

The ERA: A Brief Introduction

- ★ **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. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.**

These simple words comprise the entire text of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), affirming the equal application of the U.S. Constitution to both females and males.

The ERA was written in 1923 by Alice Paul, suffragist leader and founder of the National Woman's Party. She and the NWP considered the ERA to be the next necessary step after the 19th Amendment (affirming women's right to vote) in guaranteeing "equal justice under law" to all citizens.

The ERA was introduced into every session of Congress between 1923 and 1972, when it was passed and sent to the states for ratification. The seven-year time limit in the ERA's proposing clause was extended by Congress to June 30, 1982, but at the deadline, the ERA had been ratified by [35 states](#), leaving it [three states](#) short of the 38 required for ratification. It has been reintroduced into every Congress since that time.

In the 110th Congress (2007 - 2008), the Equal Rights Amendment has been introduced as S.J. Res. 10 (Sen. Edward Kennedy, MA, lead sponsor) and H.J. Res. 40 (Rep. Carolyn Maloney, NY, lead sponsor). These bills impose no deadline on the ratification process in their proposing clauses. The ERA Task Force of the [National Council of Women's Organizations](#) supports these bills and urges groups and individuals to advocate for more [co-sponsors](#) and passage.