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Billboard Unveiling to Launch Women's Equal Rights Campaign

Push in advance of Constitution Day underscores the need for Equal Rights Amendment

*Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged
by the United States or by any state on account of sex.*

Raleigh, N.C. — The ERA-NC Alliance, AAUW-NC and NC NOW will join Equal Rights Amendment bill sponsors on Thursday, Aug. 22, at 2 p.m. at a press conference to launch a statewide ERA awareness campaign in advance of Constitution Day. Women's rights advocates will unveil billboards, installed strategically across North Carolina, to call for state ratification of the ERA.

The launch will take place in the press conference room of the General Assembly Legislative Building, 16 W. Jones St., Raleigh.

North Carolina has the historic opportunity to become the 38th — and final — state necessary to ratify the ERA to guarantee equal rights for women and men under the U.S. Constitution.

The presidents of the three statewide organizations will jointly announce the campaign with state Sen. Floyd B. McKissick, Jr., and Rep. Carla Cunningham, the primary sponsors of ERA bills SB184 and HB271, respectively. Additional primary sponsors of the bills are Sens. Erica Smith and Terry Van Duyn, as well as Reps. Susan Fisher, Evelyn Terry and Julie von Haefen.

During the weeks leading up to Constitution Day on Sept. 17, advocates will promote ERA ratification with a series of activities, including an Instagram challenge.

"An all-male panel wrote our constitution," said Marena Groll, co-president of the ERA-NC Alliance. "Equality was a problem right out of the gate, and it's something that has eluded us for more than 230 years."

An ERA bill was introduced in Congress in 1923, but not passed until 1972. The amendment was then sent to the states for ratification. By the controversial 1982 deadline, 35 of the necessary 38 states had ratified. The ERA movement re-ignited in 2017, challenging the legitimacy of the deadline as Nevada became the 36th state to ratify, quickly followed by Illinois as the 37th the following year. North Carolina's efforts are being followed nationally.

"We are very excited about the new billboards," said Gailya Paliga, president of NC NOW. "We hope they spark interest in the ERA as a fundamental legal remedy against sex discrimination for women and men."

ERA bills SB184 and HB271 will continue to be viable until the end of the long General Assembly session. They are exempt from the crossover deadline.

"What an honor if North Carolina will vote to ratify ERA and be the final state to approve Constitutional protection of equal rights for all Americans," said Jane Terwillegar, president of AAUW North Carolina.

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