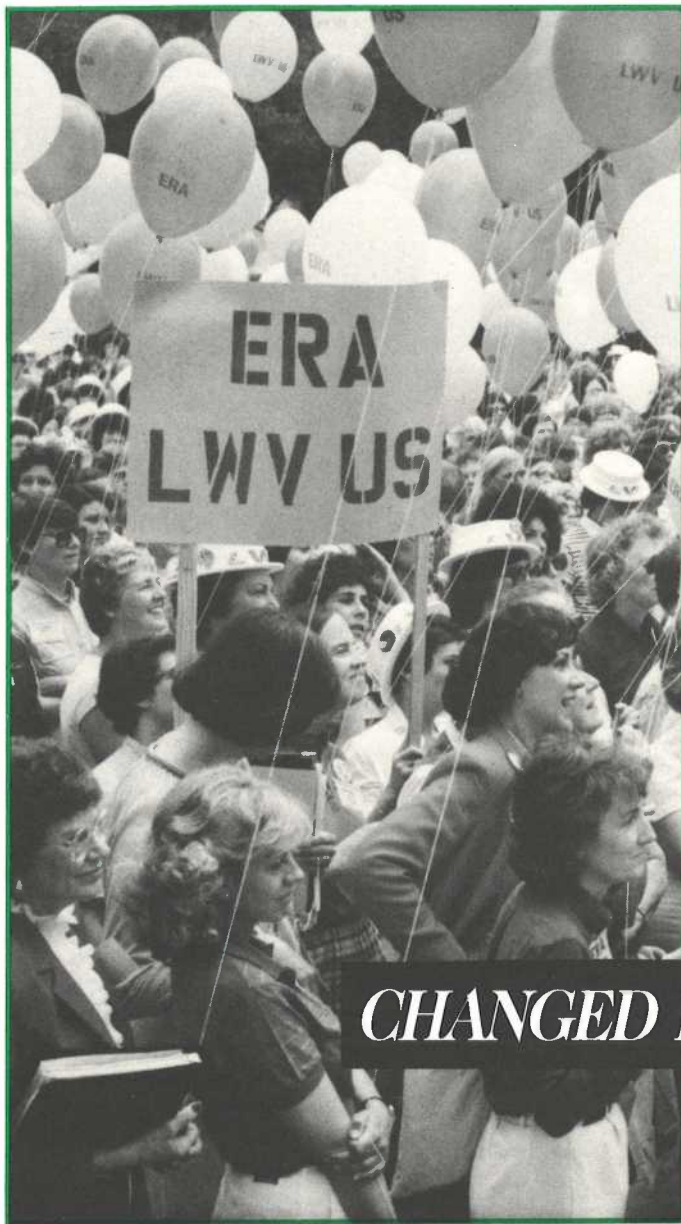


*The League of
Women Voters
and the
Equal Rights
Amendment*

CHANGED FOREVER

League of Women Voters Education Fund



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*League of Women Voters Education Fund
1730 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036*

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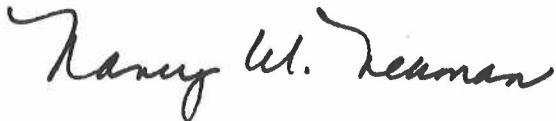
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Foreword

Working on the League's ERA Research Project has been the equivalent of taking a walk through the entire history of the League of Women Voters. Sifting through old files . . . looking at photographs . . . seeing former national board members who are longstanding friends . . . all helped to put both the suffragist and ERA battles into perspective.

As Joanne Hayes, former LWV national board member, commented at our mini "ERA reunion," ". . . the ERA reaffirmed my belief that there was something really good and true at the center of the League structure, which was the wisdom of the local Leagues." Concurring wholeheartedly, it is my pleasure to dedicate this project and report on the League's involvement in the 1972-82 battle for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment to those thousands of League members who worked so hard to secure its passage.



Nancy M. Neuman
Chair
League of Women Voters Education Fund

The Quest for Equality

The Suffrage Legacy

The League of Women Voters of the United States traces its origins to the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the organizational architect of the campaign for ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 1919, delegates to NAWSA's Jubilee Convention in St. Louis heard President Carrie Chapman Catt propose the creation of a League of Women Voters to "finish the fight" for woman suffrage. The League would bring women together "in an effort for legislation which will protect coming movements, which we cannot even foretell, from suffering the untoward conditions which have hindered for so long the coming of equal suffrage."

In February 1920, six months before the 19th Amendment was finally ratified, NAWSA members met in Chicago for a Vic-

tory Convention and formally agreed to reconstitute their organization as the League of Women Voters. The legacy of NAWSA's struggle against "untoward conditions" provides a direct link between the League's origins in the suffrage movement and its role in the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

Final ratification of the 19th Amendment was not easily won. In fact, the history of the "Susan B. Anthony Amendment" bears remarkable parallels to the ERA saga. The radical notion of woman suffrage prompted vigorous debate from the time it was proposed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the 1848 Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. But it was not until Susan B. Anthony was arrested for voting in 1872 that efforts to adopt a women's suffrage amendment began in earnest. The words were simple and straightforward: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Supporters organized, lobbied, petitioned, paraded and picketed. However, more than 40 years passed from the time the amendment was introduced in Congress until it was finally voted out and sent to the states for ratification in 1919. Even then, after getting more than half of the needed approvals in the first year after its passage, the amendment was besieged by opposition forces claiming that it promoted socialism, free love and the breakup of the American family.

Carrie Chapman Catt leads march in New York City in 1917 to gain support for women's suffrage.



Formal organizations opposed to the 19th Amendment sprang up nationwide, aimed at defeating it by blocking ratification in just 13 state legislatures. Opposition was widespread among women who, for varied and complex reasons, believed claims that the amendment would topple their pedestals, end chivalry, threaten the family and require more of them than they felt capable of achieving. States' rights advocates called the second sentence of the amendment a "federal power grab," and many business interests worked against it on grounds that it would bring higher wages for women and boost the temperance movement.

As the amendment approached ratification by the necessary three-quarters of the states, the threat of rescission surfaced. Some states called for referendums to allow citizens to confirm or reject previous legislative approvals, but the Supreme Court declared such votes unconstitutional. By the summer of 1920, 35 states had ratified the amendment and the battle narrowed down to Tennessee as the last remaining hope.

Carrie Chapman Catt arrived in politically and meteorologically steamy Nashville in mid-July to lead the final battle of the ratification campaign. The next six weeks played out as a bizarre political melodrama, including the departure of a handful of Tennessee House members for Alabama in order to deny a quorum. Tennessee finally ratified the 19th Amendment by one vote—that of 24-year-old Harry Burn, whose mother had sent him a telegram saying, "Hurrah, and vote for suffrage!"

However, even when victory was finally achieved and the 19th Amendment was certified as part of the U. S. Constitution on August 26 (now celebrated as Women's Equality Day), the major suffragist organizations

were as divided in their strategies for further women's rights efforts as they had been in their fight for the vote. The National Woman's Party, formed by Alice Paul during the final years of the ratification battle, had taken the militant route to suffrage. Its members had picketed the White House; Paul and others had been arrested and force-fed during hunger strikes in jail. In contrast, the NAWSA had for decades pursued the mainstream tactic of educating and lobbying legislators and working for political victory through ratification campaigns in the states. This strategic division resurfaced in the approaches that these two groups were to take to the next major constitutional proposal for women's rights, the Equal Rights Amendment.

From Opposition to Support

Alice Paul authored the first ERA, the "Lucretia Mott Amendment," which was introduced in Congress in 1923. It read: "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." The amendment was opposed by the League of Women Voters and other progressive organizations because it would have made unconstitutional recently enacted protective labor legislation for women and children. In addition, the League did not want to be perceived as being interested solely in women's issues.

The League opposed the Equal Rights Amendment on legal grounds, even though it had no quarrel with the objective of the bill and in fact established its own Committee on the Legal Status of Women. But the League preferred a step-by-step attack on legal and administrative discrimination

against women, which led the organization to support federal aid for maternal and child-care programs and to oppose discrimination in public employment based on sex or marital status.

In 1944 Alice Paul rewrote the amendment in its present language, patterning it closely on the 19th Amendment:

1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.
2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Support for the ERA broadened during the 1940s when it was added to the platforms of both political parties. In 1954 League opposition to the amendment, by then dormant, finally disappeared during a restructuring of the organization's program. As growing League involvement with civil rights and equal opportunity issues in the 1960s led members to see parallels between the status of women and that of minorities, a strong push for women's issues developed at all three levels of the League—local, state and national.

Finally, in May 1972, less than two months after the Equal Rights Amendment had been passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification, the League of Women Voters at its biennial national convention overwhelmingly approved support for the ERA. Delegates affirmed "equal rights for all regardless of sex" as a fundamental and necessary elaboration of the organization's historical support for equal opportunity. From that time on, the League of Women Voters was a committed and active participant in the battle for the ERA—and it was a battle

the likes of which the League had not seen since suffrage.

Fleeting Optimism

"Congress took 49 years to approve the Equal Rights Amendment, but supporters predict the states will need only two years to put into the Constitution the broad ban against discrimination on the basis of sex." Thus began an Associated Press article in the *Washington Post* on April 25, 1972. Hawaii ratified the ERA within two hours of its Senate passage, followed by Delaware, Nebraska and New Hampshire the next day. In less than one month, 13 states had voted yes. (Other comments in the article cause shivers in hindsight, especially Illinois State Senator Esther Saperstein's report that "no opposition has developed, none at all," and Arizona State Senator Sandra Day O'Connor's comment that "enthusiasm chilled" when Hawaii beat Arizona to the honor of being the first state to ratify. Neither Illinois nor Arizona ever ratified the ERA.)

By the end of 1972, 22 of the requisite 38 states had approved the amendment, but anti-ERA factions were surfacing and starting to make their influence felt. The quintessential representative of ERA opposition, Phyllis Schlafly, founder of the Eagle Forum and a conservative political activist from Illinois, began to focus her existing right-wing newsletter and political base on countering the ratification drive. Schlafly's ability to align her overlapping Eagle Forum and STOP ERA groups with the fundraising and public relations successes of the Moral Majority and other harbingers of the country's conservative swing encouraged ERA opponents to use the amendment as an organization-building tool. Proponents were caught off guard by the fast-developing opposition, without adequate resource materials or political strategies to answer the challenge.

In February 1973, when it became apparent that the ERA was in trouble, national League of Women Voters representatives made phone calls to state Leagues in the 12 states where votes were pending, with an offer to serve as a clearinghouse and source of information. League members lobbying in the state legislatures reported that the opposition's emotional scare tactics were working against the proponents' rational and "League-like" arguments. An emergency flyer was sent from the national office to those states, and an article in the April/May 1973 issue of the League membership magazine, *The National Voter*, informed all League members about the worsening status of the campaign. As information from the states filled in the picture of growing opposition to the ERA, the League's national board of directors decided that a more organized leadership effort had to be mounted.

Campaign Kick-Off

On October 10, 1973, the League of Women Voters officially launched its national campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment at a press briefing in the Gold Room of the Rayburn House Office Building. LWVUS President Lucy Wilson Benson presented Rep. Bella Abzug (D NY), Rep. Patricia Schroeder (D CO), and other women members of the House of Representatives with the League's recently designed ERA bracelet in recognition of their support for the amendment. Money from nationwide sales of the bracelet was earmarked for a special ERA budget, which funded materials and logistical assistance for Leagues working to ratify the ERA or defeat rescission attempts.

