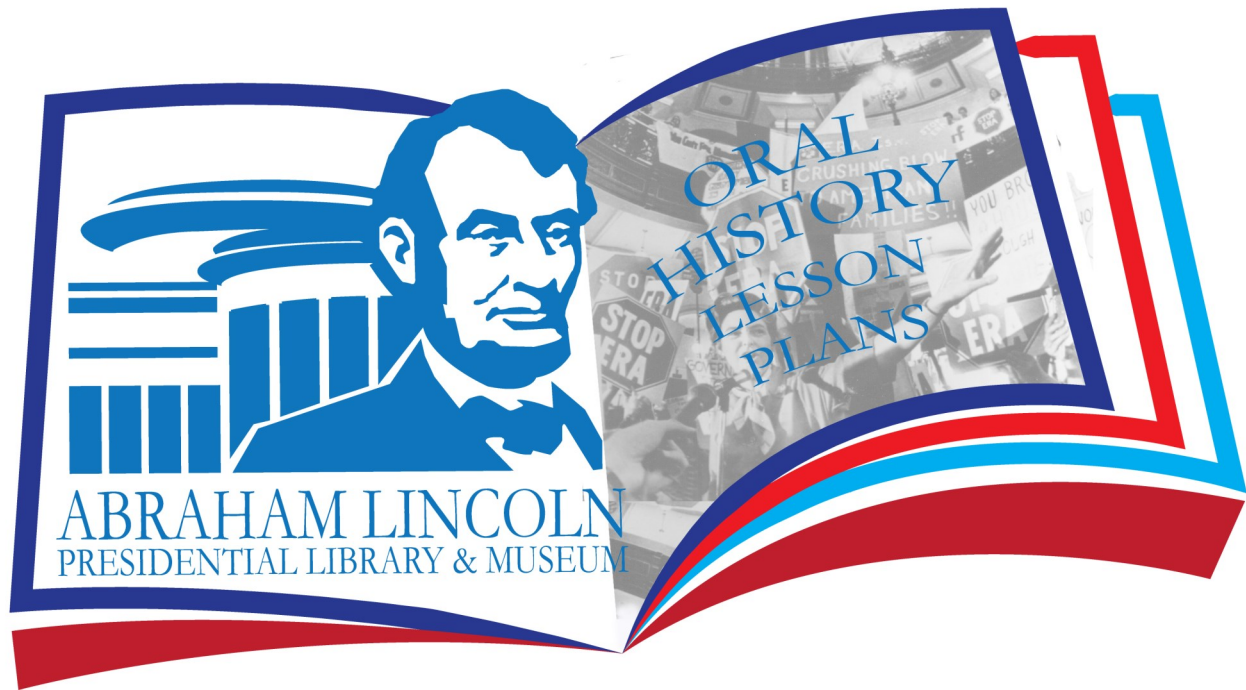


The ERA Fight in Illinois:

A Classroom Discussion



Authors: Joy Lyman, April Bryan, and Mark DePue

Grade Levels: 9-12

Purpose: This lesson will examine Illinois's key role in the nation-wide fight over the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment in the mid 1970s to early 1980s, making learning about the debate more interesting and personal for students. The participants in the debate in Illinois had many different positions on the issues, with vocal and influential advocates on both sides of the issue. This lesson will foster an informed debate on the merits of the ERA in the context that was discussed from 1972-1982.

Objectives: Upon completing the activities presented in this Resource Guide, students will:

- Explain the arguments used during that time for and against a constitutional amendment ensuring equality for all women.
- Understand Illinois's role in the larger national debate over ERA and women's rights.
- Understand the process to amend the United States Constitution.
- Sharpen their analytical and debating skills.

Materials:

Internet access, audio equipment for listening to interview clips, printed copies of discussion questions, the ERA text worksheet, and Evidence/Interpretation worksheet.

Illinois State Learning Standards:

Early High School:

- **SS.14.D.4:** Analyze roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current debates on state and national policies.
- **SS.14.F.4b:** Describe how United States' political ideas, practices and technologies have extended rights for Americans in the 20th century (e.g., suffrage, civil rights, motor-voter registration).



