

□ *This article originally appeared in the Chicago Tribune Red Eye on July 29, 2011. Read the original [here](#).*

The U.S. Department of Health And Human Services laid out a plan recently to study a long-standing ban on gay men donating blood, a move one Chicago politician called a concrete step to changing the rule.

Illinois Rep. Mike Quigley (D-5th District) said the prohibition – which bars men who have had sex with another man since 1977 from donating blood – was based on old science.

"Science, technology, and education have advanced since the inception of this discriminatory policy, and it's time the policy evolves as well," Quigley said in an email. "By adjusting our restrictions on blood donation, we have an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to equality and offer those in need of life-saving blood transfusions much-needed help."

This month a man who said he was straight made headlines in Chicago for reportedly being turned away from blood donation because of his "effeminate" behavior.

Quigley and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) have urged an end to the ban for some time. Last summer, an advisory panel for the HHS upheld the prohibition but called it "suboptimal." The ban prevents gay men from donating blood regardless of health history while allowing a return to donation for others, such as straight men and women who have sex with an HIV-positive partner. They can donate blood after one year.

"We're moving in the direction of finally ending this antiquated and discriminatory policy," said Quigley in a statement to the media.

Quigley represents the North Side of Chicago in a district that includes Lakeview and Uptown.