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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2023

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM



CELEBRATING MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Same-sex couples reflect on hard-fought right to wed a decade after Ill. legalization

By Angie Leventis Lourgos | Chicago Tribune

The wedding ceremony was simple but historic. One bride wore a black satin jacket with a white boutonniere on the lapel. The other bride donned a leopard print jacket and clutched a small bouquet of white flowers. Nearly a decade ago, Vernita Gray and Pat Ewert took their sacred vows in the living room of their Chicago condo, marking the first same-sex marriage in Illinois.

As they sealed their union with a kiss, they were flanked by their loved ones — including many prominent gay rights activists who had fought so hard for the right they had just exercised.

As part of the festivities, a friend sang “At Last,” popularized by Etta James.

“All of these people who had been in our home had been part of the struggle, had been part of the fight,” recalled Pat Ewert, 75, during a recent interview. “It was awesome.”

On Nov. 20, 2013, Gov. Pat Quinn signed legislation making Illinois the 16th state to legalize same-sex marriage at a ceremony at the University of Illinois at Chicago that was attended by thousands, including Gray and Ewert.

The bill was signed on a desk brought from Springfield upon which President Abraham Lincoln wrote his first inaugural

address in the 1860s, according to state officials.

During his speech, Quinn invoked a different speech made by Lincoln.

“In the very beginning of the Gettysburg Address, President Abraham Lincoln of Illinois said that our nation was conceived in liberty,” Quinn said. “And he said it’s dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, and that’s really what we’re celebrating today. It’s a triumph of democracy.”

While the milestone was joyous for many, there was still a

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Attorney Jordan Heinz, left, and his fiancée, Parker Polley, grab some green onion plants they were growing in their Chicago home for an omelet breakfast Friday. The couple are planning a July wedding. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Deadly arson put 2 men on divergent paths

Decades later, tangled system has set 1 free, left other behind bars

By Megan Crepeau
Chicago Tribune

It was after dark by the time Arthur Brown, skinny and shell-shocked, walked out of Cook County Jail.

A crowd of supporters was waiting. “That’s him! That’s him!” they screamed. “He’s free!”

It was November 2017. Prosecutors had thrown out his case. For the 29 years leading to that exact moment, Brown had been locked up for a fatal fire he insisted he did not set.

He walked out to a scrum of news cameras. He pumped his fist and embraced his niece. He wanted to be around his family, he told reporters. “Feels like a burden has gone, to be free.”

A few days later, a newspaper was floating through Pontiac



E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

“I was overwhelmed with joy, to see him get out. And it brought tears to my eyes. I thought my freedom would be near. It didn’t happen.”

— Michael Harper, about Arthur Brown when he was released from jail. Harper, above, at the Western Illinois Correctional Center in Mount Sterling on Oct. 19, claims he is innocent of a 1988 arson murder for which his co-defendant has been exonerated

Tax hike to help homeless debated

LA measure similar to ‘Bring Chicago Home’ panned as a ‘disaster’

By Brian J. Rogal
Chicago Tribune

Earlier this year, Los Angeles hiked a transfer tax imposed on pricey real estate purchases, a move designed to generate revenue to fund homeless services.

The measure, which hits both commercial and residential properties, bears a striking resemblance to the “Bring Chicago Home” proposal up for a citywide vote next March, and has so far failed to fill Los Angeles coffers.

Luxury home sales, the mainstay of a market home to Hollywood stars, popular recording artists and entertainment executives, plunged in the first few months after the new law took effect in April, leaving the city far short of its fundraising goals, at least for the first six months.

“With not a lot of digging, you’ll find it’s been a disaster for LA real estate,” said Matthew Hargrove, president and CEO of the California Business Properties Association. “This is a market, and markets react to taxes. They’re not coming

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INSIDE



CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Winter on the Wis. waterfront

At Wisconsin’s northernmost point, the Red Cliff Reservation is trying to diversify tourism while preserving its native culture. **Life+Travel**

Lions football: ‘Be ready to go’

The Detroit Lions are fearless and fun all at once, a formula concocted by Dan Campbell, their think-big, high-energy coach. **Chicago Sports**

Patients, staff flee hospital in Gaza

One evacuee described a panicked and chaotic evacuation Saturday as Israeli forces searched and face-scanned men. **Nation & World**

TODAY’S WEATHER

High **54**
Low **40**



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