

January 1980

ERA REPORT

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1730 M STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20036

THE NEW RIGHT

A new and growing political movement threatens the very life of the Equal Rights Amendment. That was the word from ERAmerica honorary co-chair Elly Peterson at the August 1979 ERA Strategy Session in Washington, D.C. as she expressed concern, saying, "We have got to focus on the New Right--and the threat it poses for the ERA." We are providing this information on the so-called New Right because of the active opposition to ERA by a number of groups that are often categorized as being associated with this movement.

The term "New Right" has entered the political vocabulary as a tag to identify a movement that prominently reappeared on the American political scene in the mid-1970s. It consists of a number of single and multi-issue organizations, including STOP ERA and the Eagle Forum,* which coalesce in varying combinations in efforts to defeat a wide array of targeted issues. While the movement can trace its ideological roots to such earlier groups as the John Birch Society and the Liberty Lobby, there is an important philosophical difference. Says Paul Weyrich, national director of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, "We are different from previous generations of conservatives. We are no longer working to preserve the status quo. We are radicals working to overturn the present power structure in this country."

The movement is bipartisan--affecting both major political parties. According to Republican Peterson, it has already made inroads into her party. "I dislike being used [by this movement] both as a Republican and as a woman," she says. Peterson noted that perhaps the most complete analysis of this movement had been done by former U.S. Senator Thomas J. McIntyre in his book, The Fear Brokers. She recommended it as required reading for all ERA supporters.

As described by McIntyre, The Fear Brokers, "... is a book about the Radical Right, about people who profess to love America more and understand it better than you or I do, but whose words and deeds belie this claim...it is about the exploitation of genuine and widespread anxieties by political leaders who preach passionate certainties but whose chauvinism about America masks their own deep-seated reservations about the Grand

* Among the organizations that participate in many of the coalitions within this movement are: The National Conservative Political Action Committee, The Conservative Caucus, Young Americans for Freedom.

American Experiment--about our basic values, traditions, and institutions; about the Bill of Rights and the Constitution itself--and whose shrillness reveals their profound fears about our strength as a nation, our character as a people."

McIntyre takes pains to point out that many of the beliefs held by groups in this movement are shared by millions of other Americans. But he is quick to add that "it is the subtle blending, the exaggeration of what may well be valuable attributes, and intolerance of other viewpoints that make the New Right political philosophy an unacceptable distortion."

The Washington, D.C. Interchange Resource Center, an organization that monitors ultra-conservative political groups, characterized the various coalitions and groups as a pragmatic movement willing "to embrace any issue that serves its cause, broadens its constituency and brings in money."

Part of the movement's mounting success is due to its use of modern computer technology to mount massive direct mail drives that raise millions of dollars overnight. This computer capability also makes it possible to generate an outpouring of support in the form of letters to Congress and/or state legislators on a specific issue they have targeted for defeat, e.g., ERA. (It is significant to point out that it is far easier to identify what these groups are against than to cite what they are "for.")

The movement is also characterized by its choice of tactics. Its aligned groups lean heavily on emotional rhetoric designed to stymie reasonable arguments and nullify the impact of facts and figures. Peterson cautioned the delegates from unratified states attending the Washington meeting: "They know ERA is an emotional issue with which they can stir people up."

ERA STATUS REPORT ON THREE STATES

- Missouri has developed a changed and more positive climate for ERA and plans to enter the amendment into their Senate in mid-January 1980. It looks hopeful.
- Florida is developing another Coalition, and they are working together and plan to try the amendment again.
- Illinois ERA decisions depend on the results of the elections in March. N.O.W. is giving an all out push there under the name of the ERA Ratification Council. LWV is working with them and the reports of their activities are positive.

The LWVUS-ERA Committee, made up of national board members, shown during a recent Washington meeting at which they approved funding for Missouri and Oklahoma ERA campaigns.



