

## Legislators must make ERA priority in next session

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“Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.” This powerful idea was conceived in 1923 by American suffragist Alice Paul. In 1776, we declared that all men are created equal and endowed with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It was Alice Paul’s vision that the women of America should be guaranteed those same freedoms and rights.



*Michelle Dorsey, MD*

After 49 years and tireless advocacy, Alice Paul’s Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) finally gained passage in Congress in 1972 with the support of President Richard Nixon. But only 35 of the needed 38 states achieved ratification within the required time frame. The ERA has recently seen new life, with Nevada becoming the 36th state to ratify in 2017 and Illinois following suit this past week. When 38 states finally achieve ratification, legal analysis shows a case can be made to enact the ERA.

The ERA is as relevant to American women today as it was nearly 100 years ago. The ERA guarantees equality for women under the law and protects women from gender discrimination. The ERA will establish a legal precedent for equal pay for equal work, equal access to education and health care, and allow us to legally contest economic inequality, pregnancy discrimination, and violence against women.

Join the League of Women Voters of Arizona in advocating for Arizona to become the final state to ratify the ERA. This year marks the second consecutive year that an ERA bill failed to see a vote in the state Legislature. We must convince our state legislators to prioritize the ERA in the next legislative session. Arizona can play an instrumental role in achieving constitutionally guaranteed equality for all women in the United States. Equal means equal.

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