Benson emphasized that the two major components of the League's campaign would be public education and lobbying of state legislators. To implement that effort,

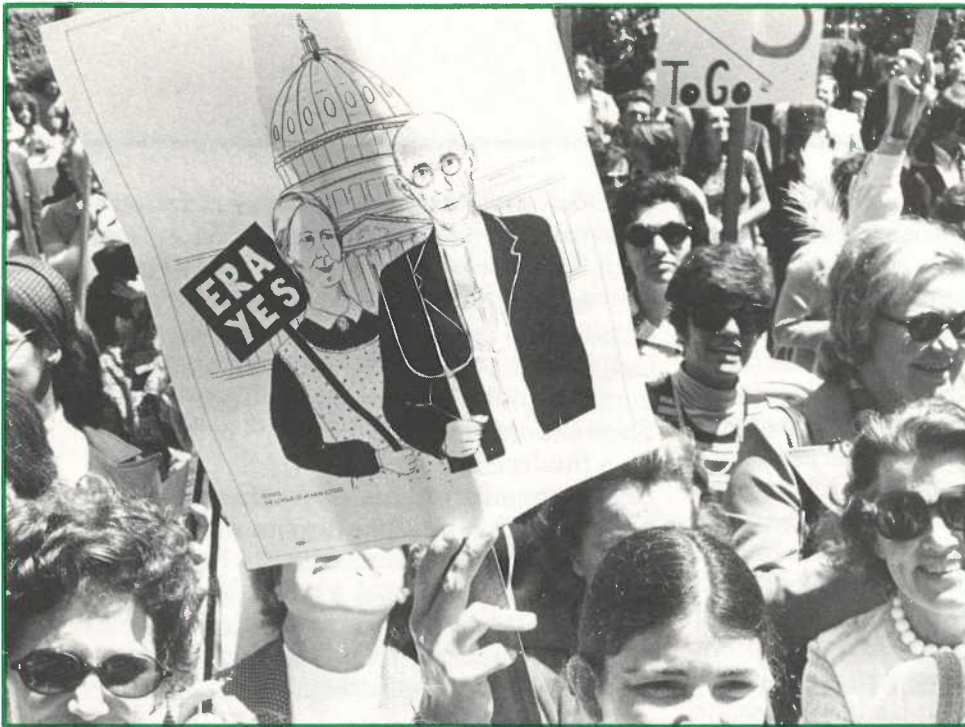
the national office prepared an ERA Countdown Campaign kit for distribution to local Leagues in unratified states. The public relations packet contained sample speeches, information on the ERA, suggestions on countering emotionalism from the opposition, fundraising ideas and media tips. The action packet included lists of state ERA coalitions, lobbying strategies, advice on the legal aspects of the battle, informative articles and a bibliography.

In mid-October 1973, Benson appeared on the *Today* television show in a debate with Schlafly, moderated by Barbara Walters. Benson refuted, point by point, the anti-ERA arguments about family support obligations, the draft and protective labor laws. In a paradigm of proponents' experience with the STOP ERA leader, Benson later recalled, "I appeared on that program with her twice. I greatly underestimated her the first time, but I did much better the second time."

Meanwhile, the League was being inundated with orders for the ERA bracelet, which was modeled on the then-popular POW bracelet signifying support for prisoners of the Vietnam war. Coverage in *Good Housekeeping* and elsewhere added to the publicity, and more than \$100,000 was raised within a few months. By the time the bracelets were sold out in 1977, sales had produced more than \$273,000 for the ERA war chest.

Intensified Efforts

With 30 states in the ratified fold and eight to go, the League began 1974 by hiring its first ERA staff director, Mary Brooks. "My job description was essentially 'Help get the ERA ratified,'" Brooks noted. "When I realized that no other organizations had coun-



League members rally in support of the ERA at 1974 national convention in San Francisco.

terparts to me, and when my work within six months had made me one of the top national political experts on the ERA, I knew we were in a lot of trouble.”

The LWVUS was a member of the Equal Rights Amendment Ratification Council, a loose coalition of about 50 national organizations that monitored state ratification efforts and met periodically in Washington to exchange information. However, ERA activists in the states were essentially on their own, without any national coordination, support or direction for their state campaign efforts.

Impatient for more focused strategies and action, Brooks and representatives of some of the other member organizations (including Common Cause, the American Association of University Women, the National Organization for Women, the National Women’s Political Caucus, United Methodist Women, Catholic Sisters Network, the International Union of Electrical Workers and the United Automobile Workers) formed an ERA Technical Task Force within the Ratification Council. This group, which met at the League office for about a year, analyzed the needs of state ratification coalitions and pooled their resources for states requesting help. When the Task Force began its work in the spring of 1974, the

national convention in San Francisco, three more states had ratified, bringing the total to 33. On May 8 at noon, delegates marched from the convention’s hotel site to Union Square for an ERA rally, featuring speeches by President Benson and representatives from unratified states. Keller Bumgardner, the first LWVUS board member in charge of the ERA effort and later chair of the South Carolina ERA coalition, moderated an ERA briefing session the following day.

August 1974 marked the beginning of a special partnership in the ERA campaign between the League and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs (BPW). At the League’s invitation, the presidents and several staff members of the two groups met over dinner to review the outlook for the ERA ratification fight. Although by 1974 BPW had raised more than \$300,000 for the ERA, it had no full-time staff person working on ratification and no plans to assist the unratified states. The League representatives urged BPW to hire political professionals and to target its ERA money on those states most likely to ratify.

In response, BPW asked its Ohio ERA coalition representative, Mariwyn Heath, to

serve as BPW's national ERA coordinator "for five months at most," she recalled. Heath, who is recognized as a central figure in the campaign and a prime mover behind the 1976 creation of ERAmerica, the national ERA coalition, worked closely with the League throughout the remaining years of the battle. She characterized the League as "the steadiest and most solid partner we had. You cannot say enough for the League's commitment to the issue and the willingness of both ERA chairs and directors to go the extra mile and give 110 percent."

While Brooks continued to meet with the Task Force and a League ERA Action Strategy Committee and made field trips to identify and aid state activists, the emphasis during the fall of 1974 was on election strategy. As a nonpartisan organization, the League does not support or oppose candidates for public office. However, as a service to voters, the League does disseminate information about candidates' positions and voting records. In that capacity, LWV members in the unratified states worked to identify and publicize candidates' positions on the ERA as an election issue. On November 8, the LWVUS announced results of a post-election survey of nine target states showing that chances of ratification had improved: 52 percent of legislators elected in those states were pro-ERA and only 28 percent were on record in opposition.

National Coalition-Building

"Five in 75" was the battle cry as the campaign entered the new year. League members were deep in the trenches, serving as ERA coalition chairs in seven of the ten states targeted for ratification fights that year. Although North Dakota brought the ratification score to 34 in early February, news from other states was not good. South Carolina tabled the ERA, North Carolina

voted no, and Illinois adopted a resolution requiring a three-fifths majority for ratifying a federal constitutional amendment.

In May, delegates to the League's council meeting, the biennial gathering of state League representatives, declared a commitment to the ERA in the strongest terms. They endorsed a national board proposal for a fundraising appeal in which each League member was asked to give at least \$1 for the ERA in order to raise \$140,000. Council delegates also asked the board to investigate establishing a centralized national effort for the ratification drive and passed a resolution to hold national League meetings only in ratified states.



June mailing to League members and a September message on tape from LWVUS President Ruth Clusen to all state and local Leagues, comparing the ERA campaign to the suffrage battle, put the fundraising effort over the halfway mark in less than three months. In the meantime, Bumgardner and Brooks were representing the League at meetings of the ERA Subcommittee of the International Women's Year (IWY) Commission, which was staffed by Mariwyn Heath. This group had been set up to provide a new organizational base for the national ERA effort, with the idea of minimizing the normal interorganizational friction that results from working in a coalition.

In October 1975, the LWVUS sponsored an ERA campaign strategy meeting in Chicago for League ERA coordinators and other participants from the eight targeted states of Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina and Oklahoma. The session was designed to give state ERA activists nuts-and-bolts help with in-state fundraising, public relations, field organizing and campaign management. According to Brooks, the meeting marked a change in the League's mentality about the magnitude of the challenge and the profes-

sionalism with which proponents needed to proceed. "From then on it was a different ballgame," she said. "Before then, with the exception of a few states, it had been generally garden-variety lobbying." Information from that meeting played a large part in the recommendations made to the national board by its ERA Strategy Committee in January 1976.

That year began with the announcement of a new national ERA campaign organization, ERAmerica. On January 15 Rep. Margaret Heckler (R MA), cochair of the IWY Commission's ERA Subcommittee, reported to the full commission, chaired by Jill Ruckelshaus, on the proposal for the new organization. Democrat Liz Carpenter and Republican Elly Peterson were appointed as the first national cochairs. Office space was provided by the National Education Association.

On February 25 ERAmerica officially launched its campaign with a press conference outlining its ratification plans for the year. While the League wholeheartedly endorsed the creation of ERAmerica, it did not contribute the \$10,000 in seed money that was asked for. Instead it gave a \$1,000 contribution and lent Mary Brooks to the organization for more than three months as a field organizer. When it became apparent, however, that a lack of funding would prevent ERAmerica from functioning as an effective campaign organization, Brooks returned to the League.

In 1976, a coordinated effort was organized to target funds to states involved in priority ratifications. Under the ERAmerica umbrella, the League and BPW developed campaign budgets and provided funds to selected states; smaller contributions were made by AAUW and the National Woman's Party. Indiana received approximately \$60,000 and North Carolina close to \$30,000. Money also was sent to Colorado and Massachusetts, where pro-ERA forces were victorious on state ERA-related questions on the November ballot.

Dlegates to the League's 1976 convention, held in May in New York City, once again overwhelmingly confirmed the League's commitment to the ERA. A telegram from First Lady Betty Ford wished the League a successful convention and added, "I particularly applaud your support for the Equal Rights Amendment. Women like you who have earned the respect of your communities can be especially effective in promoting ratification of ERA." A spontaneous call for contributions from the floor by the League president of an unratified state garnered more than \$1,200, with money being thrown off the balcony in enthusiastic response. On the League board of directors, Joanne Hayes took over as the new ERA chair.

Over the summer, operating difficulties and failure of a fund drive led to a reorganization of ERAmerica. NOW, one of the coalition's founding members, withdrew a few months later to pursue an independent campaign for the ERA in conjunction with its own organization-building. Lacking sufficient financial support and authority to serve as a participatory "campaign central," ERAmerica came to function primarily as a national information and resource coordination center for participating groups.

From Mariwyn Heath's perspective, the failure of ERAmerica to become an effective strategic center reflected the fact that its member organizations never made the amendment a priority over their other issues. She recalled that the ERA was "dusted off for fundraising and focus when it suited. The separate agendas were astonishing."

Time of Transition

A major ERA resource publication, *In Pursuit of Equal Rights: Women in the Seven-*

ties, was written by Brooks and mailed to all state and local Leagues in November 1976. The 24-page booklet was filled with information about ratification and rescission, implementation and interpretation, the courts and the amendment's legislative history, the status of women in various areas of the law, the opposition, state ERAs, resources and endorsing organizations. Widespread use of the publication led to a second edition with updated statistics in 1978.

