



Minority Women and the Equal Rights Amendment

As minority women of color, we cannot separate our racial identities from our womanhood. To overcome practices and patterns of discrimination, we must have the legal means to develop our full potential. The Equal Rights Amendment is that tool. It is in our own best interest to understand and actively support it.

What Does the Equal Rights Amendment Say?

Section 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.

Section 2: The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. The amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

The ERA is a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution which, when ratified, will guarantee women full citizenship rights in the United States of America. Currently there are over 800 federal laws alone and numerous state laws which discriminate against women affecting important employment and educational opportunities, property rights, guardianship over children or household, and criminal offense penalties. The Equal Rights Amendment will legally end such discrimination.

By law, 38 states must approve or ratify the proposed amendment in order for it to become part of the Constitution. This is done through state legislatures. In 1972 when Congress proposed the amendment to the states for ratification, it set a limit

of seven years for the process. In 1978, Congress extended the time 3 years to allow ample time for states to consider and vote. Currently, 3 more states must ratify by June, 1982 for the amendment to become law. Even though 35 states have ratified, all women in this country are in jeopardy until the Equal Rights Amendment is Constitutional law.

One of the most important reasons for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment is its economic impact. Why? Because of the facts. . .

- 1978 statistics showed that minority women accounted for 18% of all women who hold jobs outside the home.

- On the average, women earn 59¢ for every \$1 men earn. Because of the jobs in which minority women are concentrated, we earn considerably less than white women, minority men, and white men.

- Approximately 80% of all women workers are in under-rated, underpaid clerical, sales, service and craft jobs. Minority women are most heavily concentrated in clerical and service jobs. Upward mobility for all these women is virtually non-existent.

- Minority mothers who hold jobs outside the home totalled 2.2 million in 1976, or 15% of all mothers who hold jobs outside the home.

- Even with a college degree, women still earn less than white males who lack a high school diploma. American Asian, Indian, Alaskan Native, Black and Puerto Rican women are least likely to have

completed college. In fact, this population's educational attainment level declined between 1970 and 1976.

- Minority women are least likely to ever be homeowners due to a combination of sex and race discrimination by lending institutions — even if we can afford it.

- The large majority of poor people in this country are women and children. Women are the sole heads of 35% of all Black and Hispanic families, and 11% of all white families. Over half of the minority families headed by women live below the poverty level.

- The 13.6% unemployment rate for minority women is higher than among any other category — white men, white women, or minority men.

- By 1990 it is projected that 12 million more women will hold jobs outside the home; that is, 1 out of every 2 women over age 16. Without some basic changes, more of us will be working for less.

What's in it for Minority Women?

The fact is that as minority women we suffer the most from sex and race discrimination. To obtain the things we need to improve our status and that of our families, women must have equal rights under the law. The Constitution is the supreme law of our country. Just as the 14th Amendment was enacted to guarantee equal protection under the law without regard to race, the Equal Rights Amendment must be enacted to guarantee equal protection under the law without regard to sex. As minority women of color, we need them both.

NOW Minority Women's Committee

The NOW Minority Women's Committee was formed in 1977. Its purpose is to ensure that the concerns and needs of minority women are fully represented in the program of NOW. Its charge includes identification and recruitment of minority women, liaison with minority organizations, and planning activities in support of its purpose.

The Committee is comprised of a cross-section of minority women members from each NOW region. You can further our efforts by becoming an active NOW member, contacting Committee members, or starting a local Minority Women's Committee of NOW. For further information, contact a Committee member nearest you or contact the Committee:

c/o NOW National Action Center
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Join us in working for the Equal Rights Amendment by becoming an active NOW member. Send in the form in this brochure with dues for National membership. As a National member you will receive the National NOW Times and other national literature.

If you are not familiar with local chapters, as a National member you will automatically receive a Chapter Directory so you may choose a chapter convenient to you.

You may also want to convene a new chapter in your area. The NOW State Coordinator listed in the Chapter Directory can tell you how.