



Chicago comes out for 40th annual Pride Parade

By [Jay Shaff](#)

An estimated half a million attended Pride Parade

Chicago, IL - The 40th Annual Chicago Gay Pride Parade kicked off at noon today with what is estimated to be the largest crowd ever for the event reaching 500,000 according to Chicago Police sources. An official count has yet to be released by the Mayor's Office of Special Events.

On this near weather perfect day of sun and comfortable temperatures, the streets were packed with onlookers and vocal pride enthusiasts.

Leading the parade was Grand Marshall Alexandra Billings. "This is a great day for solidarity and a fabulous day for sequins." Also in the lead of the parade was the local Nettelhorst Elementary School group of children and parents, a first time participant hoping to demonstrate support for the nearby gay community. Governor Pat Quinn (D-IL) marched in the celebration.

Newly elected Fifth District Congressman Mike Quigley (D-IL) today celebrated his 27th Chicago Gay Pride Parade and said "it's a beautiful day and a beautiful time for equality".

State Representative Sara Feigenholtz (D-12th District) exclaimed "it's my favorite day of the year!!" She was joined by first time parade attendee State Representative Susana Mendoza (D-1st District). Greg Harris (D), 13th District Representative in the Illinois Legislature and a strong same sex marriage legalization advocate said he wished some of his downstate colleagues would be as supportive of the community and its goals as Chicagoans.

Today's parade commemorated the Stonewall rebellion of 40 years ago as scores of floats, dancers, marchers, drill teams and other entrants took more than 2 1/2 hours to cross the starting line at Belmont and Halsted.

A significant and very well organized police presence lead by 23rd District Commander Kathy Boehmer appeared to mingle well with the crowds and no major problems were observed. Fire Department paramedics dealt with heat related issues, but demand for their services was limited due to the cooperative weather and a strong cooling breeze.

Halsted merchants were thrilled with the great turnout and the wonderful weather.

Other major cities such as New York City, San Francisco and Toronto also held their parade today.

ABC-7 Chicago (www.abc7chicago.com) will broadcast the parade tonight at 11:35 p.m.