



Elusive Victory: The Equal Rights Amendment Fight in Illinois:

1972 - 1982

Dr. Mark DePue

ELUSIVE VICTORY



**THE EQUAL RIGHTS
AMENDMENT FIGHT
IN ILLINOIS**

MARK R. DEPUE

The ERA Project

- ALPLM Oral History Program launched in 2006
- Interviews on the Equal Rights Amendment fight in Illinois between 2009 & 2025
 - Excerpts from 49 oral history interviews
- Extensive use of newspaper articles + secondary sources
- An objective approach: **Positions of both sides are presented**

1970 Illinois Constitution

- **1970:** New Illinois State Constitution is adopted by the IL public
- **Article I: Bill of Rights, Section 18:** No discrimination on the basis of sex. *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.*
- **Article XIV, Section 4:** Adoption of Amendments
 - **60% requirement needed in both chambers to ratify an amendment**



Changes for Women

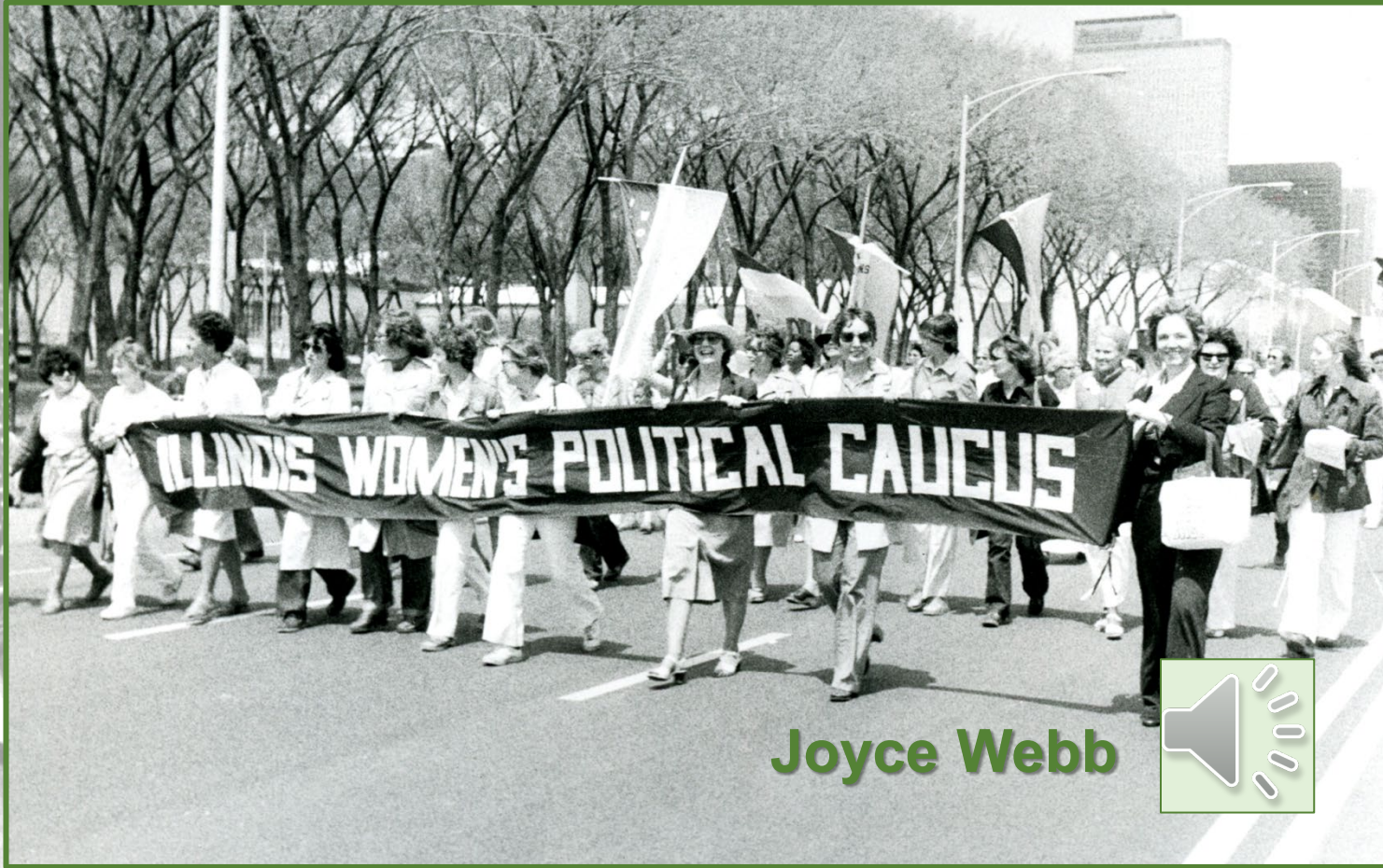
June 1972 - Title IX: *No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*



