

Betty Folliard's Testimony to MN House Rules Committee, May 6, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chair & Members,

I'm Betty Folliard, Founder of ERA Minnesota, an all-volunteer organization dedicated to passing an Equal Rights Amendment, also known as the ERA, into our state and federal constitutions; and I'm here today in support of SF37 as amended by Representative Her.

Since this state's inception, our constitution has never had an equality clause. Our state constitution was written 167 years ago, in 1857, the same year the dreadful Dred Scott decision came down from the Supreme Court stating that enslaved people were not U.S. citizens. (Dred Scott met and married his wife here at Fort Snelling.)

Back then, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian people, People of color and ALL women were intentionally excluded from full citizenship. The ERA is designed to rectify historic injustices that too often continue to thwart our people's progress.

Just as our state has evolved, so has the language of the ERA. The ERA today explicitly offers protections in our strongest legal document to repair systemic inequalities; it will help to dismantle structural racism, sexism, pay inequity, sexual violence, pregnancy discrimination, health care disparities, the pink tax, and more.

Please note two reports in your packets for more specifics: Attorney General Ellison's task force Report on Expanding the Economic Status of Women; and the 2024 Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota report by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the Center on Women, Gender, and Public Policy at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Policy.

The ERA today guarantees equal protection under the law for all Minnesotans; ultimately, with your yes vote today, Minnesotans will get to decide if we as a state value equal rights through our vote, just as 28 other states have already done before us.

It's time to reach beyond our past, to upend historic stereotypes and systems of suffering, to recognize the full dignity and humanity of all Minnesotans. Because the ERA is for all, and all means all. Equality has no qualifiers.

I thank you for your time and humbly ask that you vote YES on SF37 as amended.