A memo from ERA Chair Joanne Hayes that accompanied the mailing of *In Pursuit* advised League members to be wary of entering into public debates on ERA with the opposition. "All too often," she wrote, "debates degenerate into 'sideshows' for proponents and opponents, with the press picking up the most sensational aspects. . . . The organized opposition to the ERA has but one strategy and that is to create doubt . . . let's not help them create it." League members in general, however, continued to act on the conviction that presenting accurate and logical information in support of the ERA would convince the public and legislators that the amendment deserved ratification. They had yet to acknowledge what ERAmerica consultant Joseph Napolitan wrote in his 1981 analysis of the campaign: "In any contest matching emotion against logic, emotion will win every time."

By the year's end, an ominous trend could not be ignored: not a single state had ratified the Equal Rights Amendment in 1976.

However, hopes began to rise again as Indiana became the 35th state to ratify, on January 18, 1977. Other votes early that year were excruciatingly close: the amendment was defeated by a 24 yes–26 no vote in the North Carolina Senate and by a 19 yes–21 no vote in the Florida Senate. Realizing that 1977 would be a crucial year, the League began to build toward an all-out fight. A

new flyer entitled *ERA Means Equal Rights for Men and Women* was added as resource ammunition in January.

Brooks left her position as the League's ERA Director after the North Carolina vote. In retrospect, she admits, "I felt it was dead then, because I could imagine the same scenario being repeated time after time. The League had gone all out in lobbying, and on the North Carolina Senate floor, a number of supporters spoke in favor of it. But there stood anti-ERA Lieutenant Governor Jimmy Greene with his arms folded, not having to say a word. The opponents didn't even have to make any arguments against it. It didn't have a chance."

Brooks departed at the end of the first phase of the ERA campaign; the next stage was to carry the League's involvement to new heights. In March, LWVUS President Ruth Clusen sent a memo to state Leagues advising them to prepare their delegates to Council '77 for an important decision on a major ERA fundraising drive. The board saw a three-fold need for bold action: to ratify the ERA, to deal a blow to the growing right-wing coalition that was also opposing the League on other issues and to fill a leadership gap in the ratification fight. Stressing the need for massive fundraising, ERA Chair Hayes distributed pledge sheets to national board members at its March meeting; the first pledge returned was for \$5,000.

Council delegates spent much time at the May meeting discussing the League's role in the ERA battle. The board proposed that the League undertake a massive fundraising effort, contingent on receiving pledges from Leagues nationwide totaling \$1.3 million, or an average of \$10 per member. A go-ahead decision would be made by the board at its June meeting if pledges by that time totaled half the potential amount. Delegates added the stipulation that an ad hoc committee report to the board in June on the prospects of ratification.

A clear signal was sent from the grassroots in response: by June 23 member pledges totaled more than \$825,000. The Ad Hoc ERA Committee report assessed ratification as difficult but imperative to work for. As a result, the national board voted unanimously to put the campaign into motion and to withdraw up to \$200,000 from the League's operating funds to cover expenses.

As the League's efforts increased, Nancy Neuman took over as ERA Chair on the national board. An ERA committee was set up and a new staff director and support staff were hired. A mailing in July to state and local League presidents included a new flyer, *Go ERA*, as well as fundraising tips and background information on the history of the League's ERA support.

The Ad Hoc ERA Committee had listed Florida, Illinois, North Carolina and Oklahoma as the states with the best prospects for ratification. Later in 1977 South Carolina was added to the target list. Neuman traveled to North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Illinois and maintained extensive contacts with activists in many of the unratified states.

On August 26, the League engaged in a literal change of pace by participating as one of four cosponsoring organizations in the Alice Paul Equal Rights March in Washington. As a memorial to Paul, who had died earlier that year at the age of 92, more than 75 organizations joined in this re-creation of a 1913 suffrage march which she had led down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the White House. Paul's march was cut short

when she and several of her colleagues were arrested. In re-enacting the historic event, the organizers proposed to complete her march to symbolize nationwide support for the ERA.

At a reception in the White House Rose Garden early in the day, President Jimmy Carter issued a proclamation calling for ERA ratification. Clusen and Neuman then led the League contingent down Pennsylvania Avenue along with the 3,500 other marchers. The event culminated with a rally at Lafayette Park, across from the White House, where Clusen told the assembled supporters, "Ratification of the ERA must



League members prepare to march down Pennsylvania Avenue at the Alice Paul Equal Rights March in August 1977.



LWVUS President Ruth C. Clusen and ERA Chair Nancy Neuman present First Lady Rosalynn Carter with the League ERA necklace at the White House.

actionary activists and highlighted anti-ERA sentiments, conference participants demonstrated their enthusiastic support for the ERA and raised \$100,000 for ERAmerica.

Campaign Complications

Beginning in the fall of 1977, an issue of major significance in the ERA campaign set the League apart from a

be more important than the role that any one of us, individually or as organizations, plays in its achievement. We must want to win—as much as the opposition wants to defeat us.”

Clusen and Neuman were back at the White House on September 8, when they accepted a personal check for the LWVUS ERA Campaign from First Lady Rosalynn Carter. In return, Neuman presented her with the newly produced LWVUS ERA gold necklace, designed to follow up on the success of the ERA bracelet.

Neuman took a seat on the board of ERAmerica as vice-president, while the League continued to support that organization financially in its role as a clearinghouse for ERA information and communication among endorsing groups. Clusen, Neuman and several other League board and staff members also attended the first International Women's Year (IWY) Conference in Houston in November. There Clusen participated in an ERA panel discussion and the League sold its ERA necklaces in the exhibit hall. Although many state elections of IWY delegates had brought out re-

number of other endorsing organizations. A resolution was introduced in Congress to extend the period for ERA ratification for seven years beyond the existing March 22, 1979, deadline. Constitutional experts differed on whether Congress had the right to extend, whether a simple majority or a two-thirds vote was necessary to do so and whether an extension would affect the standing of state efforts to rescind ratifications. The League decided to remain neutral on the legislation in order to concentrate its energies on maintaining momentum toward the original deadline.

By March 1978, in part because of discouraging losses in Virginia and South Carolina, pressure was building for the League to mount a national effort in favor of the ERA time-limit extension. However, the League held to its neutral position, believing that ratification was still possible by 1979 with concerted effort by the pro-ERA groups. The League hoped that the approaching deadline would have a galvanizing effect on legislators and contributors and feared that rearranging priorities to work for extension rather than ratification,

as NOW and other groups were doing, would have a negative political effect by implying that ratification by 1979 was a lost cause.

The League also had political and legal reservations about extension. Apart from the issue of whether the bill could get enough votes to pass Congress, there were serious constitutional questions about the need for the amending process to be “roughly contemporaneous” and the possibility that the validity of rescission might be thrown open to reinterpretation by Congress. While the League reserved the right to reevaluate its stance as the deadline approached, it continued to devote its efforts toward ratification in the hope that the question of extension would become moot.

The ratification effort became increasingly intense throughout 1978. In South Carolina (where a campaign consultant said, “We were lied to, eyeball to eyeball”), key supporters switched to No votes at the last minute. In Virginia, pro-ERA demonstrators were arrested in the state capitol. On March 19, the Kentucky legislature voted to rescind its ratification, but Lieutenant Governor Thelma Stovall, acting as chief executive in the governor’s absence, vetoed the rescission.

The League, along with other ERA supporters, undertook massive efforts in targeted unratified states to secure ratification. Grappling with the emotion-laden arguments over abortion and the rights of homosexuals proved to be one of the more difficult aspects of the ERA effort. The ability of anti-ERA forces to put proponents on the defensive took its toll. Added to this frustration was the agony of watching pro-ERA “head counts” dissolve in the statehouses when it came time to vote.

In March 1978 the attorney general of Missouri sued NOW, alleging a conspiracy in the boycott of unratified states that pro-ERA organizations were encouraging. The LWVUS was subpoenaed to appear as a witness and also was faced with the possibility

of being charged as a defendant in the suit. In implementing its 1975 council decision not to hold national meetings in unratified states, the League had changed its 1978 convention site from Chicago to Cincinnati. However, as Neuman explained in her deposition, the LWVUS did not conspire with other organizations to promulgate the boycott policy.

The next likely vote in 1978 was in Illinois, where League dollars were paying for lobbyists, media work and a highly organized campaign effort. In April, Neuman and Clusen joined the Illinois League at a reception for state legislators in Springfield. In her May 2 ERA address to national convention delegates in Cincinnati, Neuman expressed optimism about an Illinois vote despite the three-fifths majority vote required for ratification.

Delegates to the 1978 League convention again proved their overwhelming commitment to the ERA. After a floor roll call of the states’ fundraising tallies, delegates strongly affirmed the League strategy of “a flat-out ratification effort aimed at the March 22, 1979, deadline.” During the closing proceedings, ratified states adopted unratified sister states for special direct assistance and in a final burst of enthusiasm, delegates collected more than \$1,600 in a shopping bag in just five minutes.

June brought bad news from Illinois—twice. On June 7, the ERA lost in the Illinois House by a vote of 101 yes–64 no (six short of the three-fifths required), primarily because a group of pro-ERA legislators from Chicago abstained over a party leadership dispute. On June 22 the Illinois House again defeated the ERA, this time by just two votes, 105 yes–71 no; critical no votes were cast by three members who previously had voted yes. Both tallies would have been a rousing majority in favor of ratification in any other state. Despite its deep disappointment and frustration over the political

betrayal in Illinois, the League continued to pour financial resources into other targeted campaigns in Florida, Nevada, North Carolina and Oklahoma.

Supporters of the deadline extension made plans for a march in Washington, DC on July 9, followed by a lobbying day on Capitol Hill. Many members urged the League to come out in favor of extension and support the march, but the national board held to its earlier decision. The new LWVUS president, Ruth J. Hinerfeld, pointed out that none of the unratified states had asked the League to back the extension effort. Neuman responded in a letter to one member, "It's a shame extension has diverted so much attention away from our real goal of ratification. It may make people feel better to be working for it, but it's not getting three more states ratified." (Neuman reports that historian Gerda Lerner told her several years ago, "By the way, the history books will show the League was right on extension.")

While the July march increased political momentum for extension, some ERA supporters and opponents cited the League's neutrality on the issue to question its commitment to the ERA. In response, the League national board reconsidered in September and voted to support extension while continuing to work for ratification by the original deadline. The League still had reservations about the precedent-setting aspect of the extension and the fact that more rescissions during the extension period would cause increased difficulties with Congress after the 38th ratification. In October, the Senate joined the House in extending the ERA ratification deadline to June 30, 1982.

Legal Entanglements

In the fall of 1978 the League made a campaign decision to work on ERA-related

state ballot issues in Florida and Nevada. In Florida, a long menu of ballot questions included a revision to the state constitution prohibiting sex discrimination (Revision #2 on the ballot). ERA supporters considered a significant victory on that question essential to eventual ratification of the federal ERA amendment in Florida. The Nevada ballot included a nonbinding referendum on ratification of the federal ERA.

In both states the key to success was getting out every possible pro-ERA vote. League members across the country were provided with get-out-the-vote cards to send to acquaintances in those states, with efforts concentrated on Mail Day, October 23. In an all-out fight, the League spent more than \$400,000 on Florida's "Yes on 2" campaign. But on November 7, Florida's voters, seeking to defeat a casino gambling proposal and apparently overwhelmed by the number of questions on the ballot, followed the path of least confusion and voted down all nine ballot proposals, even the relatively noncontroversial issue of merit retention of judges. In Nevada, where the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) gave members written instructions to vote no, the pro-ERA side lost by a 2-to-1 margin and a number of pro-ERA legislators were defeated. Prospects for ratification in those states, never bright, dimmed considerably.

