This resource guide covers the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) from its birth in 1923 to its death in 1983, to its afterlife from 1983 to the present. The content focuses on pro-ERA activities, in particular the activities of the National Woman's Party. Generally materials relate to the ERA at the national level, although some focus on North Carolina. All materials can be found at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill libraries. The pathfinder is intended for undergraduates and contains books and journals for students doing general research as well as government documents and manuscripts for those who want to conduct more detailed research.

Introduction

In 1920, soon after ratification of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, the National Woman's Party and its leader, Alice Paul, decided that a constitutional amendment granting equal rights to women was the next step in liberating women. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was first introduced to Congress in 1923. Although the amendment gained support in the 1930's and 1940's, until the late 1960's the National Woman's Party was the main advocate of the amendment. Many organizations, especially labor and women's organizations, initially opposed the amendment because they feared it would end protective labor legislation for women. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, numerous women's organizations, in particular the National Organization for Women (NOW) advocated for the amendment. Both houses of Congress finally passed the amendment in 1972 and sent it to the states for ratification.

In order for the amendment to be added to the Constitution, three fourths of states had to ratify the amendment by 1979. By 1979, thirty-five of the thirty-eight needed states ratified the amendment and the deadline for ratification was extended to 1982. However, the amendment ultimately failed because no other states ratified it. Women's organizations are still advocating for passage of the ERA.
Library of Congress Subject Headings

Equal Rights Amendment  Sex discrimination against women--
Constitutional Amendments    Law and Legislation
Equality before the law       Women's rights
                            Women--Legal status, laws, etc.--
                            United States

Reference Books


Book is a good introduction to the field of women’s history. Includes entries about the Equal Rights Amendment and the National Woman's Party. The Equal Rights Amendment entry discusses why it took so long for the Equal Rights Amendment to gain national attention.


An excellent guide to primary sources about National Woman's Party's Equal Rights Amendment work. Contains a detailed timeline of National Woman's Party activities and lists contents of microfilm collection. Includes a description of arrangement of the papers, complete and brief reel lists, an index of important correspondence, and background information.


Volume 1 contains an alphabetical index of entries in both volumes and page numbers of primary sources, as well as an index of entries arranged by category. Entries include see also and references. The eight page entry for Equal Rights Amendment provides a comprehensive history of the amendment. Also includes articles about state equal rights amendments, ERAmerica, National Woman's Party, National Organization for Women, and Alice Paul.

This three volume set contains multiple entries that describe various aspects of the Equal Rights Amendment. Equal Rights Amendment entry by Melissa Hausman contains an excellent outline of the ideology and legal issues of the ERA and includes references for further reading. This encyclopedia contains a detailed index.


Equal Rights Amendment entry provides a good discussion of initial opposition to the amendment. Woman's Party entry describes the party's shortcomings. The article about Alice Paul is negative and downplays her work after the passage of the 19th Amendment. Contains brief article about the National Organization for Women. This book does not have an index.

Bibliographies


The Equal Rights Amendment Project was a national resource center on the equal rights issue. The book was published before the end of the ratification process. Materials are divided into: Congressional Publications; Other Government Publications; Pamphlets, Brochures, Reports, Papers, and Other Documents; and Periodical Material. Excellent table of contents makes it easy to find the listing for a narrow publication type, such as House of Representatives' hearings. Bibliography includes 5800 entries Entries are not annotated. The book has a detailed introduction, an author index, and an organization index.


Continues the Equal Rights Amendment Project's bibliography. Instead of grouping materials by type, it groups them by subject. Subjects are: Public Opinion and Party Politics; Federal and State Interpretations of the Equal Rights Amendment; Employment; Education; Family and Religion; The Military; Ratification Efforts; Boycott, Extension, and Rescission; Defeat; Television News Coverage; After 1982. Many entries are annotated. Book also includes an introduction: "The Equal Rights Amendment as a Mainstream Political Issue", an organizational resources appendix, including a list of ERA supporters as of 1978 , an author index, and a subject index.

Approximately fifty pages of this book contain citations about Equal Rights Amendment in several categories. Some citations are annotated. An excellent resource for researchers interested in government documents pertaining to the Equal Rights Amendment.


Entries listed under Equal Rights Amendment in the index. The book includes over 50 citations from 1970-1975. Mostly magazine articles and Congressional hearings. Some citations are annotated. ERA entries are scattered throughout the bibliography which makes it more difficult to use.


Contains seven pages of annotated citations of pro- and anti-ERA writings from 1924 to 1971, most of which are articles in periodicals. The list is certainly not comprehensive, but a select list of articles from popular and lesser known periodicals.


