



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 22, 2016

Two Republicans Get on the Equality Act Bandwagon

The [Equality Act](#), which would amend existing federal civil-rights laws to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, including in the use of restrooms and other sex-segregated facilities, has just become a bipartisan affair in both houses of Congress. Two Illinois Republicans, both facing tough reelection battles, have signed on to the unconstitutional bill, which was previously only sponsored by Democrats and independents.



On January 15, Representative Bob Dold became the first congressional Republican to cosponsor the Equality Act.

"Illinois has a long and proud history of fighting for equal rights, and I am proud to continue this tradition by supporting the Equality Act. Engraved on the front of the Supreme Court is the phrase 'equal justice under the law,' but as long as any Americans can be legally discriminated against, there is not equal justice in this country," Dold said in a statement to [The Hill](#).

"Congress must act to ensure that all Americans, including the LGBT community, are protected equally from discrimination under federal law, just as they already are in my home state of Illinois."

Dold, who has a cumulative score of [43 percent](#) on *The New American's* Freedom Index, is in his second nonconsecutive term representing the 10th congressional district, which encompasses the northern suburbs of Chicago. He first won the seat in 2010, lost to Democrat Brad Schneider in 2012, and defeated Schneider to regain his seat in 2014. Schneider is once again trying to topple Dold this year.

While some Equality Act proponents welcomed Dold's announcement — Chad Griffin, president of the LGBT lobbying group Human Rights Campaign (HRC), said Dold was "showing tremendous leadership" — others doubted his sincerity, noting, among other things, that Dold once stood by traditional marriage and recently voted against a measure that would have protected President Barack Obama's [executive order](#) prohibiting federal contractors from discriminating against individuals on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

"Remember when Bob Dold said marriage was between a man and a woman — and voted against workplace protections for LGBT workers literally eight days ago?" Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spokesperson Sacha Haworth told the [Washington Blade](#). "Illinois voters do, because that's the real Bob Dold. It is exactly this shameless pandering that he'll be held accountable for in November."

Dold gave pro-Equality Act forces even more reason to question how strongly he supports the bill by hinting that it needed to be amended to protect religious freedom. He told *The Hill* that while the bill is "not perfect in its current form, it marks an important first step in the process of crafting a bipartisan bill that ensures equal rights for all Americans while also fully protecting the religious freedoms our Constitution guarantees."



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The bill, in fact, is a direct attack on religious freedom. It expressly prohibits people from claiming exemption from its provisions under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and thus “would force people to affirm homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism, despite their religious objections in various situations, including the provision of public accommodations,” wrote the [Family Research Council](#). In addition, the bill vastly expands the definition of “public accommodations” to include practically everything except single-family homes.

Four days after Dold made his announcement, Senator Mark Kirk followed his lead, announcing his cosponsorship of the Equality Act.

“Discrimination on the basis of being gay is against the law in Illinois and should be against the law nationwide,” Kirk told [BuzzFeed News](#).

Kirk, who has a cumulative Freedom Index score of [34 percent](#), was a five-term congressman before narrowly winning election in 2010 to the Senate seat formerly occupied by Obama. Kirk’s reelection fight is one of the “seven Senate races Democrats should be optimistic about in 2016,” according to [Slate](#), suggesting that, as with Dold, political calculations may have played into his decision.

Nevertheless, HRC’s Griffin heaped praise on Kirk, too, telling the [Advocate](#): “His support for the Equality Act sends a strong message that fairness and equality are bipartisan values. It also reflects the view of the overwhelming majority of all Americans who believe that everyone, including LGBT people, should be able to have a fair chance to earn a living, provide for their families, and live free from fear of discrimination.”

The Equality Act, however, isn’t just about extending federal antidiscrimination law to cover sexual orientation and gender identity, as bad as that would be. The bill also states that “an individual shall not be denied access to a shared facility, including a restroom, a locker room, and a dressing room, that is in accordance with the individual’s gender identity,” opening the door for men to use women’s restrooms and women to use men’s locker rooms. This would, of course, effectively prevent the vast majority of Americans, who prefer such sex-segregated facilities, from exercising their own freedom of choice.

The bill is strongly supported by such stalwart defenders of choice — when it comes to abortion — as Obama and all those seeking to succeed him on the Democratic ticket: Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent who is also cosponsoring the bill; former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; and former Maryland governor Martin O’Malley. It now has 172 cosponsors in the House of Representatives and 42 in the Senate.

Republicans remain the only real obstacle to the Equality Act’s passage, and not enough of them are likely to take their cues from Dold and Kirk to pass the bill this term, especially when doing so would strengthen Democrats in a presidential election year. But as the lawmakers from the Land of Lincoln have shown, it is possible, under the right conditions, to persuade members of the GOP to sign onto this horrendous piece of legislation.

Moreover, one can be fairly certain that the bill will be reintroduced in future congresses, where it may stand a better chance of becoming law. Voters who care about the Constitution and Judeo-Christian values will therefore need to remain vigilant lest they learn the hard way just how unequal the Left’s version of equality — “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” — really is.



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