In the midst of this heated activity, Neuman traveled to Kansas City to appear as a witness in the *Missouri v. NOW* boycott trial. Her testimony was an important corroboration of the fact that there was no conspiracy among the boycotting organizations, since the League was one of the first two groups to officially decide to hold conventions only in ratified states—two years before NOW began to encourage that policy. Nevertheless, with only \$80,000 left in the League's ERA war chest after expensive losing campaigns in Illinois and Florida, the

necessity of spending precious ratification dollars on the lawsuit was exasperating.

The new year brought some tough political and legal choices to the national board at its January 1979 meeting, but the ERA remained at the top of the League's list of priority items for the coming year. A decision to spend \$11,000 in North Carolina on field organizers, public relations and a legislative reception featuring ERAmerica cochair Liz Carpenter and nationally syndicated columnist Erma Bombeck proved fruitless, as the ERA was buried in committee in that state in February. In anticipation of a lawsuit challenging the extension of the ratification deadline, the board agreed that the League would join the lawsuit as an *amicus curiae* in defense of the new deadline.

In addition to pursuing elusive ratifications, the League had to contend with fighting off new rescission efforts in a number of states. While such attempts had been mounted since the early years of the campaign, a new anti-ERA legislative tactic appeared in South Dakota and elsewhere when opponents attempted to have the states' ratification declared "null and void" after the original March 22, 1979 deadline. In Illinois, an attempt to revise the three-fifths rule failed and the League's counsel advised that there were insufficient grounds to challenge the Illinois rule in court. The only minor source of cheer that spring was the failure of rescission attempts in Wyoming, Indiana and several other states.

As expected, a lawsuit, *Idaho et al. v. Freeman* was initiated after the original March 22, 1979 deadline by legislators from Idaho, Arizona and Washington. They sought to have the extension declared invalid, uphold the viability of Idaho's rescission action and withdraw Washington's ratification. State Leagues in those three states joined the LWVUS in filing as *amici curiae* to counter the anti-ERA legal maneuvering. Complicating the litigation was the fact that the

judge assigned to the case, Marion Callister, was a high-ranking official in the actively anti-ERA Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He refused to withdraw from the case and the Justice Department decided not to appeal his decision.

As the battle continued to grind on through 1979, fundraising was again a major concern. In order to keep ERAmerica functioning, the League and other organizations on its board each contributed \$10,000. To begin replenishing League coffers, a tear-off contribution form appeared in the spring issue of the League's *National Voter* magazine. Madeleine Appel was appointed as the new ERA Chair on the national board and, in July, Ellouise Schoettler joined the staff as ERA Director.

National Business Council for ERA

In August 1979 the League convened a meeting in Washington, DC for League ERA Chairs from unratified states, in conjunction with a strategy-planning session conducted by ERAmerica. This gathering allowed the League activists to make contact with each other as well as to promote coalition building with other ERAmerica organizations. Strategists at the meeting concluded that the support of business leaders was a missing link in the ratification campaign, and the LWVUS agreed to develop plans for a National Business Council for ERA (NBC).

With help from Ms. editor Gloria Steinem, the League contacted actress and businesswoman Polly Bergen, who agreed to cochair the NBC initiative. With her help, the League assembled a group of business representatives for an initial planning meeting on December 3, 1979 at the Equitable Life Assurance Society in New York.



William Agee (left), Polly Bergen (center) and Coy Eklund (right) launch the National Business Council for ERA at a New York City press conference.

Equitable President Coy Eklund and William Agee, chairman and chief executive officer of the Bendix Corporation, joined Bergen as NBC cochairs.

The League initially envisioned the NBC as a source of lobbying contacts and funding for the ERA campaign, but participants at the meeting expressed a desire to be involved in the organizing and strategy planning as well. In a follow-up memorandum to the League's ERA Committee, Appel extolled the potential of the new approach: "The only thing that will change votes is calling in chits, and ERA forces currently don't have chits. Business does. Its members give heavily to political campaigns. Its members and their lobby representatives can remind legislators of past and future support and stress their desires to ratify."

The National Business Council for ERA was officially launched at a press conference in New York on February 12, 1980. LWVUS President Ruth Hinerfeld and the three National Business Council Cochairs announced that 50 top corporate leaders had signed on as founding members. A steering committee of business members would be set up to plan and implement strategies, she said, while the League, as NBC's sponsor, would participate in that committee and administer and coordinate

the council's activities.

Immediately after the press conference, Bergen, Schoettler and *Redbook* editor Sey Chassler, a council member, flew to Washington to attend a White House briefing for business people, legislators and ERA activists from selected un-

ratified states. When Bergen announced the formation of the council and explained its workings, the response from the audience of ERA veterans was extremely enthusiastic. President Carter praised the League's ERA efforts, and Bergen and Schoettler were swamped with requests for more information.

February 12 was not entirely a red-letter day, however, since the ERA was defeated in the Virginia Senate by a vote of 20 yes-19 no. (Under Virginia Senate rules, an absolute majority of 21 is required for ratification.) Using unprecedented tactics, an anti-ERA senator killed the measure by abstaining, thereby avoiding a 20-20 deadlock that would have been broken by pro-ERA Lieutenant Governor Charles Robb.

On May 10, LWVUS President Hinerfeld was one of the speakers at the National ERA March in Chicago, where she addressed a crowd of nearly 100,000 supporters. On May 15, the White House hosted a briefing on the ERA for business leaders and activists, including many state League presidents and ERA Chairs. The LWVUS was involved in the planning of the briefing, and Appel participated on a panel with several business leaders in a discussion of ratification strategies. Membership in the council

continued to climb, reaching 125 by June.

That same month, Bergen spoke to delegates at the League national convention in Washington, DC, urging continued commitment to the ERA battle. At the same convention, delegates voted to expand the League's ERA position to encompass not only ratification efforts but also "action to bring laws into compliance with the ERA: (a) to eliminate or amend those laws that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of sex; (b) to promote laws that support the goal of ERA, and (c) to strengthen the enforcement of such existing laws." With realistic foresight, the League made this program revision in order to have a basis to act on ERA-related issues even if the ERA were not ratified. After convention, Lois Harrison, former Florida state League president, brought her experience from that state's ERA campaign to the national board as the new ERA Chair.

June 18 was another of those days of converging events that seemed to occur regularly in the ERA saga. On that day the League joined several other national organizations as a patron of "A National ERA Evening," cosponsored by ERAmerica and the National Women's Political Caucus ERA Fund. President and Mrs. Carter hosted a White House reception for the 450 people attending the fundraiser, then joined the group for dinner at the Mazza Galerie, an elegant shopping mall in Washington. The President and Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy spoke in support of the ERA.

During the evening, word came that the ERA had again fallen victim to political chicanery in Illinois. When pro-ERA floor leaders had realized that the vote would not succeed, they froze it at *102 yes-71 no*, five votes short of the necessary three-fifths. Many members of the National Business Council had made calls to legislators before the vote, but even their influence was not enough to overcome the three-fifths obsta-

cle. League members ruefully recalled what Nancy Neuman had said in 1978: "Even the state flower would have trouble passing on a three-fifths vote in Illinois."

Political Realities

With the country's political tide turning more conservative, ERA proponents began losing former allies. In 1980, the Republican Party withdrew support of the ERA for the first time since 1940. Hinerfeld wrote to the Republican Platform Committee expressing dismay with the plank that granted equal standing to both sides of the ERA debate.

The election of Ronald Reagan as President in November 1980 was incontrovertible evidence of the mood of the country. Although Hinerfeld appeared at a joint ERAmerica/NOW press conference on November 6 to offer public reassurances that the campaign was alive and well, the assembled political realists knew that the death knell had sounded for the current incarnation of the ERA. As ERA Director Schoettler expressed it, "We knew we had lost, but we couldn't stop. We couldn't give it up."

In an attempt to start 1981 with a fresh strategy that might have an effect on legislators, ERAmerica and NOW reached back to the suffragist tactic of a petition drive. The kickoff was on January 11 (Alice Paul's birthday), and the halfway point was set at February 15 (Susan B. Anthony's birthday). The League participated in the national drive, collecting more than 40,000 signatures in an effort to reinvigorate the campaign and identify people who could help fend off rescission attempts. While talk of rescission surfaced in a number of states, little action materialized. Nevertheless, the

League set up an "early warning system" of contacts in ratified states to alert the national office if a serious threat emerged.

As always during the years of its involvement with the ERA, the League faced the challenge of balancing its leadership on that issue against the many other commitments and interests of a multi-issue organization. In 1980, for instance, the most visible League priority had been sponsorship of the presidential debates, which took precedence in fundraising and organizational commitment. However, with the election over, the national board agreed to send a direct mail priority message on February 10 to all League members across the country, asking for contributions to fund the final push in the key unratified states. In another demonstration of staunch support for the ERA, members responded with more than \$220,000.

Mobilizing the Media

The League's partnership with members of the business community paid a dividend in the spring of 1981 in the form of an ERA Communications Task Force, which was developed under the aegis of the National Business Council and the Advertising Women of New York. The task force, comprised of advertising executives who volunteered their professional talents to the ERA campaign, devised a plan for gathering consumer-based data to produce a unified and effectively phrased media message in the unratified states. Schoettler and Mariwyn Heath became a coordinating committee of two for the research project, which involved a psychological analysis of perceptions of the ERA in the unratified states and a Roper poll to back up the findings.

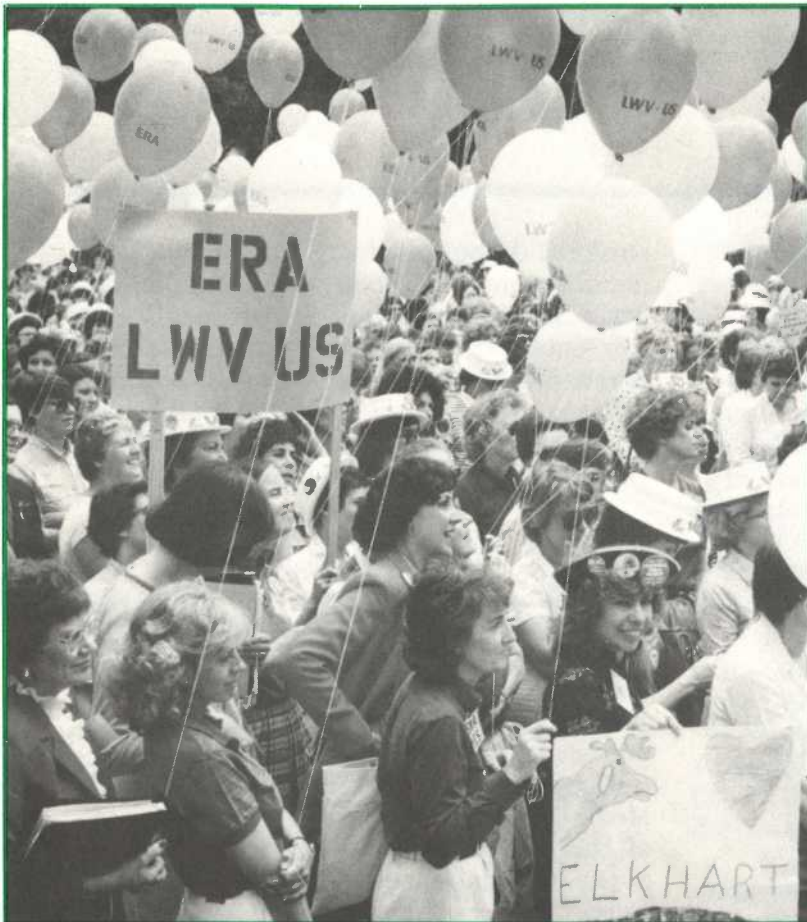
June 30, 1981, the beginning of the final year of the ERA campaign, was marked by NOW-sponsored Countdown Rallies in Washington, DC and more than 100 other

cities across the country. Hinerfeld and Polly Bergen were among the many speakers at the national rally in Lafayette Park across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. Media coverage of the other events showed a strong League presence nationwide. Available in time for the rally was an informational flyer, *The Equal Rights Amendment: Why We Need It*, published by the LWVUS for use during the countdown year.

