois House put our state on the right side of history," Quinn said. "Illinois is a place that embraces all people, and today we are an example for the nation."

Mayor Rahm Emanuel tweeted: "With one vote, countless couples will be acknowledged for what they are under the law - families just like everyone else. Great day!"

But Bishop Larry D. Trotter, who helped lead opposition to the bill, applauded legislators "who stood up for God."

"Regardless of the passage of SB10, we will always believe that marriage is between one man and one woman," Trotter said. "Yet we will still love the members of the LGBT community. We pray God's grace, mercy and blessings over the state of Illinois and the United States of America."

Because Harris changed the bill's effective date on Tuesday to June 1, the measure needed only 60 votes - instead of 71 - to pass the House.

Harris also amended his legislation to give greater safeguards to fraternal religious organizations so they don't have to sanction same-sex marriages. That was recognized as a nod to Catholic lawmakers concerned that groups such as the Knights of Columbus would be compelled to open their facilities to same-sex wedding receptions.

Harris' opposition consisted of a socially conservative brew of Roman Catholics, white evangelicals and black ministers, who all argued that giving gays and lesbians the same right to wed as heterosexuals defies the Bible's definition of marriage, threatens children with pro-gay and potentially explicit instruction in classrooms and big-foots the ideologies and rights of their churches.

Rep. Tom Morrison, R-Palatine, who voted against the bill, went so far as to express worry that opening the door to same-sex marriage would lead to demands for similar recognition from those seeking to marry more than one person.

"If opposite-sex unions are discriminatory, then a limit to two people is as well," he said. "And those who support polyamory or polygamy are taking note."

On Tuesday's roll call, only three out of 47 House Republicans - Rep. Ed Sullivan, R-Mundelein, Rep. Ron Sandack, R-Downers Grove, and Rep. Tom Cross, R-Oswego, the former House minority leader and a current candidate for state treasurer - sided with Harris.

After the day's quickly evolving developments, Harris credited Madigan for helping get his legislation passed and savored in a win that took years to achieve.

"This is the direction the country is going," Harris said.