L to R, seated: Ann Savage, Florence Rubin, Yvonne Spies. L to R, standing: Madeleine Appel, Ruth Robbins, Nancy Newman. Missing: Joanne Hayes.

IDAHO ET AL. V. FREEMAN

ERA proponents are increasingly concerned over the recent developments surrounding a current court case filed by the states of Idaho and Arizona and four state legislators from Washington. The case challenges the constitutionality of the ERA extension and also seeks to validate a state's power to rescind a prior ratification.

The concern arises over whether federal Judge Marion J. Callister should rule in this case involving the Equal Rights Amendment, because he holds a high-ranking position in the hierarchy of the Mormon Church, which has taken official stands against ERA, against extension and in support of rescission--the issues of the case.

Last October, Judge Callister rejected a Justice Department motion that he disqualify himself from the case because of his position as a Regional Representative in the Mormon Church. (There are fewer than 100 men who rank higher than a Regional Representative in the church's policy making body.) In its motion to disqualify, the Justice Department stated that the test for disqualification is whether a reasonable person could infer that a judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned. They concluded that, because of Callister's position in the Mormon Church and the official position of the church vis-a-vis ERA, a reasonable question does exist.

The Justice Department's Solicitor General has so far decided not to seek a reversal of Callister's decision to remain on the case. As a result, 79 members of Congress have sought to intervene in the case as party defendants on the grounds that the suit challenges the authority of Congress (under Article V of the Constitution) to control the constitutional amendment process.

In a related action, Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) and several other members of Congress are asking to meet with President Carter and Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti to demand that the Jus-

A RECAP OF RECENT LWVUS-ERA ACTIVITIES

- LWVUS-ERA has developed a plan for organizing support for ERA from the business community. This League effort is the only new national strategy on the boards for gaining ERA ratification. We anticipate a major public announcement in mid-February. The LWVUS-ERA has networked with the entire spectrum of organizations supporting the ERA campaign, as well as the White House, to insure a unified effort.
- Brought ERA chairs from unratified states to Washington in August for an ERAmerica national strategy session.
- Initiated an ERA REPORT.
- Approved funding for: a phone bank in Missouri, field service in Oklahoma, the Illinois ERA Ratification Project.
- Conducted ERA coalition-building workshop in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- Participated in ERAmerica board and steering committee meetings.
- Distributed free LWVUS-ERA publications to unratified states.
- Served as liaison with state ERA chairs and other national ERA proponent organizations.
- Entered as amicus in the Idaho/Arizona/Washington case (see story). Working behind the scenes on insuring a fair hearing for this case.

tice Department make further efforts to have Callister's refusal to disqualify himself reconsidered.

On December 3rd, the National Organization for Women responded to the Solicitor General's decision not to seek a reversal by filing its own appeal of a previous decision by Callister that denied N.O.W. intervenor status. The Justice Department will support N.O.W.'s request. If granted intervenor status, N.O.W. intends to pursue the question of disqualification of Judge Callister.

ERA proponent organizations held meetings in Washington, D.C. to discuss strategies which could be taken to urge the Attorney General to take action in the matter. He has not yet taken any steps, although there are legal procedures available.

Believing in the validity of ERA extension, the League of Women Voters of the United States and the LWV of Idaho, Arizona, and Washington signed on as amici (friends of the court) in the case. They share the concern of all ERA proponents that this case be given every chance for a fair and equitable hearing.

UP-DATE: Callister is not being challenged on his religion but on his position in the Mormon Church. At press time the Mormon Church had just freed Judge Callister from his church duties.

The LWVUS-ERA Office gratefully acknowledges those persons in both ratified and unratified states who completed the ERA questionnaires sent out this summer. Plans are being made to determine how best to use and distribute the information received. Thanks again!

WOMEN AND AMERICA: ROSALYNN CARTER CHALLENGES COMMUNICATORS In a speech on April 26, 1979 to the New York Women in Communications, Rosalynn Carter declared that American men and women must be informed that the Equal Rights Amendment "will insure that both women and men are guaranteed choice in all areas of their lives."

