

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) joined Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) and other lead cosponsors at a press conference to introduce new legislation to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a law which currently discriminates against lawfully married same-sex couples, and ensure respect for State regulation of marriage.

Rep. Quigley made the following “announcement” at today’s press conference. A full transcript of his remarks is available [here](#) . Video is available on “[Q-Tube](#) .”

“I want to thank the members who are co-sponsoring this bill, and I want to make an announcement today:

Today, in supporting this Act, I am an arch conservative. Why is that? Because when you think about it, what have the conservatives said for all time about government’s role? That government’s role is to stay out of people’s personal lives.

This will allow people privacy and the right to make decisions that are most important to them. But most of all, it is about respect for what they decide to do with their own lives as long as they’re not hurting anyone else. So what, I would ask, is a more intimate, more important, more critical decision, a more sacred decision than who we love—and how we express that love?”

Quigley also issued the following statement following the event:

“Last week, the President referenced the words of the late Senator Kennedy, who said he had been struck by what it must be like for those without insurance to have to tell a loved one that ‘*there is something that could make you better, but I just can’t afford it.*’

I’m reminded of those words today and wonder myself what it must be like to say to your spouse, ‘*there is something that could make you better, but I just don’t have the legal rights to authorize it.*’

The fact of the matter is, repealing the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) will be a huge national step toward marriage equality, but until individual states across our country recognize and legalize these unions, many people will still not be allowed their human rights. Some states have already righted this wrong, but DOMA is holding equality back. The policy is as discriminatory as it is nonsensical. Same-sex couples married under state laws serve their communities, pay taxes, and raise their families the same as anyone else.

Opponents of the repeal are often ironically the same people who oppose big government. But what's bigger, or frankly more appalling, than a government that tells you who you can love?

I'm very proud to stand here today with so many tireless leaders who have been fighting the battle for full equality for too long. We will continue to fight though, until every American is treated not only with fairness and respect, but with equity under the law. It is not just the right thing to do; it is our moral obligation.

Through DOMA, which was signed into law 13 years ago, on September 21, 1996, the federal government can single out legally married same-sex couples for discriminatory treatment under federal law, selectively denying them more than 1,100 federal protections and responsibilities – including Social Security and immigration benefits – that otherwise apply to married couples.

This policy is discriminatory and harmful to families, preventing the government from honoring its legal commitments and the needs of families, even though these couples have assumed the obligations of civil marriage under state law and contribute as citizens and taxpayers.

The new legislation - **the Respect for Marriage Act of 2009** – will ensure that couples who assume the serious legal responsibilities of marriage are treated fairly under federal law.

An emerging national advocate for the LGBT community, Quigley has cosponsored over a dozen bills that work toward equality during his first 100 days in office. Immediately after being sworn in this past April, Quigley's first act in Congress was to co-sponsor the Hate Crimes bill, not long after which he called for the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and joined Reps. Barney Frank, Tammy Baldwin, and Jared Polis to introduce the Employment

Non-Discrimination Act. Quigley also sent a personal letter to President Obama urging him to include same-sex marriages in the 2010 Census.

Quigley is a member of the Congressional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equality Caucus. Back at home, he has formed a district LGBT Advisory Council of community leaders to function as a resource on important issues as well. Over sixty community leaders are already engaged members of the Council.

As Cook County Commissioner (1998-2009), Quigley worked tirelessly to ensure that Cook County did not do business with groups that discriminate based on sexual orientation. Additionally, Quigley passed two groundbreaking ordinances that extended health benefits to gay and lesbian partners of County employees and created the Cook Country Domestic Partnership Registry, which allows domestic partners to more easily secure benefits for one another.

Video embed code is available on Q-Tube.