

**EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT TESTIMONY – APRIL 25, 2017**  
**League of Women Voters of Illinois**

Good Afternoon - My name is Hilary Denk, League of Women Voters member and volunteer on the Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the LWVIL Issues Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to represent the League of Women Voters of Illinois and to strongly urge you – the members of the Sub-committee on Constitutional Amendments - to pass SJRCA4 out of committee and before the full Illinois Senate in order for the House to vote before adjournment at the end of May, 2017.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution giving women the right to vote took 72 years to become reality in 1920. However, we are proud to say that the State of Illinois progressively gave women the right to vote in 1913, becoming the first State east of the Mississippi to do so. Also, Illinois was the first state to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was introduced in every session of Congress from 1923 until it passed in 1972. In 1943, the ERA was rewritten and dubbed the “Alice Paul Amendment.” The new amendment read, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.” The Equal Rights Amendment passed, but has not yet been ratified by the required 38 states. This Amendment is necessary because laws and common practices in the workplace and society still perpetuate inequality for women.

Article 1, paragraph 18 of the Illinois Constitution of 1970 states “The equal protection of the laws shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex by the State or its units of local government and school Districts”. Once again the State wisely recognized the importance and fairness of equal rights. Similar statements affirming women’s equality exist in constitutions the world over.

The time has come for the State of Illinois to step up to the plate and pass SJRCA4 and ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. In the past month, the state of Nevada became the 36<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the ERA. Illinois should join Nevada in becoming the 37<sup>th</sup> state supporting ratification. Only one additional state would be needed for ratification. The League of Women Voters of Illinois strongly urges you to do it now.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. The League of Women Voters was born from the suffrage movement right here in Illinois, and like our illustrious forebears, we are committed to continuing the fight until we reach the goal of justice for all. We are counting on the sub-committee, the Senate and the House of Representatives to support this long overdue action.

Submitted by League of Women Voters of Illinois  
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