

WASHINGTON – Today, in a mark-up hearing of the House Oversight and Government Reform committee, Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) stood up in strong support for a bill to provide benefits to same-sex partners of federal employees by successfully introducing and passing an amendment to illustrate how extending fairness and equity to all employees will in fact help the government recruit and retain talented individuals.

“The fact that the federal government, which should be setting an example for the rest of the nation’s employers, is currently discriminating against individuals based on their sexual orientation is frankly, embarrassing,” said Quigley. “Not only are we denying people thousands of dollars in benefits and violating our equal pay for equal work laws, but we’re making the government less competitive for top talent than private sector employers, 10,000 of which offer benefits to people no matter who they choose to love.”

In response to a Republican amendment calling for a study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on the possible effect of domestic partnership benefits on the insurance premiums of other employees, Quigley offered a secondary amendment to ensure the Committee considered all factors of a cost-benefit analysis. Quigley’s amendment expands the GAO study to also examine how offering benefits to all employees, regardless of sexual orientation, will impact the federal government’s ability to recruit and retain employees.

“The Republican amendment strives to paint the extension of equal benefits in a divisive light, as a burden to those who already receive them,” added Quigley. “My amendment seeks to highlight the huge gains such an extension could bring to the federal government.”

Quigley also cited the testimony of John Berry, Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, who previously stated to the Committee that by failing to offer comparable job benefits to employees, the federal government is not able to compete with top U.S. companies such as American Airlines and Chevron.

“As we acknowledge this week the anniversary of President Lincoln’s address at Gettysburg and the struggle for civil rights it embodied, I think it’s fitting that we discuss and move forward the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act,” said Quigley. “We constantly echo his words, but this is one of those times where we’re put to the test, and forced to ask ourselves if we mean it when say we’re all created equal.”

Quigley Pushes to Extend Benefits to Same-Sex Partners of Federal Employees

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Prior to being elected to Congress this past spring, Quigley served for over ten years on the Cook County Board of Commissioners, where he passed similar legislation, the Domestic Partnership Benefits Ordinance, to provide full benefits for domestic partners of county employees. Much like his advocacy on behalf of the LGBT community during this, his first year as Congressman, Quigley passed the county ordinance in 1999, his first year in office.

The House Committee passed Quigley's amendment as part of the full bill. H.R. 2517 now moves to the floor House for a vote.