

It's a fact!

In 1923, just months after Minnesota women were granted the right to vote, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was given its first reading on the floor of the Minnesota House. The author was Agnes Myrtle Cain.

Cain was one of the first four women elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 1922. The daughter of Irish immigrants, she became a powerful figure in Minnesota politics, even though she served only one legislative term.

She was a strike leader, a co-founder of the Minnesota branch of the National Women's Party, and a leading union advocate.

Cain was still championing the ERA cause when Minnesota became the 26th state to pass the measure in 1973.

But it was her "anti-masking" bill that proved most famous. The first of its kind in the nation, the measure made concealing one's identity in public a misdemeanor.

The law was aimed at members of the Ku Klux Klan, whom Cain called "cowards, lawbreakers and criminals." The bill was approved by the House on a 96-2 vote. Fifteen other states soon passed similar legislation.

Gov. Wendell Anderson named Feb. 15, 1973, as Myrtle Cain Day. She died in 1980.



Former Rep. Myrtle Cain

—photo courtesy Minnesota Historical Society