

## Illinois becomes same-sex marriage state, but problems loom

Robert McClory | Nov. 8, 2013 NCR Today

There was much jubilation in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood Tuesday when the Illinois House finally passed the gay marriage bill, 61 to 54. The state Senate had already approved the bill in February. At the Sidetrack Bar, a banner was erected to mark the occasion, and a packed house of celebrators raised their glasses high and sang a rousing, slightly off-key version of "We're goin' to the chapel and we're gonna get married ..."

Getting the bill passed in the House was no easy task. House Speaker Michael Madigan, who had objections to the bill, apparently settled his own doubts and twisted a few arms to get the majority vote. The 61 yes votes included 58 Democrats and three Republicans. The opposition was made up of 43 Republicans and 11 Democrats.

Madigan cited Pope Francis in his remarks: "For those that just happen to be gay -- living in a very harmonious, productive relationship but illegal -- who am I to judge that they should be illegal?"

Even President Barack Obama joined in the festivities, saying from Washington, "Michelle and I are overjoyed for all the committed couples in Illinois whose love will now be as legal as ours -- and for their friends and family who have long wanted nothing more than to see their loved ones treated fairly and equally under the law."

But the joy and happiness was not universal. Chicago Cardinal Francis George, who had vehemently condemned gay marriage, was uncharacteristically silent during the weeks and days leading up to the vote. After it passed, the Catholic Conference of Illinois, an organization of the state's bishops, issued a terse statement, saying "it is deeply disappointed that members of the General Assembly chose to redefine what is outside of its authority: a natural institution like marriage. We remain concerned about the very real threats to religious liberty that are at stake with the passage of this bill."

Meanwhile, there is cause to worry about the breadth of the bill's coverage. It exempts clergy and houses of worship from providing for same-sex marriages if they have religious objections. But that provision does not extend to restaurant and other business owners, doctors, lawyers and counselors who refuse service to same-sex couples on religious grounds. They could lose their state licenses if they do not cooperate with the law as it stands. It is likely conservative Catholic law groups will be filing lawsuits in the near future seeking to amend the law.

Gov. Pat Quinn is expected to sign the legislation soon, but it will not go into effect until June 1.

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