Late High School:

- **SS.14.D.5:** Interpret a variety of public policies and issues from the perspectives of different individuals and groups.
- **SS.14.F.5:** Interpret how changing geographical, economic, technological and social forces affect United States political ideas and traditions (e.g., freedom, equality and justice, individual rights).



Early High School:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1:

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

Late High School:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1:

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.



Background Information:

Suffrage for women was achieved in 1920 with the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. The National Woman's Party (NWP), founded by Alice Paul, then turned their attention to passing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would guarantee women equal rights under the law. In 1923 the amendment was introduced in Congress and for the next forty-nine years, the Equal Rights Amendment was reintroduced into every session of that body. But not everyone supported the ERA; critics included social conservatives and members of the labor movement who believed that women needed special protection in the workplace.

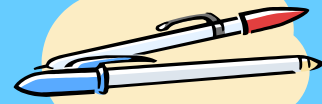
Feminist goals evolved over the years to include ending job discrimination, equal pay for equal work, affordable child care, birth control and abortion rights, more attention to women's health needs, rape crisis centers, women's shelters, and equal access to education. In 1963, The U.S. Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, which guaranteed that there could not be pay discrimination in the workplace based on sex. Then, in 1972, the feminist movement gained another victory when an amendment to the Higher Education Act, referred to as Title IX, was passed. Title IX eliminated discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded programs and institutions. In 1973, the Roe v. Wade decision made abortion legal before the third trimester— an issue that continues to be contentious today.

By the early 1970s the National Organization for Women (NOW) focused its attention on the ratification of an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution. In 1972, Congress passed the amendment and sent it to the state legislatures, where it was given a seven year deadline for ratification. Proponents pushed hard to have the amendment ratified, and gained an extension of three years when ratification efforts failed within the original time frame. By 1973, opponents of the ERA, led by Phyllis Schlafly of Alton, Illinois, had organized a vigorous grass-roots campaign to block passage of ERA. Illinois became an important battleground state in the fight to adopt ERA, with a fight being waged in the Illinois legislature every year from 1972 through 1982. It was the only northern industrial state that never adopted ERA. Controversy over the ERA still exists today and efforts to reintroduce the amendment for ratification continue.

Activity Procedure:

The question that students will be investigating during the lesson is “Why didn’t the Equal Rights Amendment pass in Illinois?”

1. If the students are not familiar with the Women’s Rights Movement, give them some background on the topic before diving into the ERA debate.
2. Begin the lesson by having students read and annotate the text of the ERA, and discuss. Check for understanding of key words.
3. Have students listen to the interviews from both sides of the issue. Discuss their ideas about ERA, and as they do so, complete the “Evidence/Interpretation worksheet”.
4. After the students listen to each clip, give them a few minutes to share with a partner or small group.
5. After all clips have been listened to, give students a few minutes to fill out the discussion question section of the worksheet, then talk as a class about the pros and cons of the ERA and why it did not pass.
6. By the end of the discussion, each student should have an answer to the question of why the ERA did not pass, and whether or not they agree with the decision.



Tips and Suggestions:

- * Pre-teach a lesson on Women’s Movement before this lesson, so that students have the context to really interact with the material.
- * Use these interviews for an in-depth project on the campaign for ERA. Assign students to groups, have them listen to the full interviews and do additional research, then allow a class period for a debate over ERA. Have the students “vote” on the amendment.
- * Encourage students to be considerate and thoughtful to both sides of the ERA conversation.



Discussion Questions:

1. Explain the arguments used by supporters for passage of ERA. What were some of the benefits if ERA were adopted?
2. Explain the arguments used by opponents to ERA. What would some of the downsides be if ERA were adopted?
3. Why is the ERA no longer up for debate in Congress?
4. Why didn’t the ERA pass? Include evidence in your answer.
5. Have subsequent events and changes in American culture and society made ERA unnecessary today?
6. Do you think the ERA should be brought back up for debate? Why or why not?

Additional Resources:

- Further info on ERA: <http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/overview.htm>
- 14th Amendment to U.S. Constitution: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/14thamendment.html>
- Equal Pay Act of 1963: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/epa.cfm>
- Text of Title IX: <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm>
- Illinois State Constitution, Article I, Section 18: <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lrb/con1.htm>
- Illinois State Constitution, Article XIV, Section 4: <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lrb/con14.htm>



Interviews:



Phyllis Schlafly:

Schlafly has been involved in conservative Republican politics since the 1950s. She was an outspoken opponent of the ERA, and a leader in the Stop-ERA movement from 1973 through 1982.

