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# An ERA may end; a cause won't die

By Margaret Miller  
staff writer

The Equal Rights Amendment may die unratified when June 30 ticks into history. But to its backers, the battle isn't lost. Or ended. "We are not sitting around and wringing our hands," said Laura Callow, Livonia homemaker who is co-chair for Michigan of ERAmerica. "We have won so much." And as for going down for the extended count, "They've been calling ERA dead for years," Callow said. "But it isn't dead until we who support it say it is." Callow and other feminist leaders are not even conceding that the deadline will pass without success. "The 19th Amendment (which gave women the vote) also was ratified in a cliff-hanger," Callow said. "One legislature was called into special session, and one representative changed his vote at the last minute on the plea of his mother."

She hopes for some last-minute developments this time, too.

BUT EVEN IF it comes to the ERA vigil planned in Lansing and then time runs out, pro-ERA leaders can point to great gains that started with, in Callow's words, "the thesis that half the population is not being treated as equal."

- Sex tipped off some of them.
- Equal pay has become a "household word."
- Equal credit is required by law.
- People now know about battered women and displaced homemakers. There are shelters for the former and programs for the latter.
- Schools are required by law to offer athletic competition for women.
- Grass-roots organization is now well in hand, and there is more push to get women into lawmaking posts.

Just the growth of the women's movement that has rallied around the ERA banner is a victory, Callow said. "When the idea of equal rights for women was first introduced, it was supported by one organization, the National Woman's Party, and maybe 15,000 people. "Now there are more than 200 organizations, and supporters in the millions."

CALLOW TALKED about the many reactions to the simply worded amendment as it moved, first to quick ratification by more than 30 states, then into sharp opposition and rescindings and finally into last-ditch struggle.

"There is going to be a new day," said Janet Good, who has been involved with the feminist movement through her work with Michigan's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

"I am sad that the men in the legislatures have voted that 300-million of the citizens of the United States are not equal. What they are saying is: 'You're damned right we are going to discriminate against you because of your sex.' But much has been learned, she added: "We know better how to judge candidates, by votes instead of looks."

Joan McCotter of Livonia said it has been only in recent years that she has realized the importance of the amendment. After years in teaching, she now is involved in leadership of a business and an organization for women in construction.

"I was sheltered in a profession that was largely women. I didn't realize until I went into business how pervasive are the attitudes that can shut women out. "The nitty-gritty is the ability to survive, and that is where an amendment is needed."

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She used the term "red herrings" to describe many arguments against passage of the amendment.

One of these is the possible drafting of women. "The argument that women should not be drafted can be used against them in peacetime," she said. "And I have to say as a citizen that if there is a war, women must be involved. And a man or a woman with a gun is probably better off, from a protection standpoint, than a woman with a young baby."

ERA Callow added, is an economic issue. Equal pay for equal work now is required by law, she said, but the "comparable worth" of work done by men and women is an issue still unaddressed.

"And pensions are clearly a part of pay," Callow said. "But in many states they are lower for women. Women cannot get disability insurance or they must pay a higher rate than men do."

"Insurance companies now have equalized the premiums young men and young women pay for auto insurance, but have done nothing about the greater discrepancy in insurance payments for women farther along in life."

Opponents of ERA have backed some of the gains, Callow said.

"But the agreement comes after the fact. They also are arguing for rights for women greater than those of men in some areas. That has to mean that men have rights better than women in other areas. This is a put-down for women. "The argument is for the status quo. And that is discrimination."

## WHAT LIES AHEAD?

"ERA is clearly going to be introduced. Ten years ago, we were not organized at the grass roots, but today we are. An artificial deadline has cut us off, but we will use other methods now."

One of these, she said, will be gatherings across the country like Women's Assembly II, scheduled at the Airport Hilton in Romulus this Friday and Saturday with more than 20 organizations involved.

The assembly will study six areas — employment and economics, education, power and image, community concerns, family relations and health care and international relations.

"There will be resolutions, and the delegates will ratify and use the platform that evolves as a means of measuring candidates."

Setting up political action committees by several women's organizations represents another new note, said Callow.

"I see the coming decade as one when women will push for political power. It has always been a two-pronged fight, of course. ERA has been what we rallied around, but we have pushed for the specific issues, too."

"We are organized as never before, and many are going to be sorry they made us work so hard for ERA."



BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Laura Callow and other proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment promise the fight will go on to gain for women equal treatment under the law.

## Griffiths sees support base growing



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Martha Griffiths, who authored the ERA, thinks it will pass in a different form.

By Suzie Rollins Singer  
staff writer

Anti-ERA groups may be surprised this time around when ERA is reintroduced and support thickens.

That's the assessment of former Congresswoman Martha Griffiths, who as a representative of Michigan's 17th district wrote the Equal Rights Amendment a decade ago. It will die June 30 unless three more states ratify by that date.

"The ERA will be reintroduced July 1 by Rep. Patricia Schroeder, (D-Colo)," said Griffiths in an interview after a recent talk in Detroit.