This book has an excellent annotated bibliography of thirty books and journal articles that discuss various aspects of ERA. Books and journal articles were written both during and after the process.

Books


Written before the end of the ratification process. Author looks at the history of ERA. She examines the origins of the ERA, National Woman's Party activities, why people supported ERA or opposed it, and what the American feminist movement during the 1920's and 1930's was like.

Berry begins by discussing the process of amending the Constitution, then examines the progress of several proposed amendments: income tax, prohibition, woman suffrage, and child labor. She compares ERA to these previous amendments and concludes that ERA failed because "supporters did too little, too late of what is required for ratification of a substantive proposal".


The author conducted a case study in Texas, Georgia, and Illinois to determine whether the community conflict and traditional interest group politics models were applicable to ERA ratification politics. The book was written before the ratification process ended. The author wanted to find out why the ERA, which was popular, had such a difficult time being ratified by the states.


This is a great primary source. A detailed how-to manual for people interested in getting the ERA ratified in the three remaining states. It was written during the ratification process by an ERA advocate and lawyer who consulted with many activists. One of the author's main purposes was to correct misperceptions of the amendment. The "Strategy Guide and Action Checklist" is especially interesting for people studying activism.

Mansbridge, Jane J. Why We Lost the ERA. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. UNC Davis Library Stacks Floor 5 HQ 1236.5 .U6 M37 1986

Mansbridge was a participant in the ratification struggle and studied it when she realized it would fail and after ratification failed. She argues that the American public did not want a substantial change in gender roles and that the Supreme Court would probably not take advantage of the amendment. She argues that proponents were unwilling to compromise because they were ideologically committed to equality.


The authors studied the ratification process in North Carolina, but argue that North Carolina is representative of the nation. They argue that the conflict over ratification is about gender. The text begins with a narrative of the history of ERA and the second half examines the feelings of pro- and anti-ERA women and the North Carolina General Assembly.

A study of why ERA was not ratified. Steiner focuses on the period from 1971 to 1982. The author, a senior fellow in the Governmental Studies program of the Brookings institution, concludes that ERA failed because advocates missed their window of opportunity, which was only open for a very brief period of time.

Journals and Journal Articles


Two political scientists examine characteristics of ERA activists in North Carolina. They looked at "political activity, political attitudes, personality characteristics, socioeconomic status (SES), religion, social cross-pressures, geography, and parental influences" of ERA and anti-ERA activists. They concluded that ERA activists in North Carolina were similar to party elites, while anti-ERA activists were dissimilar to party elites.


The author argues that future leaders of ERA ratification efforts can learn lessons from the American suffragists of the early 1900's. Article includes a review of why ERA failed and a summary of the United States woman suffrage movement.


An excellent primary source. Contains a legislative history of the ERA's first twenty years in Congress, an article by the National Woman's Party which answers common questions about the amendment, and short articles in support and opposition of the amendment. Authors of pro and con articles include writing in support: Alice Paul, U.S. Senator Hattie W. Caraway, U.S. Representative Margaret C. Smith, Pearl Buck, and Katharine Hepburn; and writing in opposition: Carrie Chapman Catt, American Association of University Women, National Council of Catholic Women, and the National League of Women Voters.


When this collection of articles was published, it was clear that the Equal Rights Amendment would not be ratified. Articles explore attitudes of women state legislators toward ERA, factors influencing state legislative responses to ERA, political ideology of opponents and proponents, a
case study of coalition politics, and an examination of the influence of campaign contributions on ERA ratification in Illinois.

**Government Documents**


An excellent bibliography. Index includes entry for Equal Rights Amendment. Book contains citations for a variety of government documents about various aspects of the Equal Rights Amendment.


Microfilm includes copies of all ERA resolutions introduced into Congress and several Congressional hearing transcripts.


Extensive list of testifiers includes: representative of League of Women Voters (opposes); Carrie Chapman Catt, president of National Women Suffrage Association (opposes); representative of National Women's Trade Union League (opposes); American Federation of Labor (opposes); representative of National Woman's Party (supports).


Many more supporters testified at this hearing. Transcript includes: letter of support from then Senator Harry S. Truman (dated 4/20/1944); letter in support from 28 governors; list of organizations in opposition; and testimony from National Woman's Party representatives; Mary Church Terrell, National Association of Colored Women (support); National Women's Trade
Union League (opposed); Congress of Industrial Organizations (opposed); American Civil Liberties Union (opposed).