Interview:

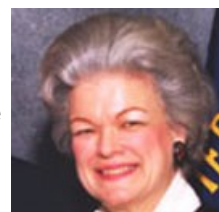
[ERA Language](#) (4:52) **Transcript:** [Click Here](#)
[Not a Hypocrite](#) (1:26) **Transcript:** [Click Here](#)

Kathleen Sullivan:

Sullivan is a conservative, pro-family proponent who was one of Phyllis Schlafly's lieutenants. She argues that women had distinct advantages over men in many state laws, and these would have been taken away with the passage of the ERA.

Interview:

[Extending the Fight](#) (1:54) **Transcript:** [Click Here](#)
[Thompson and ERA](#) (1:55) **Transcript:** [Click Here](#)



Jeri Frederick:

Worked in the National Organization for Women (NOW) Springfield office when NOW was leading an effort to get the Illinois legislature to pass the ERA.

Interview:

[After WWII](#) (1:48) **Transcript:** Coming Soon
[Sex vs. Gender](#) (0:52) **Transcript:** Coming Soon

Joyce Webb: Webb helped found the Women's Center, one of the first in the United States originally meant to serve as a "consciousness raising" group but soon evolving into a crisis center for women.

Interview:

[Equal Rights](#) (0:59)
Transcript: Coming Soon
[State Laws](#) (1:52)
Transcript: Coming Soon



Pauline Kayes: In 1982, during the last year of the fight to pass ERA in the Illinois legislature, Kayes was one of a group of women who chained themselves to the railing outside the IL Senate chamber in protest the lack of action on ERA.

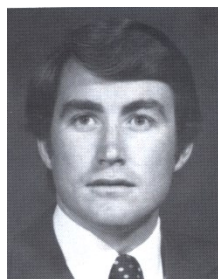
Interview:

[Chaining](#) (2:16) **Transcript:** Coming Soon
[We Were Bad Girls](#) (0:52) **Transcript:** Coming Soon

James R. Thompson: James R. Thompson was governor of Illinois from 1977-1991. He was governor during the turbulent debate on whether or not to pass ERA, and endured the crossfire from both sides. He actively supported the amendment, although he believed the Equal Protection clause of the 14th amendment made ERA unnecessary.

Interview:

[ERA Votes](#) (1:41)
Transcript: Coming Soon
[ERA](#) (2:36) **Transcript:** Coming Soon



Jim Edgar: Illinois Secretary of State from 1981-1990 and governor from 1991-1999, Edgar was often caught in the middle of pro-ERA protesting.

Interview:

[Chaining and Fasting](#) (5:49) **Transcript:** [Click Here](#)

Dawn Clark-Netsch: An assistant in the Kerner administration, IL Constitutional Convention delegate, longtime Illinois Senator, Comptroller and Democratic gubernatorial candidate in 1994, Senator Netsch was a leading sponsor and powerful voice for ERA in the Illinois Senate.

Interview:

[Refuting Ant-ERA arguments](#) (6:39)
Transcript: [Click Here](#)



The Equal Rights Amendment:

- 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.

At the beginning of class answer: What is the significance of this amendment? What does it mean? Is there any vocabulary words you need to know to understand the amendment?

At the end of class answer: Why didn't the Equal Rights Amendment pass in Illinois? Use at least 5 pieces of evidence to support your answer.

Name:

Date:

Class Period:

Listening Guide

Complete the following chart as you listen to the audio excerpts. Write down *evidence*, things that the interviewee says during the excerpt, and then write down *interpretation*, things that you thought about or connected to while listening to the interview.

Evidence: I heard....	Interpretation: I thought... I wondered... I predicted... I made a connection to...
Interview 1:	
Interview 2:	
Interview 3:	
Interview 4:	

Evidence: I heard....	Interpretation: I thought... I wondered... I predicted... I made a connection to...
Interview 5:	
Interview 6:	
Interview 7:	
Interview 8:	