"But this time I hope it's reworded. Instead of asking for a 27th Amendment, I think this time they could amend the 14th Amendment to include women. If it's in a new form it will give everyone a break who wouldn't vote for it before. If the wording changes they could vote for it and not look like they were wrong all those years," she said.

Griffiths, now in private practice and serving on a number of corporate boards, thinks it was the wording that hurt the amendment.

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on the account of sex," is how the amendment reads.

"The word equal was a great drawback," added the veteran of 20 years in Congress. "It was badly interpreted. People thought equal rights meant women had to mow the lawn or share bathrooms. It only meant that under law everyone would be equal."

She said she's willing to wager bets that men will join the pro-ERA groups. "Let's face it, men today need a woman's salary to live on," she noted.

"Over 50 percent of the women in this country work — and not just for fun. In a lot of situations it's the woman's job that maintains the family. Today, you'll have husbands campaigning for ERA," she said.

THE SAGGING economy, dual career families and high interest rates have pushed more women into the work force. Rising divorce rates and

low or no alimony payments are making women more aware of the necessity of an equal rights law. Even widows are learning that they aren't getting what they're entitled to when their husbands die, Griffiths said.

"There was once a Michigan law, that was recently repealed by Gov. Milliken, that said only a bar owner's wife could own a bar," Griffiths explained.

"There was a case where a bar owner died and left the bar to his wife. Because she was a widow and not married to the owner she found out she had no right to own the bar because she had no husband. That's terrible."

Griffiths said frankly the bar story is an isolated case, but added that it's isolated cases that are opening the eyes of rural women.

"We were never able to get the message across to enough women. We did all right in the cities, but we had a tough time convincing the rural women," she said.

Griffiths is outspoken on the ERA issue.

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## Donnelly urges end to bitterness

By Sherry Kahan  
staff writer

Elaine Donnelly is hoping for a new beginning once it is clear on July 1 that the Equal Rights Amendment will not become part of the U.S. Constitution. She says she'd like to see "a more cooperative attitude among women."

"It's time to get over the bitterness," added the Livonia resident who heads Michigan STOP ERA and is the organization's national media chairman.

"I don't feel bitter. It's time to break the ice and find a way for those of us who agree on basic issues and positive things to stand together."

"The defeat of ERA doesn't mean women's rights are lost or anything taken away. It means the debate will continue in a more reasonable fashion."

"The fight has been worth the sacrifices we made. We won't allow another version of ERA to pass Congress. We've already counted votes. It won't get out of the judiciary committee."

BUT WHEN the smoke of the battle disappears, what is next for a woman

who has spent the past 10 years testifying before Congressional committees, battling with Federal Communications Commission officials, appearing on TV and radio, writing pamphlets and rounding up the vote of legislators?

First she will celebrate the end of ERA at the "Over the Rainbow" party to be given in Washington, D.C. June 30 by Phyllis Schlafly, national chairwoman of STOP ERA. After that, Donnelly will continue to be political.

"I feel strongly women should be involved in politics," she said. "They are very bright. They have a lot to bring to political life."

"I am very involved with the Republican Party," she said, indicating she plans to continue this commitment.

"I wouldn't say I'd never run. But I'm not thinking of running at this time."

Her interests lie in other directions.

SEEKING TO HAVE her side covered equally by the media in the ERA fight, she said she became "an expert more or less on the fairness doctrine."

It requires that television broadcasters present both viewpoints on major issues.

"I've dealt with the Federal Communications Commission on rule-making procedures to insure that in the presentation of issues regarding women, both sides will be represented."

"I'm thinking of becoming a consultant in that area."

Donnelly has challenged the FCC, claiming it has not insisted that broadcasters observe the fairness doctrine, and she disagrees with Mark Fowler, the Reagan-appointed FCC head, who wants to get rid of this doctrine.

"My next challenge will be to defeat the efforts of Fowler to eliminate the fairness rules. I know a lot about them. I intend to testify for their defeat."

IRONICALLY, Donnelly favored ERA at first and then changed her mind. She said the change came because of statements made about the proposed amendment by Martha Griffiths, who introduced the Equal Rights Amendment and backed it actively.

At the time, Griffiths was a member of Congress representing the 19th Congressional District, a post now filled by Rep. William Broadhead.

"I am opposed to such notions as

women being equally subject to the draft and combat," said Donnelly. "Griffiths was quite explicit about it. When Sen. Sam Levin tried to attach to the amendment such exceptions as exemptions from the draft, she said they must make ERA absolute with no exceptions for draft or combat duty or 'else your daughters and granddaughters will curse your memory.'"

"It struck me as unfair and high-handed, to say the least. I didn't feel she had the right to speak for me, my daughter and granddaughter."

"She also said it was needed for psychological uplift. But you don't amend the Constitution for uplift."

IN DONNELLY'S opinion, "ERA will do nothing to resolve problems women face today with sex discrimination."

"It will not add anything to laws already on the books. It is worse than useless. It will cause a lot of trouble for women."

An amendment prohibiting discrimination based on sex would not do anything to help women combat discrimination.

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ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Elaine Donnelly of STOP ERA hopes now for a spirit of cooperation.