In October, Polly Bergen spent four days on the ERA campaign trail in four Georgia cities, generating popular and business support for ratification in the name of the National Business Council. Her visit was described by a Georgia legislator as "the best thing that's happened on ERA in Georgia in ten years." The tour was capped off by an Atlanta press conference, where Governor George Busbee pledged his active support to the ratification drive.

That same month, the ERA Joint Media Project, the final new tactical initiative managed by the League, was unveiled at an October 27 press conference in Washington. The project, which was developed from the Communications Task Force's research work earlier in the year, involved a series of radio ads promoting ratification with the theme, "Nothing Can Protect a Woman Like the ERA." Participating organizations that joined the League in endorsing and funding the project were AAUW, BPW, NWPC, Women in Communications, Advertising Women of New York, the National Woman's Party and ERAmerica. The radio spots eventually aired in Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Oklahoma and Virginia.

To produce this series of vignettes dramatizing the need for the ERA, members of the advertising community in New York contributed an estimated \$750,000 of in-kind production expertise, talent, use of facilities and other ancillary services. While ERAmerica coordinated targeting of the broad-



In Houston, Texas, League convention delegates rally in support of the ERA.

casts and purchase of air time, the League was in the forefront of the effort to raise funds for the nearly \$800,000 worth of air time purchased without commission by a cooperating agency.

The Final Months

Engrossed in fundraising for the media campaign and strategy planning for the final state votes in 1982, ERA proponents were stung by the release of Judge Callister's decision in *Idaho v. Freeman* on December 23, 1981. The substance of the verdict was not unanticipated; Callister followed the anti-ERA line that the ratification extension was illegal and, rejecting precedent, he ruled that rescissions were permissible. The timing of the decision, just six months before the June 30, 1982 ratification deadline, and the Justice Department's subsequent efforts to stall the judicial review process were both seen as calculated political tactics on the part of

ERA opponents.

The National Organization for Women petitioned the Supreme Court for an expedited review in order to clarify the legal confusion and thereby counter the verdict's chilling effect on ERA action by state legislatures. The League and 40 other groups joined the suit as *amici*. On January 25, 1982, the Supreme Court granted a stay on Judge Callister's decision until after the June 30 ratification deadline but denied NOW's request for expedited action to resolve the legal issues.

Entering the legislative homestretch, ERAmerica added its own field coordinators in targeted states. Telephone calls to coalition offices promoted by the radio ads showed a groundswell of citizen support for the ERA. By the start of the year, National Business Council membership had grown to 195.

But the cumulative effect of a decade of "untoward conditions" was too much. Oklahoma tabled ERA. Missouri stalled it in committee by a 4-4 vote. The Georgia House defeated the amendment by an unexpectedly lopsided vote of 57 *yes*-166 *no*, with anti-ERA legislators adding the insult of flipping on their red lights simultaneously. The Virginia Senate again defeated the ERA, 20 *yes*-19 *no*; the 20th anti-ERA legislator this time did not abstain but instead left town before the vote (imitating the disappearing act of anti-suffrage Tennessee legislators in 1920).

Mississippi, the only state where the ERA failed to reach the floor of either house of the legislature, never presented a ghost of a chance for ratification. But on February

10, 1982, Mississippi did unanimously ratify the 19th Amendment to the Constitution—62 years after the fact.

Frustrated by the unremitting resistance of the political system to a concept that supporters considered so self-evident, League activists belatedly acknowledged the lesson that the suffragists had learned during their long and painful battle: despite rhetoric to the contrary, the holders of traditional power never share it without a fight. Erma Bombeck expressed this frustration in *McCall's* in May 1982: "Sometimes, when I am being introduced to speak, I allow myself the luxury of reflecting on the absurdity of where I am and what I am doing here. I am a woman living in a nation that is over 200 years old, . . . a nation that prides itself on freedom and human dignity for all, asking—no, begging—that when every law in this land is written it will also include me."

League members worked tirelessly both as individuals and as representatives of their state and local Leagues, refusing to accept the inevitability of defeat. Letters and telegrams flowed to the governors of the three target states, urging them to use their political clout for ratification. In a

stroke of desperate creativity, one League member wrote to rabidly anti-ERA Florida State Senate power-broker Dempsey Barron, encouraging him to consider that his name, like Harry Burn's in the Tennessee suffrage battle, would go down in history if he became the man who turned the tide by switching to support of the ERA.

By the time delegates to the League's national convention met in Houston in May of 1982, action was focused in just three states: Florida, Illinois and North Carolina. If one or two of these states ratified, supporters hoped others such as Oklahoma might show renewed interest. The Joint Media Project's radio ads were on the air in all three states, and the active involvement of the National Business Council was an important part of the lobbying strategy.

In Houston, League convention delegates took time out from their business sessions to hold a rally for the cause that had inspired greater League energy and effort than perhaps any other. If the occasion was not a victory party, neither was it a wake. With helium-filled red, white and blue balloons, ERA supporters marched

to the steps of City Hall and heard President Hinerfeld, Houston mayor Kathy Whitmire, ERAmerica Cochair Liz Carpenter and Helen Milliken, and others laud the League's work on ERA and urge continuation of the struggle for equality up to the June 30 deadline and beyond. Framing the speakers at the rear of the platform was a handmade



At Houston rally, ERAmerica Cochair Liz Carpenter urges League members to keep on fighting for the ERA.



League members from Oakland, California with their ERA quilt.

quilt from the LWV of Oakland, California decorated with “ERA” and the dove emblem of women’s equality.

Capturing the essence of what had happened to the myriad supporters who had worked nationwide on the campaign, Milliken declared, “None of us who have been a part, large or small, of the struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment will be the same. ERA, the issue of equality, has politicized women.” Carpenter reinforced the message: “Let there be no shame. Never have women moved so far and so fast.”

The rally took place just hours after Sonia Johnson, the leader of Mormons for ERA, and seven other women had begun a fast for the ERA in Springfield, Illinois. Delegates telegraphed a message of support to the hunger-strikers, saying, “Your dedication to ERA carries on the tradition of our suffragist foremothers.” Telegrams also were sent from the convention to the governors and legislative leaders in the targeted states, urging an all-out political support effort.

But success remained out of reach. In June, despite much work on a state Busi-

ness Council and the pledge of Governor Jim Hunt to support the amendment, the North Carolina Senate tabled the ERA. On June 21, the Florida House passed it by two votes; the Senate then defeated it by six votes. The *coup de grace* was administered on June 22, when the Illinois House one final time gave ERA an overwhelming majority, 103 yes—72 no—but four votes short of the necessary 107 needed for ratification. (The Illinois rule requiring a three-fifths majority for federal constitutional amendments was dropped soon after the ERA deadline had passed.) During the last week of June, the political reality of the ERA’s impending defeat was clear to even the most diehard optimists.

In the course of the ten-year struggle for the ERA, the League had raised more than \$2.5 million in funds and in-kind contributions through massive state and local League fundraising efforts, direct mailings to members, the sale of ERA jewelry, and the National Business Council. The League and BPW had been the bulwark of support that had kept the national ERA coalition, ERAmerica, functioning for more than six years. The League had been widely credited as the only organization with the appropriate stature and credibility to pull together the intricate National Business Council for ERA, and out of that project the Joint Media

Project had developed, “thanks in great measure to the leadership and perseverance of the LWVUS” (as ERAmerica executive director Suone Cotner wrote to LWVUS ERA Chair Lois Harrison in May 1982). When the national League staff gathered on June 30 to raise a glass to the past and future of the Equal Rights Amendment, they were drinking a toast to the efforts of all involved League members.

Also on June 30, the new LWVUS President Dorothy Ridings released a press statement expressing confidence that “our political skills, sharpened by this past 10-year ratification campaign, will serve us well in our future efforts to ratify an ERA. . . . We will continue to confront legislators with this issue on Capitol Hill, in the state legislatures and in election campaigns.”

On July 1 League members joined other ERA supporters around the country in rallies for “A New Day: Beyond ERA,” sponsored by the National Women’s Conference Committee. This organization, which was charged with carrying forward the Plan of Action adopted at the 1977 International Women’s Year Conference in Houston, symbolized past struggles and dedication to the goal of equality. Ridings’ statement to the Washington rally noted, “We will turn our frustration and anger over the denial of ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment into determined efforts to achieve ERA’s goals through other means until ratification of ERA is achieved.”

Ridings issued another statement on July 14, 1982, when the Equal Rights Amendment was re-introduced in the U.S. Congress. “During the past ten years, ERA supporters have acquired a great deal of political clout and expertise which they will apply to this new ERA campaign,” she said. “The League’s commitment to a constitutional amendment prohibiting gender discrimination is as strong as ever.”

Postscript and Prologue

Although the League closed its ERA campaign office in July 1982, League involvement with the issue did not end. The Legislative Action Department rehired Mary Brooks to serve as a legislative specialist in charge of ERA-related issues. A new ERA Chair on the national board, Pat Jensen, brought her perspective gained as Virginia’s state League president during much of the ERA battle there. Under Jensen’s leadership, an ERA Committee met during 1983–84 to analyze the political and organizational landscape with regard to the ERA and to make recommendations to the LWVUS board of directors. However, the committee’s proposal for a long-range project to lay the foundation for another massive ERA campaign was rejected by the national board, which felt that the timing was not right for such an effort.

The League’s 1984 Advocacy Agenda did include “Equal rights for women through passage of the Equal Rights Amendment coupled with a focus on expanding employment opportunities for women.” In the same year, *The Equal Rights Amendment: Why We Need It* was revised and reprinted. A new section in that flyer addressed the suggestion that the ERA would be more “acceptable” if it were clarified by amendments regarding its application to abortion, the military and other issues. The League publication pointed out that any qualifying amendment to the ERA, no matter how well-meaning, would make legal gibberish of its basic principle that “equality of rights may not be . . . abridged . . . on account of sex.”

Until now, the flyer explained, women have been accorded their rights—such as property ownership and the right to vote—piecemeal and through a long and bitter political process, receiving them more as privileges being granted or won than as

rights being affirmed. If Congress could amend the constitutional guarantee of equal rights to women, it would violate the sole premise of the ERA—that the rights articulated in the Constitution shall be granted equally to all without regard to gender. The rights of women would then still not be affirmed on the same basis as the rights of men.

This political and legal quandary over the issue of restrictive amendments came to a head in November 1983, when pro-ERA supporters in Congress pushed for a floor vote on the ERA in the U.S. House of Representatives. In spite of reservations about beginning a renewed battle for passage of the ERA without laying a framework for ratification by the states, the League and other ERA activists lobbied valiantly on its behalf. The floor vote, brought under a suspension of the House rules that prohibited amendments and restricted debate, required passage by two-thirds of those present and voting. The final tally was 278 *yes*—147 *no*, six votes short of the necessary two-thirds.