Hearings focused on legal ramifications of amendment. Senator Ervin of North Carolina, a staunch opponent of ERA, presided. According to him, the House did not hold hearings on the amendment and previous Senate hearings did not explore legal ramifications for states and the federal government. Ervin inserted speeches, letters, and newspaper articles that supported his opinion into the record. Testifiers included representatives of NOW, law professors, a representative of the Democratic National Committee, and Alice Paul.


Detailed table of contents includes: proposed legislation, chronological lists of witnesses, alphabetical list of witnesses and materials submitted. Testifiers include: Ruth Bader Ginsburg (pro), AFL-CIO (support); Sen. Sam Ervin (opposed).

See also: listing for Lexis/Nexis Congressional Universe in Databases section below.

Manuscripts

Sam J. Ervin Papers, Subgroup A: Senate Records #3847A, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.


U.S. Senator Ervin was one of the primary opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment. Equal Rights Amendment materials contained in folders 1328, 1631, 9413-9434, 10344-10354, 11298-11317, 12472-12482, 13250-13251, 13650-13658, 13659-13662, 13663, 13664-13666.

Sam J. Ervin Papers, Subgroup B: Private Papers #3847B, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.


Folders 659 to 662 contain his speeches about the ERA. Subject folders 882 to 902 contain documents pertaining to the ERA from 1975 to 1985.

UNC Davis Library Microforms Collection Microfilm Call Number : 1-2162 Comprehensive collection of National Woman's Party papers includes correspondence organized by date, meeting minutes, legal papers, financial records, printed materials, photographs, World Woman's Party Papers, and a complete collection of all Equal Rights Amendments introduced in Congress, as well as some Congressional hearing transcripts.

Martha C. McKay Papers (#4856), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

According to the finding aid, McKay was the founder of the North Carolina Women’s Political Caucus and the National Women’s Political Caucus. Speech files contain speeches she gave in support of the Equal Rights Amendment, correspondence files relate to the ERA, and subject folders 25 to 29 contain ERA related documents.

Susie Sharp Papers (#4898), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. UNC Wilson Library Manuscripts Department. Southern Historical Collection.

According to the collection's finding aid, Sharp opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, even though she was a woman in a position of power. She was concerned that women would lose special protections if the Equal Rights Amendment was ratified. Folders 71 to 76 and 851 contain Equal Rights Amendment documents.

Gladys Avery Tillett Papers #4385, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

According to the finding aid, Tillett was an Equal Rights Amendment supporter since the 1920's, who became increasingly involved toward the end of the process, and was president of the North Carolina chapter of E.R.A. United in 1974 and 1975. Folders 1025 to 1042 contain ERA materials.

Online Databases

GenderWatch

A full-text database of journals, conference proceedings, magazines, newsletters, and other publications about issues pertaining to women. UNC Chapel Hill students can access the

**Lexis/Nexis Congressional Universe**

A searchable index of Congressional publications and other government documents. Some citations include abstracts and full text of some documents is available. UNC Chapel Hill students can access the database at [http://eresources.lib.unc.edu/eid/](http://eresources.lib.unc.edu/eid/). Enter Women’s Rights in the subject search box to find ERA documents, including committee reports and committee hearing transcripts.

**Websites**

**ERA Campaign Network.** [http://www.ERACampaign.net/](http://www.ERACampaign.net/)

Website of a network of activists who are using a "3-state strategy" to get the ERA ratified in three of the fifteen states that have not ratified it yet. Site includes an explanation of the strategy and why the amendment is still needed, as well as contact information, links, and a newsletter.

**ERA Summit - The Equal Rights Amendment.** [http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/](http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/)

The Alice Paul Institute and the ERA task force of the National Council of Women’s Organizations are still advocating for ratification of the ERA. Their site includes status of current ERA legislation, a list of states that have not ratified ERA, short history of the ERA, a list of supporters, a description of their strategy, and an FAQ.


NOW is working for passage of an amendment that is less open to interpretation by the states and courts than the original ERA and that protects more rights, including lesbian and gay rights. Site features an ERA history, FAQ, and an organizing kit.

**Center for the Historical Study of Women and Gender at the State University of New York at Binghamton.** "Who Won the Debate Over the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920's?" Women and Social Movements in the USA, 1775-2000. [http://womhist.binghamton.edu/era/doclist.htm](http://womhist.binghamton.edu/era/doclist.htm)

An excellent web page. The author selected documents that illustrate the ERA debate in the 1920's, transcribed the full text of the documents, and wrote introductions that explain each document's significance. The page is broken into four sections: Arguments by Supporters of the
ERA, Published Debates between the Two Sides, Anti-ERA Arguments, and The Debate Continued in the 1990's.