



March 18, 2021

**Kristie Wolff – Executive Director, North Dakota Women's Network
Opposition SCR 4010
North Dakota House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee**

Chairman Kasper and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Kristie Wolff, I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Women's Network.

North Dakota Women's Network is a statewide organization with members and advocates from every corner of the state. I am testifying today in opposition to SCR 4010.

We can all agree that the joint resolution that introduced the ERA included a deadline for ratification of 1979.

Because the ERA time limit is only in a joint resolution—not in the text of the ERA itself—it can be changed by another joint resolution passed by a simple majority. This issue was discussed at length in Congress in 1978, and both Houses did vote to extend the ERA time limit by three years to 1982. Just yesterday, the US House of Representatives voted to remove the deadline. These actions are occurring under the basic principle that one Congress cannot bind another Congress.

Under Article V of the Constitution, the only question for a state is whether to ratify. North Dakota has done their part in the process. Historically once a state ratifies, it cannot rescind that ratification. For example, the 14th Amendment became part of the Constitution even though two states, New Jersey and Ohio, attempted to rescind their ratifications. Those states were included on the list of ratifying states.

Let's talk briefly about why the ERA is so important. The Equal Rights Amendment would guarantee that the rights affirmed by the U.S. Constitution are held equally by all citizens without regard to their sex.

We have all seen the statistics on violence against women and the truly horrible numbers of Indigenous women who suffer from violence or who end up missing or murdered. We have all read the reports about disparities in pay.

But this isn't just about women. As its sex-neutral language makes clear, the ERA's guarantee of equal rights would protect both women and men against sex discrimination under the law.

How many fathers and children would greatly benefit from increased fairness in regard to parenting time and custody. Fathers take their children out in public, yet the number of changing tables in men's bathrooms vs women's bathrooms creates an unnecessary barrier for fathers to adequately care for their child.

Clearly, work needs to be done. So, my question is do we move forward? Or do we turn back the clock?

North Dakota has done their part in the process, by ratifying the ERA. Let us honor all those who fought and sacrificed simply to be treated equal. Let us move forward and be part of adding a critically important statement about equality to our constitution. Let us send an important message to children that one of our most cherished values as a state and a nation is equality.

SCR 4010 turns back the clock, therefore I am asking the Committee for a Do Not Pass recommendation.

Thank you,

Kristie Wolff

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