In the Winter 1984 *National Voter*, Jensen wrote a journal of the League's participation in the congressional activities surrounding that vote. She concluded with thoughts concerning the future of the League of Women Voters and the ERA:

- The Equal Rights Amendment has grown in political stature since the last time around. It has become the focus for all women's issues and has gained enough strength to be used by both political parties. The problem is that ERA supporters have not yet become politically powerful enough to control its use.
- The ERA remains a unique political issue. It is real; it is symbolic. It is loved; it is hated. It is used. It is distorted. And you can't predict what will happen next. Ever.

- The ERA is THE issue League members remain deeply committed to. We feel the need for equality not just with our intellects, but with our hearts. It can drain you emotionally and you have to be careful not to suffer burn-out, for then you lose perspective and effectiveness.

- It is hard to stay on a high with the ERA, maybe because of the emotion involved. So, we have to learn to roll with the punches and with the times, the pain and the anger. For the time being, we find ourselves in a reactive stance. We don't have control of what will happen in Congress this year, but we will remain ready for action. The League also will move forward with the development of long-range plans, for eventually the ERA will move out of Congress and into the states once again for ratification. We must be ready.



Voices from state League leaders documented the hard-fought battle for ERA ratification reflected in newspaper headlines from across the country.

Voices from the States

In March 1987, a seven-page questionnaire was sent to presidents of the 50 state Leagues of Women Voters and the District of Columbia League, soliciting information on their participation in the ERA campaign. Respondents submitted facts, figures, analyses and supplementary materials for the national League archives. The response rate of 92 percent underscored the organization's continued strong commitment to the issue.

Foremost among the many conclusions that arise from this material is the sheer magnitude of the effort that Leagues across the country invested in the ERA campaign. The battles in many states—Florida, Illinois and North Carolina, for example—merit book-length treatment themselves. The key League activists who served as coalition chairs, strategists and lobbyists, as well as the many grassroots members who raised money, lobbied legislators and educated the public about the ERA, are so numerous that to mention a few would do a disservice to their many counterparts.

This brief overview of responses to the questionnaire does not purport to be a summary of those intense efforts. It is rather a patchwork of selected information stitched together to convey the overall design of the tremendous nationwide effort made by the League of Women Voters.

Education and Lobbying

Consistent with the organization's traditional method of working on public policy issues, state League ERA activities concentrated on both education and lobbying. Virtually all responding Leagues reported that they had disseminated information about the ERA through meetings, speaking engagements, newspaper articles and publications, while more than half also had used radio and television for citizen education

efforts. The Hawaii League, for instance, incorporated ERA information into its 90-second radio spot "Viewpoints," and the New Jersey League produced a 30-minute public radio panel discussion in 1980 called "Who's Afraid of the ERA?" Televised debates or talk shows focusing on the ERA, often on cable TV channels, regularly involved League participants.

Many Leagues published their own pamphlets or flyers presenting the facts about the federal ERA or documenting the impact of existing state ERAs. For example, South Carolina produced a how-to *ERA Victory Book* as well as a report on proceedings of a 1975 symposium on *The Equal Rights Amendment and South Carolina Laws*. In 1981, the Missouri League presented an analysis of the impact of the ERA in *Law and Equality*. Materials for study and action in unratified states included Florida's 1977 *Equal Rights Amendment Action Kit* and Illinois' 1979 *Committee Guide for the Study of the Equal Rights Amendment*.

Ratified states also produced ERA publications, such as Pennsylvania's flyer on its 1971 state ERA, *ERA: Under Our Own Roof*, and Maryland's *The Maryland Experience: ERA*. Even after the 1982 deadline, interest in the issue remained high. In November 1983 the New Jersey League published *The Equal Rights Amendment: Past, Present, and Future*, a 30-page guide for local League meetings.

In true League fashion, letters to the editor, news articles and printed communications of all kinds were turned out in vast quantities. Members spoke at countless meetings of the League and other organizations, and many appeared in debates with ERA opponents, most often members of the Eagle Forum. Ultimately, Leagues were advised not to participate in such point-counterpoint sessions because they gave unwarranted credibility to the opposition.

League member lobbying on ERA

ratification was based on decades of experience and a firm foundation of organizational credibility. These lobbying efforts had two goals: to convince legislators to support ratification of the ERA, and to train allies in political effectiveness. Working toward the latter goal, Maine, Oklahoma and many other state Leagues conducted lobbying workshops to share their long-established expertise with newcomers to the process.

Because the ERA was ratified so quickly in several dozen states, a number of Leagues never had to appear before their state legislatures in initial support of the amendment. However, in the last and most difficult state ratification successes, Leagues in Indiana, Maine, Montana, North Dakota and Ohio played leading roles in coalition efforts to get legislative approval. National League ERA Director Mary Brooks, who traveled to Maine and Ohio during the first half of 1974, described campaigns in those states as "a really extraordinary effort."

The North Dakota League reported successfully using state legislators as allies. The legislative seating chart was used to identify pro-ERA legislators in strategic locations on the House and Senate floors. These "centers of influence" became a source of information on what neighboring legislators thought about the issue, what mail they were receiving and when erosions or swings in support were in the works. North Dakota used this technique both to ratify the ERA and to beat rescission votes as well, each time by higher tallies.

Even before the final state ratifications were in, many state Leagues testified in their legislatures in opposition to rescission. In West Virginia, for example, when pro-rescission witnesses yielded all of their time to Phyllis Schlafly and a senator from Nebraska, the League successfully counterattacked by packing the committee room

with so many anti-rescission witnesses from within the state that there was not enough time for all of them to testify.

Battles against rescission were reported in at least 20 states, with the state Leagues playing major roles in most cases. Some of the fights were narrowly won in legislative committees, as in Michigan, where a 5-4 Democratic majority in the key committee kept the lid on three attempts to rescind that state's ratification. A League member there described the atmosphere as "quite confrontational," reporting that "the dear ladies of the right attacked legislators with their umbrellas."

In Colorado, a proposal to rescind the state ERA was on the 1976 general election ballot, as a step toward opponents' ultimate goal of overturning the state's federal ERA ratification. After a heated campaign, which included some funding from the national League, voters rejected rescission by a 2-to-1 margin, and further attempts to rescind the federal ERA were dropped in that state.

Although not many Leagues had to fight rescission attempts as often as Montana did (winning narrow victories in 1975, 1977, 1979 and 1981), most of them shared the Montana League's view that these battles were more difficult than the initial ratification effort. In a few of the states, such as Idaho and Nebraska, the League and its allies fought hard but losing fights against rescission.

Fundraising and Political Action

State and local Leagues also supported the ERA effort with massive fundraising. In addition to raising hundreds of thousands of dollars from the sale of ERA bracelets and necklaces, local and state Leagues devised

an astonishing repertoire of fundraising ideas to support the national League's million-dollar-plus campaign war chest.

For example, a gourmet dinner party raffle netted the Colorado League \$5,000 for the ERA coffers, while the Bartlesville, Oklahoma League raised \$500 through invitations to a "Christmas ERA fundraising non-party." (The price of non-admission was \$5 for the cause and 11¢ for expenses.) Bumper stickers, T-shirts and other standard fundraising items were produced by Portland, Oregon and many other Leagues. A Harrisburg, Pennsylvania baseball game capitalizing on the ERA ("earned run average") connection was only one of the hundreds of imaginative ways Leagues found to underwrite their campaigns over the ten-year period. A few of the money-making initiatives were directed specifically to unratified "sister" states, as was Alaska's donation of original "Call to Arms—Ratify ERA" silkscreen prints for sale in Florida.

Although political action always has been a weapon in the League's arsenal, the ERA engaged the efforts of both new and long-time League activists to an unprecedented extent. In addition to participating in and encouraging the boycott of unratified states, League members collected many thousands of signatures during the 1981 petition drive. The LWV of Virginia participated regularly in the three-year daily noontime vigil at the capitol building in Richmond. Florida, Kansas and Pennsylvania were among the other state Leagues holding silent vigils or rallies at their state capitol buildings. Representatives of several local New Jersey Leagues picketed Phyllis Schlafly's appearance at an Eagle Forum/Moral Majority luncheon, and another local League in that state carried the words of the ERA in its local Fourth of July parade. ("We considered having our most obviously pregnant member hold the sign that read 'on account of sex,' but we thought better of

it," one of their members reminisced.)

A number of Leagues reported having to counteract the negative impact on the public and legislators of action taken by other ERA supporters, especially in conservative environments. The Arkansas League, for instance, remarked about its ERA coalition, "Many of our members were too strident and a lot of our physical and emotional energy went into keeping our group under control. Sometimes we failed." The more confrontational tactics of some organizations caused problems in a number of coalitions, as noted by the Leagues in North Carolina, Virginia, Wyoming, among other states.

ERA Coalitions

The dynamics of group cooperation were important because League involvement in the ERA struggle in 32 of the reporting states took place within coalitions. In 21 of those states, Leagues played a major role by chairing or cochairing the coalition, and in all but one, League leaders were active participants. Major coalition partners among the many dozens listed were the American Association of University Women (AAUW), National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPW), Church Women United, Common Cause, National Council of Jewish Women, National Education Association (NEA), National Organization for Women (NOW), Planned Parenthood, National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) and the YWCA. Leagues were careful to separate themselves from any coalition actions directly involved in supporting or opposing candidates.

Although Leagues' assessments of the effectiveness of the ERA coalitions varied, the predominant sentiment was positive. Many states supported the view expressed by the Indiana League: "Coalition efforts

were ultimately more effective because the membership was more broad-based. The coalition included members and organizations in areas of the state not covered by the League. Coalitions were also more successful in acquiring much-needed funding. The ERA network at that time in Indiana couldn't have been developed by any one group."

The Hawaii League seconded that opinion: "The League was instrumental in the formation of ERA Hawaii, which was far more effective than the efforts of any single group could have been because of the number and strength of the endorsing groups." The LWV of Illinois also noted that coalition efforts were important to build a broader base and include groups that could make campaign contributions. The Ohio League credited the more dramatic tactics of other coalition members with producing better media coverage than the League could have achieved by itself. Time after time the word used to describe the League's foremost contribution to coalitions was the same: credibility.

Although many of the connections made through ERA coalitions were absorbed into other political networks and battles, a few of the original structures remain. The Alabama Coalition for ERA is reported as "still active," and the Kansans for ERA (KERA) "quietly exists today" with a small treasury and a yearly meeting. ERA Illinois, which also holds annual meetings, is the most recent version of coalition efforts in that state. In Montana, the Great Falls Equal Rights Council still holds a monthly forum and pursues other women's issues.

ERA Opponents

In contrast to the dozens of varied and broad-based supporting organizations listed

as coalition partners in different states, the names of only a handful of major ERA opponents reappeared with regularity. Mentioned as the primary opposition in 27 states were Phyllis Schlafly's inseparable Eagle Forum and STOP ERA organizations. (The Oklahoma League commented that the same people seemed to be in both groups.) The LWV of Montana reported that Eagle Forum members joined the League "in order to find out what was going on in our camp." Their League-like solution? "We put them to work."

Second on the list of major anti-ERA groups were fundamentalist Protestant churches and the Moral Majority, followed closely by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) and anti-reproductive choice groups such as the National Right to Life Committee. In addition to these national organizations, Arkansas had to deal with FLAG (Family, Life, America and God) and WWWW (Women Who Want to Be Women), while Georgia was confronted by MOM (Men Our Masters) as well.

