

## **Random Musings about the Equal Rights Amendment**

Our nation is founded on basic principles of Human Rights that are stated in our most precious documents: the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

The first of these states that ALL men are Created Equal and endowed with certain inalienable Rights: the right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The U.S. Constitution establishes a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Why then, in 2009, are we even talking about adding an Equal Rights Amendment for women to the Constitution?

Why do so many people respond to one's comment "I am working for ratification of the ERA" with total indifference, disgust, or, as I have experienced, even anger?

Yet maybe we should not be surprised at such responses. After all, it took many election campaigns over ca. 40 years for states to pass Married Women's Property Laws giving married women some control over their property, children, and earnings.

It took 72 years from the first demand for Women's Right to Vote at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 for the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote to be passed!!

Although the founders of the Republic loudly proclaimed "No Taxation without Representation" in their struggles for independence from England, single working women in most states of the Republic had to pay taxes, even though they were not allowed to vote!

It took 72 years and 56 campaigns of referenda to voters, 480 campaigns to get state legislatures to submit the woman suffrage amendment to voters, 277 campaigns to get state party conventions to include woman suffrage planks in their platforms, 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses to get the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment passed by Congress, and 41 state amendment campaigns before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified in 1920!!

Although the Constitution ensures citizens the right to a "trial by their peers," NO woman served on a jury until 1921!!!! Hence no women enjoyed that cherished right.

Many believe that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution ensures all citizens of "equal protection under the law." But current justices of the U.S. Supreme Court have noted, in fact, that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was never intended to apply to women and that it does not guarantee women equal protection in the same way it does men.

The recent trend in the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down or weaken some of the major Civil Rights Legislation that, after extensive efforts, were finally amended in the 1960s and 1970s to also apply to discrimination against women suggests the ERA is necessary.

Many, if not most, Americans are surprised to learn that women do not enjoy equality under the U.S. Constitution. They assume that we do.

**BUT** in 2009, the **ONLY** right guaranteed by the Constitution to over half of the U. S. population, is the **RIGHT to VOTE!**