



memorandum

Going on DPM

November 18, 1976

TO: State and Local League Presidents
 FROM: Ruth C. Clusen, President and
 Joanne Hayes, ERA Chairperson
 RE: ERA Action '77 (outlook and recommendations)

Most of you have probably heard that Massachusetts passed its state ERA at the ballot on November 2nd by a wide margin. In addition, Colorado successfully defeated an attempt to repeal its state ERA--again, at the ballot. The 1977 legislative sessions are rapidly approaching. These two victories for state ERAs in states far removed from one another clearly demonstrate that the federal ERA ratification stalemate can be broken.

It must be broken this coming year. If we aren't successful this year and unratified state legislatures need to consider ERA in 1978, they would do so with the same state legislators who presumably would have considered ERA in 1977 (with the exception of Virginia). The next opportunity for a major turnover of state legislators in unratified states is in November of 1978, only a few months from the March 22, 1979 deadline.

Our job is clear. Four more states must ratify and we must continue to hold the line on rescission until the job in the unratified states is successfully completed, hopefully in 1977.

What's the Next Step?

Action Recommendations--Unratified States

States (Convening dates, regular session)

Alabama	March	Mississippi	January
Arizona	January	Missouri	January
Arkansas	January	Nevada	January
Florida	April	North Carolina	January
Georgia	January	Oklahoma	January
*Illinois	January	South Carolina	January
Indiana	January	Utah	January
Louisiana	April	Virginia	January

The major goal is to successfully persuade a majority of legislators in both houses of the state legislatures that the Equal Rights Amendment should be ratified.

*Illinois reconvened this year on November 17 and will continue until sometime in December.

I. With the exception of Mississippi, every unratified state League has an ERA coordinator (see attached list). In most unratified states, the state League ERA coordinator (working with other state endorsing organization representatives) has compiled at least a tentative post-election legislative head count. With the help of local Leagues (wherever possible) this head count, along with an evaluation of the positions of the house, senate and committee leadership, will determine the state legislative strategy. To insure an accurate, continually updated report on the legislative head count, every local League, if they haven't already, should assign a person to work on ERA at the local level and transmit any new information on the position of local legislators to the state League ERA coordinator.

II. There are two activities that, united, will form a single thrust for ERA legislative consideration in 1977.

Educating and lobbying: The key word with respect to these two activities is "persuasion," both with the public and with state legislators. The gentle art of persuasion is not unknown to the League and several action publications are available at the national League office which outline the philosophy and "how to's" of forming a coalition as well as the "do's" and "don'ts" of lobbying legislators.**

Many state legislators have been persuaded by the simple eloquence and sincerity of a Leaguer who believed in what she/he was supporting and came armed with good factual materials. Approaching legislators in this fashion at the local level can't be done to excess. If they're supportive, thank them and continue to provide support for them in every way possible until the vote comes up. In addition, we must prepare now for the "letter competition." During the legislative session, as many of you know by now, letters for and against ratification become a serious consideration for "leaning" legislators. Contact your state League ERA coordinator about the number of letters needed every week and the timing during the session. Be creative and have fun with this--friends and coffee make good letter-writing companions.

With regard to public persuasion, we have learned two fundamental things: 1) Whether you approach the city or town council, address private groups, or place ads in local newspapers, ask people (at the same time that you are informing them about the issue) to convey their support for the issue to their local legislators. The League is not "neutral" on this issue; we support it, and we want everyone we address to support it also. 2) Sometimes Leaguers confuse the objectivity we must display in our voter's service activities with program items on which we have clearly taken a stand. We have learned that it is not wise to formally debate this issue with the opposition. Debates have not been productive in either informing or persuading the public. Generally speaking ERA debate audiences have been a preset mix of proponents and opponents. Regardless of who "wins," rarely do uninformed citizens come away from a debate thinking that they now have an informed "new" opinion on the subject. All too often debates degenerate into "sideshows" for proponents and opponents, with the press picking up the most sensational aspects of the debate with headlines like "ERA--Integrated bathrooms and homosexual marriages?" regardless of the truth.

With regard to persuading people to support the ERA, it's important to remember that the organized opposition to the ERA has but one strategy and that is to create doubt. Doubt as to the extent of public support and the amount of public opposition and doubt about the need for and the effect of the Equal Rights Amendment. They don't

**Making an issue of it: The Campaign Handbook (Pub. No. 613, 75¢)
ACTION (Pub. No. 161, 50¢)
The National VOTER, Fall 1976.

have to prove anything. Their proclamations, while often representing sincere, if not realistic fears, are designed to create doubt. We must overcome any remaining doubt--let's not help them create it.

Action Recommendations--Ratified States

In addition to achieving ratification in four more states, we must hold the line on rescission moves by the opposition. The League's state legislative person, especially in states with previous rescission attempts, should be alert to any rescission developments and may want to send a questionnaire to state legislators regarding their support for ERA. Local Leaguers should let supporting state legislators and the state League know of any rescission rumblings in their area. Make sure your state legislators are informed on ERA and on the history and meaning of rescission. We've successfully defeated all rescission attempts in the last two years. We mustn't let up now.

ERA supporters in ratified states have also been asked to "adopt" unratified sister states. The national League supports this effort. A proposed sister-state list has been prepared by several unratified states and sent to ERA contacts in the ratified states. If you haven't heard about this yet and would like to help, write to ERAmerica, 1525 M Street, N.W., Room 602, Washington, D.C. 20036, for information about your sister-state.

Sometimes during the heat of the race, especially in the unratified states, we forget that, nationally, ERA is not a controversial issue. Even the opposition's attempt to unseat ERA at the national Republican convention failed. Over two-thirds of the states have already ratified and states are continuing to adopt state ERAs. President-elect and Mrs. Carter are supporters, as are President and Mrs. Ford. All of the national polls continue to show a supportive public. Approach your ERA efforts expecting that the public will agree and want to help if you show them what they can do. There is nothing to stop us but ourselves (and a very few reluctant but persuadable legislators).

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(SEE REVERSE SIDE)