According to responding Leagues, anti-ERA political activities organized by Mormons were evident in many states, including Hawaii, Montana, Wyoming and Georgia. Nevada and Utah, two states where Mormon influence blocked ratification, reported much tension within their Leagues because of the church's stand. Nevada noted that the Reno League dissolved during this time, "and legend has it that the primary reason was dissension over ERA." Utah described the League's diminished public stance on ERA after the LDS Church declared support of the amendment a "sin" the day before a scheduled legislative vote. After that time, although members were supportive as individuals, the state League was reluctant to put the organization on the line against such a "strong and conservative" force.

Impact on the Leagues

After the June 30, 1982 ratification deadline, a small number of Leagues reported continued activities in support of the ERA, including lobbying at the state and national levels, public education and state ERA campaigns. A number of Leagues worked to secure congressional passage of the ERA in connection with the November 1983 vote in the House of Representatives and lobbied against any amendments to the wording. Within the past few years, Leagues in Maine and Vermont were in the forefront of unsuccessful state ERA initiatives, battling against outside money from the usual anti-ERA sources that continued to distort the issue through commercials linking the ERA to homosexuality and abortion.

Leaders' evaluation of the impact of ERA-related activities on their Leagues varied among the ratified and unratified states. Leagues in ratified states tended to be more positive. The Kansas League reported that the campaign "provided a single rallying point to show the cohesiveness of local Leagues with the state and national Leagues," and the Minnesota League reported that the ERA effort was "extremely positive for the League in all respects." The unratified states had a less sanguine view, however. The South Carolina League noted, "We expended so much energy in this area that it ended up being counterproductive for other areas," and the Florida League reported that it lost some members as a result of the ERA. Nevertheless, unratified Georgia declared that overall, "the ERA effort had a positive effect on the League and gave us a better appreciation of what the League is all about."

In evaluating the effect of the ERA campaign on their League, several state leaders captured the essence of what was

best about the experience. From Montana: "It bound young and old women into the suffrage tradition of both the League and our state, and made us proud to be women active in a continuing effort to secure individual rights for all. Perhaps the ERA is for these women what the Vietnam War is for many men—a life event of significance and principle."

From Oklahoma: "During the ten years of activities there were many energetic, magnificent women and men. Many, many, contributed to the effort, moved on to other things, but when called on gave again of their time and dollars." And from Georgia: "We really know what sisterhood means now. The bonds that our ERA effort forged remain strong and lasting. It was a positive experience—sort of like combat—you wouldn't want to do it every day, but the *esprit de corps* never dies."



From left to right: Madeleine Appel, Joanne Hayes, Mary Brooks, Nancy Neuman, Pat Jensen, Keller Bumgardner Barron, Lois Harrison, and Ellouise Schoettler.

Voices from the Campaign

The *esprit de corps* among veterans of the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment was evident on September 15, 1987, when eight women who had held national board and staff ERA leadership positions met at the League office in Washington, DC as part of the League's ERA Research Project.

All six women who served as ERA Chairs for the League of Women Voters of the United States were at the meeting: Keller Bumgardner Barron, South Carolina (1973–76); Joanne Hayes, New York (1976–77); Nancy Neuman, Pennsylvania (1977–79); Madeleine Appel, Texas (1979–80); Lois Harrison, Florida (1980–82); Patricia Jensen, Iowa (1983–84).

Also participating were the two long-term ERA directors on the LWVUS staff, Mary Brooks (1974–77; 1982–84) and Ellouise Schoettler (1979–82). Nancy Reder, the ERA research project manager and director of Social Policy for the LWVEF, and project consultant Roberta Francis also attended the meeting.

Out of the day-long analysis of the League's involvement with the ERA by these strategically involved women came a number of observations and recommendations for present and future ERA supporters. The following are excerpts from their discussion.

On the Impact of the Campaign

Neuman: The hardest thing about trying to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment was that every time we'd lose a vote—and it would always be a narrow margin, and we'd get sold out—I felt a little bit of my humanity was taken away from me.

Jensen: But if there's ever been an issue that the membership felt down to their toes, it's this one.

Hayes: People went to lobby for ERA to the very same legislators who treated them

with respect when they came in with clean water information or electoral information—and these guys patronized them, or insulted them or laughed at them. And we suddenly had a radicalized lobbying group out there in the states who were mad as hell, for very un-League-like reasons, because they suddenly realized that they were being used for their information, but when they wanted something, it didn't count.

Barron: But there was a sense that it was rather demeaning to have to ask anybody to approve something that was as self-evident as equal rights.

Appel: I now am in government, and I watch the Leaguers coming to us, and their statements are lovely and collected and full of information so that you can make an intelligent decision—but politics is not an intelligent decision. We could only have won this if we had given the same amount to the coffers of the candidates that the Phyllis Schlaflys could give.

Jensen: I think there's a fundamental difference here in League people between understanding the governmental process and understanding the political process. ERA was very much political.

Neuman: ERA taught me to be much more hard-nosed politically, because we did real head-counts. We researched all those people, who their buddies were and who gave money to their campaigns. I think it was hard for other people to understand that we were caught in the ascendancy of the right wing. People will still say to me, "Well, you could have done a better job of turning your opponents around." If your opponents are all fundamentalist right-wingers, that's a different question.

Appel: I guess the thing the ERA did, in addition to raising my consciousness about the fact that women didn't have equal rights, was to convince me that if we couldn't get the ERA, then we needed to go back and get into the legislatures, get into

the government, do all the practical things that ERA wanted to accomplish anyway. When we have accomplished all our rights from the bottom up, then we will probably get an ERA. The thing that I hope that this project will do is to get the League into real gloves-off politics, because that really is the game that we have to be prepared to play. It's fine if you can get away without playing that game, but I hope all of us have learned that there are going to be issues where, when the crunch comes, we've got to take off the gloves.

On the Political Lessons Learned

Francis: The major lesson we have learned is that to get it out of Congress is the easy part. We want to be sure that when it gets out of Congress, we are positioned to get it through the states in less than three years. No amendment has taken longer than three years to ratify. I just read recently that 1991 is the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights. I think that might be a nice date to keep in mind. In a poll that was done by CBS/*New York Times* on the Constitution in May 1987, people favored ERA by 75 percent, 18 percent were opposed and 7 percent had no opinion. So on paper, it's stronger than ever.

Harrison: Leagues learned how to raise money. The local Leagues raised incredible amounts of money.

Appel: And they learned the reality of trading votes. It heightened everybody's awareness about the real problems faced by women, and it made them very determined that if we didn't get it through the ERA, we'd get it somehow. It is going to come, and we'll be there till it does.

Reder: How would you respond to the criticism of the whole ERA effort that it distracted women from trying to achieve other goals on the women's agenda?

Hayes: I think people don't understand politics. You move, you rush in where the crevice is. Anything that makes you more powerful makes it more possible to get the rest of your agenda.

Jensen: There's a psychology to the ERA, too. There was a psychic energy and connecting that went on with battling toward the ERA that all of the other issues worked on in different ways would not have achieved.

Neuman: It was almost a homemaker-versus-homemaker war, although the proponents were never cast as homemakers. It was only the homemakers who had the time to go and work on this every darn day in the state capital.

Appel: In terms of the negative effects—I think it's not just on the League but on women—there was a disillusionment with the idealism of government and politics and democracy. It opened our eyes, and we're the better perhaps for the disillusionment, but there was a loss of innocence of a certain kind.

Schoettler: We learned organizationally and politically that right doesn't always prevail, and that confrontation can be survived.

Appel: With the benefit of hindsight, we would have recognized in the beginning that there needed to be both a national campaign and state campaigns, and organized it at both levels, with the national role in helping state campaigns better defined. We needed to train our people, but we also needed to be able to provide them with professional help at the local level. And we did as the years progressed.

Hayes: Well, one thing we certainly ought to do is face up front how much things cost and start right off raising the money.

Appel: And we should have brought the men in earlier, in terms of organizing. And we should have known about blackmail and vote trading.

Neuman: Columnist Mike Royko said we

shouldn't have put all that money into the Illinois campaign; we should have divided it into 300 shoeboxes and passed it out, and we would have had it.

Francis: We got started too late with the National Business Council, but it was great. It ought to be done early on next time. A lot of people didn't believe ERA was a serious issue because men weren't involved. Do you think there's a change in the dynamic now that there are more women in political office—still not enough—and more women in business?

Hayes: Of course. It's a different ballgame now. Women have more money to give, they're more partners with men, there are more men who'd openly support the ERA early on.

Neuman: But I don't believe in the beginning of the ERA that a man's strategy would have been a good idea. First of all, the men wouldn't have done it, and second of all, women were in a position then that they would have just said, "Would some of you men go and do this for us?"

Jensen: A national campaign's going to take a lot of money. Any national campaign should have a very, very strong media component—not just flyers, not just a few ads.

On Changes for the Future

Neuman: It still annoys me that the women's movement is somehow disconnected in the minds of the public from minorities. We didn't start out with minority women in a leading role, and there should have been. The next time I hope they'll be in leadership roles.

Appel: To me it is the social change that is going to make it possible to pass the ERA, and it's a chicken-and-egg situation. If we hadn't fought for the ERA, I don't think the social change would have happened at the

same pace that it has, and so it wasn't wasted, it was just a step in the cycle. And ultimately, we will get there. We obviously can't plan a specific campaign, but what we can say is that it has to become an issue of very broad appeal.

Reder: We've seen that happen with the parental leave bill. It's making much more headway as a family issue that it probably ever would have as a women's issue.

Appel: The other thing we've talked about over and over again is that we need to make the issue of the campaign the ERA, not our individual organizational needs and agendas.

Neuman: I think that the basic paradox of the whole ERA campaign was that we were trying to achieve individual rights for women, but in order to get our individuality recognized, we had to work as a movement.

Appel: I'm not sure that young women right now feel strongly about ERA as such.

Hayes: I see the younger women bit-by-bit reassess that. They didn't think of themselves as feminists, but they have begun to bump that glass ceiling in their careers, and all of a sudden they get radicalized. And I don't think that's any different than our thinking that the suffragists were too hard on us. Some of us had suffragists in our Leagues when we were young League presidents. They used to terrorize you. They always thought you were such sissies because you wouldn't chain yourself to anything, wouldn't get arrested.

Francis: In the *ERA Report*, right after the deadline, Ellouise said, "What more could supporters have done? They could have elected pro-ERA legislators in 1980. It was as simple as that." In a way, we don't have to put on a campaign if the people there already are going to push the right button.

Appel: We should be encouraging women to run for office, qualified women. And they've got to have a women's agenda, and they've also got to have a people agenda.

Neuman: You can't forget the political climate. It would have been nice to elect all those pro-ERA people in 1980, but that was Ronald Reagan's year.

Brooks: The resurgence of the conservative right coincided with changes in the campaign finance law that made it more difficult to make large contributions to campaigns and put a premium on finding issues to raise money on. The ERA and women's issues in particular became very, very big fundraising issues for the right, and of course, anything with the word "sex" in it lent itself to a certain degree of hysteria and the kind of scare fundraising appeal that the right was so successful with during those years. I used to think that sex had replaced Communism as the national phobia.

Schoettler: There's a lesson that came out of that media campaign that was staggering to me. You needed to research the issue in terms of the people you were trying to convince, not the people that were already convinced. We were continuing to say our things because we were convinced of them, and we weren't getting to the segment whose minds we needed to change, because we were speaking in our voice and they were hearing it with their ears, and we weren't making the connection. Use of the advertising science to tailor the message on a political issue has come more and more into campaign strategies, and we wouldn't be so naive the next time around not to use it from the outset.