"In the past decade, the number of women legislators has more than doubled and, in my view, this may be the key to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment--an issue I feel I must address today. The Equal Rights Amendment must be ratified--and right now women at the state level are in the center of the action.

In North Carolina, for instance, for the first time, the women in the House agreed to block-vote on other key issues so that they could force male House members to vote with them on ERA. In Florida, all of the women in the State House went together as a unified group to support the Amendment. In Oklahoma, (3) women legislators are keeping ERA alive. And in Kentucky, the woman Lt. Governor has successfully blocked efforts to rescind the (state's ratification of) ERA.

I think we should consider our own responsibility here. Millions of Americans still need to be educated about the positive benefits of ERA--not only the men who feel threatened, but the women who insist they are for women's rights--and against ERA. We must inform them that ERA will insure that both women and men are guaranteed choice in all areas of their lives. And that ERA will not require changes for those who do not want changes.

I feel it is especially important to explain that women like me support the ERA. I am a relatively traditional person. I enjoy my roles as wife, mother, partner and businesswoman. I care how I look--and what I think. I am not threatened by ERA. I feel freed by it.

You and I can try to make this controversial issue understandable. We can talk about the breadth of its support. We can be assertive in targeting our attention on key legislators in unratified states--and on those women in elected positions at the state level who are desperately working for all of us.

I came here today hoping to wield some First Lady influence in urging you to join me...in encouraging women throughout the country to have the self-confidence to ask for nothing less than full equality.

All of us are responsible for building a more just and caring society--and certainly one in which we have more control over our own lives."

GROWING STRONG IN THE ERA STRUGGLE

Nancy Neuman, LWVUS national board and ERA committee member, when speaking out for ERA in the October 5, 1979 issue of the Bucknell University newspaper, The Bucknellian, offered these thoughts for anti-ERA legislators!

"Ironically, while some public officials have not taken either the ERA or other issues affecting women seriously, they have played a cruel joke on themselves. By denying women equality under the law, they have broadened and strengthened the women's movement. Their action has caused previously apolitical women to come out of their homes and places of work to swell the numbers of those who have been fighting during this decade for equality.

The greatest paradox of the ERA struggle has been that while a few state legislators continue to hold the ERA in hostage, the women's movement has become so strong, so large, so vocal, that it is indeed the movement of the age, one that will prove historically to have moved the women of the United States further toward equality than ever before.

We must remain constant in our efforts to see to it that legislators know that ratification of ERA is an important and necessary step to be taken toward achieving equal rights for ALL Americans."

NEW DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT APPOINTED

Linda Tarr-Whelan, former administrative director of the New York state Department of Labor, has been appointed deputy assistant to President Carter responsible to Sarah Weddington. Tarr-Whelan will be serving as the liaison with women's organizations and working with the Interdepartmental Task Force on issues affecting women. She can be reached at 202-456-6585.



TWO GENERATIONS FOR ERA

Suzanne Gray, LWVLA legislative chair and state board member, and her daughter at an LWVUS-ERA workshop in Baton Rouge, LA. ERA chair Madeleine Appel and Ellouise Schoettler, LWVUS-ERA director, spent a day with LWVLA local League representatives where the group discussed coalition building and ERA strategies for Louisiana.

ERA WASHINGTON SUMMIT

ERA was the focus of Administration attention on October 23, 1979, as the President's National Advisory Committee for Women (PNACW) and representatives from unratified states met in a closed-door session to discuss strategies for ERA ratification in their states. Later that afternoon the committee personally gave the President a report based on the discussions.

At an ERA gala "pep rally" at the White House that capped the day's meeting schedule 500 proponents were invited to mingle, share campaign stories and hear remarks by President and Mrs. Carter.