- **January 1973:** Roe v. Wade, legal case in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (7–2) that unduly restrictive state regulation of abortion is unconstitutional.
- **Backlash from social conservatives was immediate and long-lasting.**



Argument for ERA



Joyce Webb

- Argument for passage, by Ruth Bader Ginsburg
- *The equal rights amendment ...would dedicate the nation to a new view of the rights and responsibilities of men and women. It ... looks toward a legal system in which each person will be judged on the basis of individual merit and not on the basis of an unalterable trait of birth that bears no necessary relationship to need or ability.*

Phyllis Schlafly & Stop ERA

- Schlafly finds a cause - Creation of Stop ERA
- Schlafly's arguments against ERA
- Stop ERA tactics



**Representative
Barbara Flynn Currie**

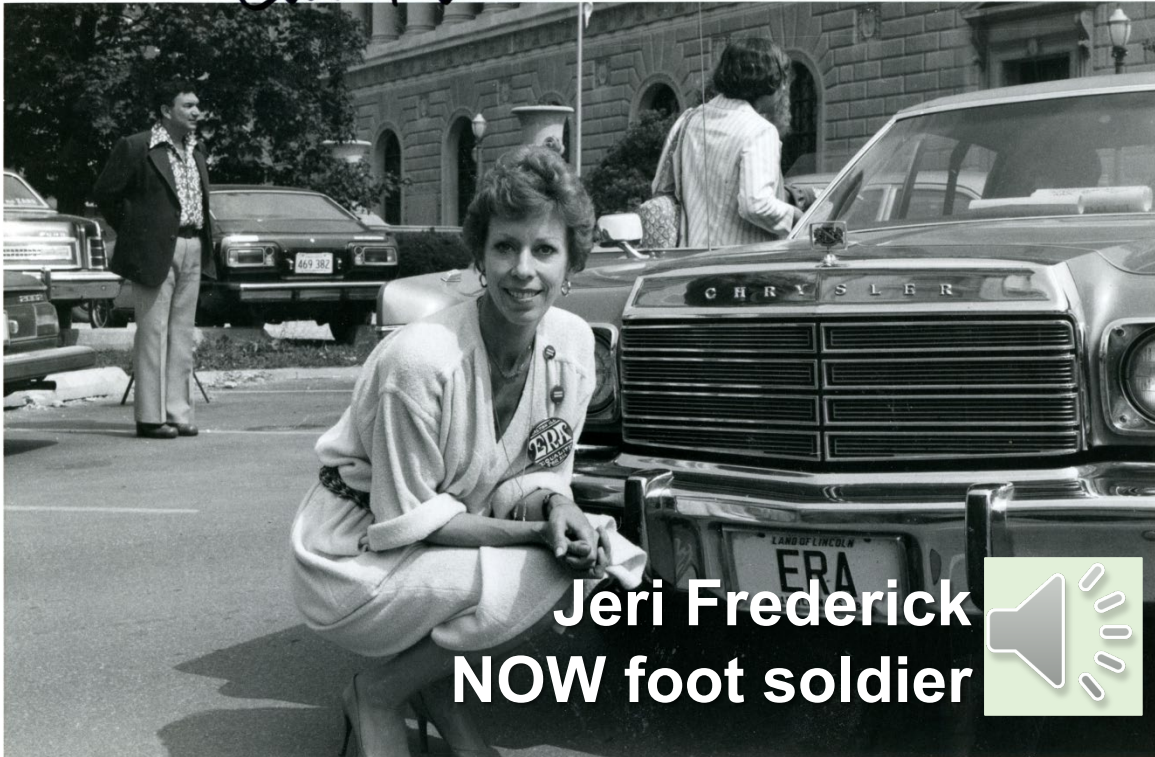


The Fight in the 1970s

1. Legislature votes on the three-fifth requirement for passage

2. Legislature votes on ERA Amendment itself

Carl Hansen



Jeri Frederick
NOW foot soldier



1978 – Deadline Extension

- **National Women's Conference pushed for an extension to ERA timeline**
- **Congress extends the ERA timeline from 1979 to June 30, 1982**



1982 -The ERA Clock is Ticking

- **Pro-ERA activities**
 - Increased tempo of demonstrations
 - Intense pressure on legislators
 - Direct Action
 - ✓ Grassroots Group of Second Class Citizens
 - ✓ 37-day Hunger Strike by Sonia Johnson & seven others
- **Gov. Thompson meets with legislators**
- **Stop ERA activities**



