

*Video of the speech can be found [here](#)*

Last Wednesday, Congressman Quigley delivered the following remarks before the Committee on Oversight and Government passed the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act for Federal Employees.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. My crack staff delivered a top notch presentation for me today, but I just want to speak from the heart for just a moment here.

I was the chairman of an identical measure—I was the chairman of the Human Rights Committee in Cook County in Chicago—of an exact duplicate measure that I sponsored and passed. Now, Cook County has 5 million people. It has one of the largest budgets in the country. It has a population greater than most states, and it's just fascinating to watch the "dooms-dayers," who talk about doing these things and what it means morally and financially to

our governments.

To all the municipalities and the businesses that have passed this sort of measure, it has meant nothing but maintaining a high quality workforce and maintaining an environment that speaks of justice and equity for everyone. It didn't break anyone's budget; it didn't come close. It still maintains extraordinarily widespread public support, and it's the right thing to do.

But I'm still struck by things that are said about it. For anyone who has faced the kind of discrimination that Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and the Transgendered community have dealt with, to be called a "select group" must be a tragic comedy. We just passed a very important measure dealing with hate crimes. To say, "Oh, what a great select group."

Where's the history of the Gay and Lesbian communities being treated as a "select group?" It's just extraordinary. Rather, there is a group of Americans which has been discriminated against for all time, and if that passes as being a select or privileged group, leave me out. It's just hard to fathom.

And for those who evoke the concept of what a traditional marriage is, I would just respectfully suggest that we're not talking about strangers here. I mean look around. These are our friends. These are our family members. These are our neighbors. I would suggest that if you are going to evoke and try and create a theocracy here, that most of those faiths involve incorporating and involving everyone and caring about everyone. So it's very tough when you start deciding I am going to start deciding what's traditional, and not you. It's hard to watch that, especially when you know people in 20 and 30 year Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender relationships.

I'm reminded of something. I feel like at some point we're switching sides here. I say this with the greatest respect for Barry Goldwater who said "You don't have to be straight to shoot straight," when talking about supporting Gays in the military. But he also took it a step farther. He said the traditional conservative movement was about keeping government out of people's lives. I think I've heard that before—that we shouldn't have Big Brother telling people how they should feel or what they should do.

Think for a really long time now. What is the most intimate decision you can make in your life? It

is who you love and how to express that love. So now we're going to be the arbiters of that? We're going to decide, well, that's not the kind of love we're talking about. That's not the love that our god cares about? I think you're really stepping over a major source there if you think that's okay.

Its extraordinary to watch. It's painful to watch Americans live without benefits, to be treated differently, who do nothing but contribute, and are solid Americans, many of whom have gone across the seas and fought for this country and been killed or blown apart because they love this country and they come home and they can't have the same benefits. Because of DOMA, as has been talked about here, there are a couple thousand benefits that they are deprived of through no fault of their own.

So I guess I'm left with the reminder that tomorrow is the anniversary of Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg, to quote another great Republican. Think about what he was really saying. With the greatest respect, I think what he was saying was 87 years ago we'd created a country in which we decided that all men were created equal, and today, he spoke at Gettysburg, we have to decide if we really meant it. So I think those decisions come around every once and a while. And, with the greatest respect to those who have an honest difference of opinion, this is one of those times when we have to ask ourselves if we really mean it, if all are created equal. Thank you."