Mr. Carter pledged his administration's full support for ERA. He said he will be asking Cabinet members to push for ratification of ERA in their speeches and to pointedly remind unratified states of the need for the amendment every time federal grants or loans are made to them.

In turn, the PNACW has asked presidents of all proponent organizations to back up the President's action with similar statements of support and to ask their members to do the same.

From Ruth J. Hinerfeld, LWVUS President:

A major strength of the League lies in the fact that we are a multi-issue organization, reaching diverse audiences. I urge all League leaders and members to include statements in support of ERA whenever possible in public engagements. I am aware, of course, that in many speaking situations, such as voters service, we must remain nonpartisan on issues, and it may not be possible to work ERA into every subject we address. However, when feasible, a statement in behalf of ERA will be a powerful and positive demonstration of the League's continuing commitment to the ratification of ERA.

NOVEMBER: THE MONTH TO READ ABOUT ERA

Thirty-three national magazines participated in a major effort, orchestrated by ERAmerica, to publish articles and editorials in their November issues to focus attention on ERA and generate widespread public discussion of the amendment.

According to ERAmerica co-chair Sharon Percy Rockefeller, "The significance of the joint publishing project is that women's magazines have recognized the need to provide their readers with independent information on ERA, an important issue which has too often been obscured by ridiculous allegations."

Helen Milliken, co-chair of ERAmerica, also points out, "No matter what role a woman fulfills ... she is interested in the issues that affect her life. Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment is a must if women are to become full-fledged members of our society."

Among the magazines participating in this project are: Redbook, Cosmopolitan, McCall's, Mademoiselle, Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, Ladies Home Journal, Essence, and Glamour.

LWVUS PRESIDENT INTERVIEWED

The League of Women Voters national president, Ruth J. Hinerfeld, participated with six other women in government in a November Ladies Home Journal interview in which they covered such issues as "Strength for the '80s," "How to Win," "The Politics of Equality," and "Women for Women."

When discussing the "Women for Women" question, Mrs. Hinerfeld observed that "women who have gotten their feet wet campaigning for an issue have taken a big step toward running for office themselves. A lot of the heightened awareness of women is a result of the drive for the Equal Rights Amendment."

Rep. Patricia Schroeder, in "Strength for the '80s," points out, "It's hard to overcome the illusion that all you must do is prove your cause is fair and just. Take the Equal Rights Amendment: equal benefits for paying equal taxes; equal pay for equal work. How much more fair and just can you be? But the enthusiasm hasn't been there. We need more women in politics to push for the advancement of all women."

With the increase of women in the political arena, it is apparent that, as observed by Hinerfeld, "Women are no longer circumscribing their interests to what at one time was called women's issues. We have stood in gas lines; we're interested in the energy situation. Half of us are working; certainly we're interested in inflation, interest rates, taxes. What concerns the women of this country is what concerns the people of this country."

In addition to Hinerfeld and Schroeder, participants included Sarah Weddington, assistant to the President; Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS); Lila Cockrell, mayor, San Antonio, Texas; Carla Hills, former HUD secretary, now chairperson of Council of Human Concerns for the Republican National Committee; and Mary Burke Nicholas, director of the Women's Division, State of New York.

ERA: "SEE HOW SHE RUNS" *Gretta Tameling, LWV state ERA Chair for Illinois, sends this report on the Illinois ERA Ratification Project:*

The project consists of Action Teams which will be spreading throughout the state in an effort to broaden the base of support for the ERA.

Action Teams are made up of individuals whose sole purpose is to coordinate and take action for passage of the amendment. Each team organizes within a "territory," which can be a county, district, neighborhood, etc., and is responsible for a wide range of activities essential to a well-organized, knowledgeable campaign--including lobbying, phone banking, letter writing and fund-raising.

Ms. Tameling invites anyone interested in more information on Action Teams to contact her at the LWV Illinois office, 67 East Madison St., Chicago, Illinois 60603 (312-236-0315).