Brooks: I believe that generally speaking ERA arguments were well presented, but when you are then confronted with scare tactics which are all about creating doubt, there's no way of jumping into that gulf and creating certainty.

Appel: Facts never counteract scare tactics. People who don't use scare tactics and are honest have a very difficult time counteracting them. In the end, the votes are won by figuring out where the legislators are vulnerable, and what it is they want in

return, and whether you can pay that price. It is really hard-ball politics. And we personally don't have those kinds of chits to call in, which is why we turned to business, because we figured they did. And in the future we should always turn to whoever has the chits and get them on our side.

Neuman: You have a problem dealing with an amendment that you can't talk prospectively about. You can't tell what the courts are going to decide. It's like trying to predict how the courts will rule on the First Amendment. And that gets you into real problems when you're shaping a message in a campaign.

Appel: And we were willing to live with the uncertainties, but the people that the scare tactics were working with didn't want to.

Brooks: The vast majority of the country did support this in principle and I think still does. It's an extremely difficult thing to get a constitutional amendment on any kind of rights issue today. I don't think we could get freedom of speech today. On rights issues that are subject to interpretation, small and very highly organized minorities have a real edge with this particular ratification process, because it takes only a handful of states to block an amendment.

Appel: The state campaigns truly were good campaigns. We may have been naive going into it, but by the time we got through those last years, we weren't so naive anymore. We couldn't do some of the things we knew needed to be done because of our organizational structure, but we knew darn well what it took to get it done.

Brooks: People were where they were at the time, and it's not their fault. They only knew what they knew when they were there. I find it particularly useful to have a nonjudgmental approach to this and to extract lessons from it for the future but not assume that we could have had those lessons for the past.

Looking Ahead

In February 1981, during one of the North Carolina campaigns, ERA Director Ellouise Schoettler wrote in her journal, "This issue does not act like any other issue. Why?"

As with the right to vote, which was the generative force for the League of Women Voters, the Equal Rights Amendment is viewed as a symbol of far-reaching issues. Both the suffragists in the battle for the 19th Amendment and the feminists in the fight for the proposed 27th Amendment were engaged in political struggles with profound implications, symbolizing all the patriarchal wrongs requiring redress. Former ERA Director Mary Brooks articulated it best: "I think people got hooked on ERA because of all of the messages of society that women shouldn't be entitled to the same individual rights and protections as men."

Even in retrospect, it is difficult to explain the passion that the ERA evoked on all sides. Many women involved in the campaign have commented on the extraordinary level of commitment and energy that the ERA drew from a vast number of League members throughout the country. Former LWVUS President Ruth Hinerfeld remarked, "In my whole time in the League, I've never seen another issue that had that personal effect." Former ERA Chair Joanne Hayes remarked that the ERA was "reality-shaping" for many League members. "Once in the ERA fight, we are changed forever."

Based on their varied experiences, the women who were in the forefront of the League's ERA battle offered a number of conclusions and recommendations for the future. The key to running a successful ERA campaign, according to their collective analysis, lies first and foremost in emphasizing that word "campaign"—planning and implementing a ratification effort like any other high-stakes political undertaking. The comments and recommendations gathered in the course of this ERA research project—from the state

surveys, interviews and the roundtable discussion—were remarkably consistent. These comments are distilled below into an outline of the major components of such an ERA campaign.

Lay the Groundwork

Broad-based support for an ERA is crucial, both in the public arena, in Congress and in the state legislatures. A well-organized minority opposition needs to carry just over one-third of the votes in the U. S. Senate or House of Representatives, or just over one-fourth of the state legislatures in order to defeat it. Therefore, continuous climate building in favor of the ERA is essential. The better the ERA's popular image, the more comfortable legislators will be in supporting it.

Pro-ERA elected and appointed officials at all levels of government are essential to ensure more extensive and reliable political support. One dimension of the need is the election and appointment of more women to public office. According to the Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers University, women in elected office are more liberal than their male counterparts on a variety of issues, including ERA. In the 15 states that did not ratify the amendment by 1982, 76 percent of the women legislators, compared with 36 percent of the male legislators, said that the ERA should be ratified.

While an ERA is a political issue, it suffers when it is used by one political party against another. The Equal Rights Amendment began as a bipartisan issue, and bipartisan backing is critical for the building of widespread support.

The political and legal groundwork for an ERA must include ongoing work on related legislative issues. Political experience, legislative and organizational contacts and

an awareness of state equity issues will then be in place before the ratification effort begins. Legislative successes on these issues will help pave the way for ratification and implementation of an ERA.

Chief supporters and sponsors of an ERA can develop, to the extent possible, a clear and unified position on the legislative intent of the amendment. A well articulated view of what an ERA would do and why it is needed—augmented by information about the positive effects of state equal rights amendments—would be the basis of education and media components of a ratification campaign.

Fundraise, Fundraise, Fundraise

Ratification of an ERA will require an all-out political campaign, and political campaigns are expensive. Large sums of money must be raised at all levels of the effort and much of it must be raised early in the process. A substantial war chest should be built up before the campaign gets under way.

The fundraising component of the campaign should be separated from the strategy component. In other words, the strategists should strategize and the fundraisers should raise the money. The jobs are too large to be handled by the same person or small group of people.

Plan and Run a Professional Political Campaign

Political timing is critical. While supporters can line up sponsors in both houses of Congress, it is important not to push for congressional passage until campaign orga-

nizing has been done in the states and the political climate is more supportive. Suffrage history teaches two relevant lessons: that state campaigns need to be prepared in advance and that the final few ratifications will be like pulling teeth.

Timing also is critical because ratification must be accomplished quickly. No successful constitutional amendment has taken more than three years to ratify.

It is important for an ERA campaign to be as inclusive as possible. Involving groups and individuals from all segments of the population—minority, male, young, old—will provide solidarity and diversify the leadership of the campaign. The previous ERA campaign did not benefit from being portrayed as a white, middle-class women's movement.

An ERA campaign needs to have two well coordinated efforts under way at the same time—one at the national level and one at the state level. These efforts must include strong media components as well as lobbying and educational components. While an army of volunteers is indispensable, there must be an adequate, well-financed professional staff to coordinate the initiatives.

Lobbying strategies should be sharply tailored to the specific structure and operations of each state legislature. The development of lobbying networks and personal contacts with state legislators are particularly useful in this regard. Researching the legislators in order to identify and activate supporters and exert pressure on opponents also is critical. Pro-ERA leadership in the legislatures, especially in key committees and floor positions, is invaluable.

Working in coalitions is helpful both for spreading the work and for increasing political clout. However, it is important to bear in mind that organizations have different styles and that conflict is inevitable in a coalition effort. The national level of the campaign should provide technical assistance to state-level coalitions. The presi-

dents of major endorsing organizations should agree to a framework for any coalition efforts. Coalition members should be held to a commitment that the goal of ratifying the ERA will not be sacrificed to individual organizations' other goals or agendas.

Coalition efforts may not be sufficient to secure passage of an ERA. One major distinction between the suffrage and ERA campaigns is that the suffragist movement was led by an independent membership organization that existed solely for the purpose of achieving the vote for women. In contrast, ERAmerica was never intended to be a membership organization and was never adequately financed by its member organizations. Nor did the member organizations realign enough "power" to ERAmerica for it to effectively lead the ERA ratification effort.

Broaden and Mobilize ERA Effort

The ERA enjoys the support of the majority of the American people. Proponents can build on this by mobilizing supporters and speaking to the uncommitted about an ERA in language they can identify with. Keeping the ERA on the offensive as much as possible with positive education, lobbying and media efforts works best. The best defense against opponents' distortions is a good offense—ongoing education and public relations efforts.

An ERA campaign should use wisely the League of Women Voters' greatest strength—its reputation as a moderate, honest and well-informed organization. League member expertise can serve well in educating, strategizing and lobbying. The League can play an invaluable role as a "legitimizing" of the ERA as a mainstream equity issue.

It is important not to intellectualize too much. A sense of humor may work better than all of the rational, intellectual arguments in the book to make a point or deflate the opposition. Do not underestimate the opposition's ability to manipulate the fears and uncertainties of the uncommitted. The basic message should be simple and to the point.

The Past Is Prologue

With a sense of historical continuity, League ERA activists drew both factual and emotional support from women of the past—the suffragists, the abolitionists and women such as Abigail Adams, who vainly asked her husband John to "remember the ladies" in the Constitution. Supporters understood through personal experience how the ERA could generate so much passion and commitment. They worked toward and look forward to the time when ratification of an Equal Rights Amendment will create the same sort of euphoria felt on August 26, 1920, when women's right to vote was guaranteed by the Constitution.

A Timeline

The League of Women Voters and the Equal Rights Amendment

- 1923
 - ERA written by Alice Paul and introduced in Congress
 - LWV opposed to ERA
- 1944
 - ERA rewritten by Paul to present wording
- 1954
 - LWV drops opposition to ERA
- 1972
 - ERA passes Congress and is sent to states for ratification within seven years
 - LWV adopts support of ERA at national convention
 - ERA ratified by 22 states
- 1973
 - LWV launches its national ratification campaign with bracelet sales, ERA Countdown Kit
 - ERA ratified by eight states
- 1974
 - LWV hires first ERA Director, holds ERA rally at national convention in San Francisco, helps form ERA Technical Task Force within ERA Ratification Council
 - ERA ratified by three states
- 1975
 - LWV initiates first major fundraising appeal for \$140,000, sponsors Chicago planning meeting for unratified states, helps plan national ERA coalition
 - ERA ratified by one state
- 1976
 - LWV is cofounder of ERAmerica, provides field organizer, publishes *In Pursuit of Equal Rights: Women in the Seventies*
 - ERA ratified by no states
- 1977
 - LWV publishes *ERA Means Equal Rights for Men and Women*, undertakes \$1 million fundraising drive, produces ERA necklaces, participates in Houston IWY Conference
 - ERA ratified by one state

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- 1978
- LWV is neutral on ERA time-limit extension drive until September, then adopts support while continuing to push for ratification by original March 22, 1979 deadline, testifies in *Missouri v. NOW* boycott trial
 - Congress extends ERA deadline to June 30, 1982
 - ERA ratified by no states
- 1979
- LWV joins *Idaho et al. v. Freeman* lawsuit as *amicus curiae* in defense of extension, works on development of National Business Council for ERA
 - ERA ratified by no states
- 1980
- LWV launches National Business Council for ERA in February, expands ERA position at national convention to include action to bring laws into compliance with ERA
 - ERA ratified by no states
- 1981
- LWV collects 40,000 signatures for national ERA petition drive, raises \$220,000 by direct mail from members, helps develop ERA Communications Task Force and Joint Media Project, publishes *The Equal Rights Amendment: Why We Need It*, joins as *amicus* in appealing Judge Callister's decision in *Idaho v. Freeman*
 - ERA ratified by no states
- 1982
- LWV holds ERA rally at national convention in Houston, participates in post-deadline "A New Day: Beyond ERA" rallies, supports reintroduction of ERA in Congress
 - ERA ratification deadline expires on June 30 with 35 of the necessary 38 ratifications achieved
 - ERA reintroduced in Congress on July 14
- 1983
- ERA rejected by six votes by the U.S. House of Representatives on a vote taken under "suspension of the rules"