

What is the Equal Rights Amendment?



24 simple words: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

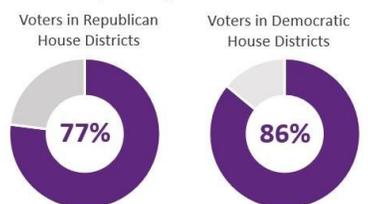
Why is the ERA necessary?

- **On principle:** like other fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, equal rights, regardless of sex, belong in the Constitution. In the words of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, "The ERA recognizes the fundamental dignity and individuality of each human being and rests on the basic principle that sex should not be a factor in determining the legal rights of men or women."
- **In practice:** the courts currently treat sex discrimination more leniently ("intermediate scrutiny") than discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, or religion ("strict scrutiny"), which impacts outcomes. For example, had the Equal Rights Amendment been part of the Constitution, the outcome of *Nguyen v. INS*, which upheld a law that made it more difficult for a child born abroad to a male U.S. citizen than a child so born to a female U.S. citizen to gain citizenship, would have been more fair to offspring of men.
- **Women's rights are currently subject to political winds:** the laws shielding women from discrimination in the absence of Constitutional guarantees can be changed or repealed and court decisions retreated from or overruled. For example, Congress allowed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to lapse in December 2018.
- **The Equal Rights Amendment enjoys enduring, bipartisan support.**
 - The history of the United States shows that Americans have consistently valued equality, but not been inclusive in the definition of who was entitled to equal rights. For gender equality, Republican national platforms proudly supported the ERA from 1940 until 1980.
 - Today, 81% of Virginians support ERA ratification, including 77% in Republican House districts and 86% in Democratic House districts.
 - Over 30 city councils and county boards of supervisors, including some in liberal areas and some in conservative areas, have passed resolutions supporting Virginia's ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.
 - ***Diverse, cross-sectional*** groups support Virginia's ratification, including: APV, AAUW of Virginia, American Bar Association, ACLU of Virginia, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Virginia Social Task Force, DPVA, LWV of Virginia, Virginia AFL-CIO, Virginia Education Association, Virginia Municipal League, Virginia NAACP State Conference, Virginia NOW, Virginia Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and the Virginia Poor People's Campaign.

Thank you for supporting constitutional gender equality as a citizen advocate!

- **The Virginia Senate, with strong bipartisan support, passed the Equal Rights Amendment on Tuesday, January 15th with a vote of 26-14.**
- **Lobbying on the Equal Rights Amendment in the House of Delegates is the priority.**
 - All Democrats are co-patrons of the ERA with the exception of Delegate Price, who we believe is supportive
 - A handful of Republicans are working behind the scenes but have not yet signed on as co-patrons in 2019
- **Meeting with your legislator**
 - Speaking directly to your own legislator or his/her legislative aide is the most effective lobbying you can do.
 - Speaking with other legislators and/or legislative aides is also helpful in showing strong state-wide support but constituents usually are given the highest priority.
- **Talking with a legislator / legislative aide:**
 - It is very effective to tell a personal story about why you support the Equal Rights Amendment. Personal stories cannot be argued and give you a strong platform from which to launch your advocacy.
 - Mention the strong, diverse, state-wide support. 81% of Virginians support ratification according to the Wason polling.
 - If speaking with a Republican please mention thirty localities have passed resolutions. The conservative areas of the state that will be of greatest interest to Republicans are:
 - **All of Hampton Roads** (Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Northampton, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach)
 - **James City, Montgomery, Page, Powhatan, Prince Edward (+ Farmville), Prince George, and Shenandoah** counties; Jonesville City Council
 - Ask the legislator's position on the issue and areas of concern. VAratifyERA has dropped a legislator's notebook at every office (*a copy is on our website at Resources/Printables*)
- **Send VAratifyERA your feedback from the visit: VAratifyERA.org/feedback**

Virginian Voters Support Ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment



Source: Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University