

## Larry Dupuis ~ Nominated by the ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation 2014 Winner of the Linda Sundberg Civil Rights Defender Award



*"Larry's passion for civil rights is why the women at the prison in Taycheedah are finally getting proper healthcare—after years of inadequate care with fatal consequences. It's why the legislature wasn't able to close down half the state's women's reproductive health centers with no notice. It's why you can sing in the Capitol and why, soon, we believe marriage equality will come to Wisconsin."*

—Kristin Hansen, ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation

Larry Dupuis, as the legal director of the ACLU of Wisconsin since 2003, is a paramount example of a civil rights defender. He said he became aware of social justice issues through his parents "and my brother, who got involved in the United Farm Workers' 1970s grape boycotts. So in part my family led me to be aware of injustice—and to feel the need to try to address that injustice."

Larry heeded the call to address injustice by initially choosing, after law school, to work at Legal Action of Wisconsin, another Community Shares member group. He decided to join the staff of the ACLU of Wisconsin after 9/11, when he saw institutions ignoring people's right to habeas corpus, and imprisoning people without charge. "What had seemed like unquestioned fundamental rights—and culturally accepted principles—were open to argument again."

Recently Larry worked with colleagues at the state and national level to file a lawsuit on behalf of eight gay and lesbian couples in Wisconsin, in what is commonly known as the marriage equality case. "Here, as in other states, we realized that we need to move this issue forward quickly. We no longer have to tell people to wait for justice, we can seize justice," he said.

Despite his passion for his work, Larry is known around the office for his bad jokes, as well as his casual demeanor. "Larry is so laid back," said Kristin Hansen with the ACLU of Wisconsin. "But you know that when you ask a basic question—which he's always happy to answer—you probably interrupted him in the middle of crafting successful legal strategies or writing brilliant briefs."

Others also recognize his talents, since Larry has served on the governing boards or committees of several organizations, including the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties section of the State Bar of Wisconsin, Legal Action of Wisconsin, the Eastern District of Wisconsin Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee, the Hmong-American Friendship Association, the Fair Lending Coalition, the National Center on Rural Aging, and the Wisconsin Public Health Association.

Larry noted that the ACLU has always been nonpartisan. "We continually assess the balance between the power of government and the liberty of individuals. We see that as essential to all of us whether 'your' favorite political party is in the majority or not.

"The ACLU's slogan is 'freedom can't protect itself.' But I'd add that 'equality can't protect itself,' either. Freedom and equality are two pillars of our way of life that are always vulnerable to the self-interest, fear, and ignorance exploited by demagogues of all political stripes. And that's why the courts of law and public opinion are sometimes our best defense."

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