The Chain Gang

- **Radical Feminists**
response to inaction
 - **Grass Roots Group**
of **Second Class**
Citizens

Pauline Kayes



Pig's Blood on the Floor

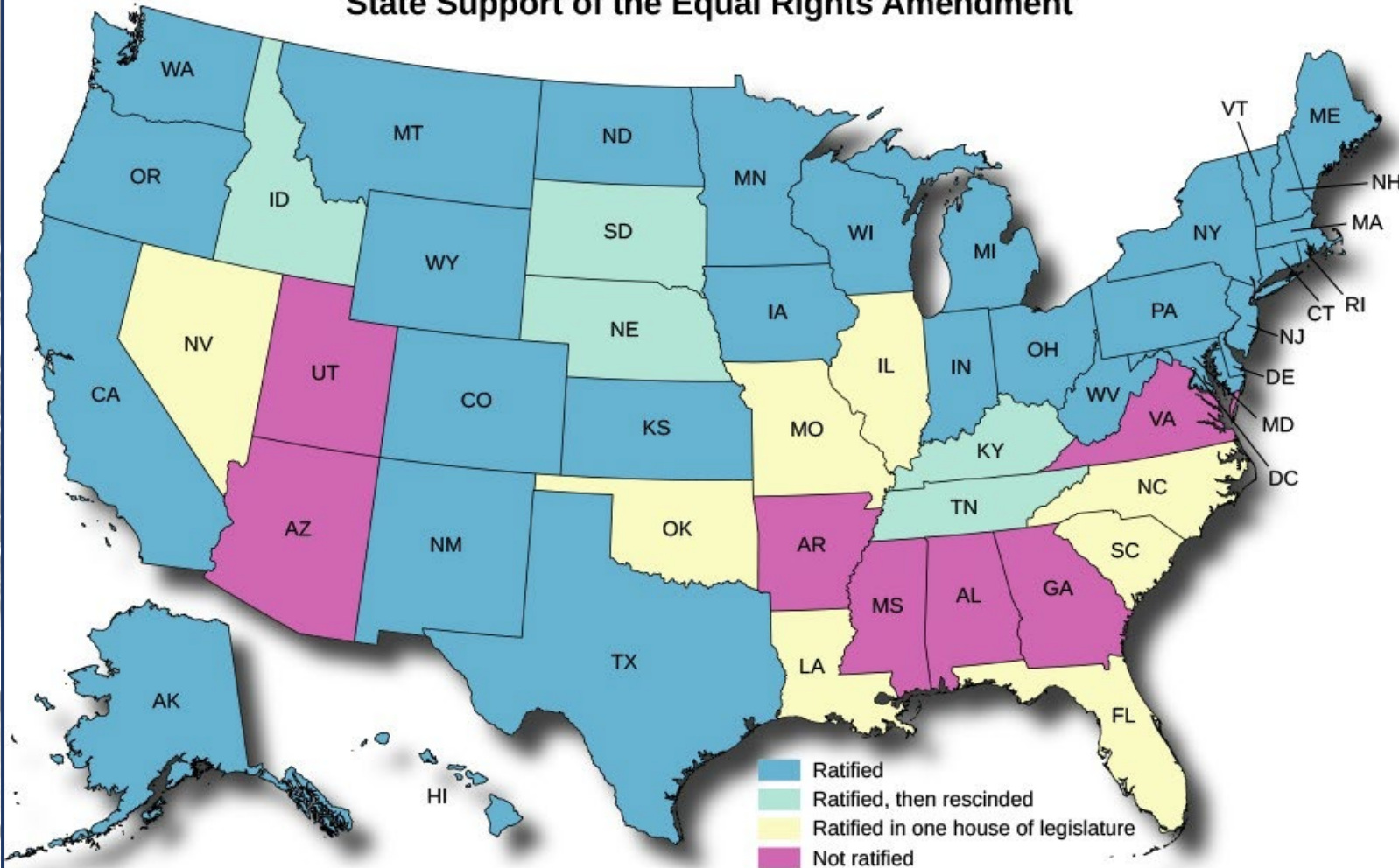


- Mary Lee Sargent, leader of the Grass Roots Group of 2nd Class Citizens



June 1982 - The Clock Runs Out

State Support of the Equal Rights Amendment



- 38 states needed for ratification
- 35 states ratified ERA by 1982
 - 5 of those states later rescinded ERA
- Since 1982, three more states ratified
 - Nevada in 2017
 - Illinois in May 2018
 - Virginia in 2019

Q & A

Check out the ALPL Oral History website at
www.oralhistory.illinois.gov

Dr. Mark DePue

Kaytlin Jacoby

Dr. Jan Droegkamp