National Organization for Women, Philadelphia Chapter

BROCHURE ON EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

1976

The Civil Rights Act of 1964—landmark legislation that specifically prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin—made marked progress in recognizing social and political equality in the United States by mid-century. Public facilities, governmental institutions, and schools were by law ordered to comply with desegregation statutes and be freely accessible to all citizens. The Act’s Title VII was specifically created to prohibit employment discrimination under the same criteria establishing the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In 1968, the Fair Housing Act followed with the provision of equal housing opportunities.

Witnessing the strides made toward achieving equality for African Americans, feminists of this period recognized that American women continued to experience discrimination “based on sex” and that the laws had clearly not provided or enforced the legal guarantee of women’s social, political, and economic equality. Taking strategic political steps toward changing the status quo, which included the perspectives of those opposing the advancement of women in all sectors of society, the National Organization for Women (NOW), supported by influential labor and civil rights organizations published a brochure promoting the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution. The brochure took a moderate approach, noting the remedies proposed for outlawing gender discrimination and assuring lawmakers in Congress that states adopting the resolutions, such as Pennsylvania, had not experienced adverse effects. Rather, the ERA mandates had produced beneficial results strengthening the resolve of achieving gender equality.

Originally proposed by Suffragist Alice Paul in 1923, an ERA bill had circulated through every Congress up to 1972, when it finally passed and was then sent to the states for ratification. The ERA was given a seven-year time frame for ratification and granted an extension to 1982; the tally of states by that year totaled thirty-five. The addition of three more states reaching a total of thirty-eight (the required three-quarters of the fifty states) would have added the ERA to the United States Constitution. The final few ratifications were not achieved, however, and women’s rights organizations continue to fight for its passage into American law.
200 years of bondage is enough!  
ERA . . . as basic as freedom of speech

**Did You Know . . .**

* Under the U.S. Constitution corporations are considered legal persons, but women are not

* Women earn on an average 41% less than men

* A man with an 8th grade education earns as much as a woman with a college degree

* Women and men do not receive the same benefits under Social Security, although they contribute the same percentage of their income

* “Equal pay for Equal Work” is based on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act which can be reversed by Congress

* If a man dies, his widow pays a large tax; if a woman dies her widower pays substantially less

* A husband controls his wife's use of “his” credit cards; a wife cannot establish credit in her name

* Insurance rates are higher for women than for men; loans for house payments, etc. are more difficult for women to obtain than for men

* The military has higher entrance requirements for women, but significantly fewer benefits and opportunities

* During probate, a joint bank account is considered to be solely the property of the husband

* Women receive longer jail sentences than men for the same crime

* Unemployment is twice as high for women as for men

* There are over 1,795 laws which discriminate against women

**The ERA Will . . .**

* Declare women full persons under the law

* Outlaw discrimination on the basis of sex, establishing constitutionally the legal right of “equal pay for equal work”
* Provide equal Social Security benefits for women and men at the same retirement age; widowers will receive the same benefits now only received by widows

* Recognize a housewife’s contribution as a financial resource to the home by not taxing her half of the estate when her husband dies

* Give married women the right to establish credit, own businesses, buy and control property, and sign contracts

* Equalize military entrance standards; make military women eligible for equal benefits and opportunities

* Extend alimony and child support responsibilities to members of either sex, depending on need and ability to pay

* Establish equal rights for both parties holding joint husband/wife bank accounts during probate

* Mandate “equal time for equal crime”

* Strike down laws which restrict rights. If a law protects rights, it will be extended to the other sex

**The Pennsylvania ERA [Has] . . .**

* Affirmed joint ownership of household goods

* Given girls equal access to scholastic sports

* Equalized sentence and parole standards

* Established that State Licensing Boards no longer permit sex biased requirements

* Eliminated male only job classifications in most cases, opening new employment opportunities to women

* NOT caused an increase in the divorce rate

* Established that a mother who is a housewife is providing her children with valuable support, equal in worth to the father’s financial support

* Extended property tax relief to widowers over 50 years old, in addition to widows

* Provided that all financial institutions regulated by the State must be free of sex discrimination

* NOT challenged the right to privacy in public restrooms, school locker rooms, college dormitories, prisons, public hospitals, army barracks and the like
Who Supports ERA (Partial List)

AFL-CIO
American Bar Association
American Civil Liberties Union
American Jewish Congress
Catholic Women for the ERA
Church Women United
Common Cause
Democratic Party
General Federation of Women’s Clubs
League of Women Voters
NAACP
Republican Party

ERA—only a step away!

The Equal Rights Amendment Reads:

“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

August 26 has been declared National “Shoulder to Shoulder for the ERA” day across the country. Contact your local NOW chapter for information about ERA support activities planned for that day.

Ongoing activities in support for the ERA will take place this Fall, and until passage of the ERA is assured. If no group exists in your area, start one! Or get your local club, church, union or other group to pass a resolution in support of the ERA, and print materials for membership information. Brochures and other information can be obtained by writing to

   National Organization for Women
   Common Cause
   U.S. Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau


Headnote: Diana Jonmarie