



NEWS from
**U.S. Senator
Bob Dole**

(R.—Kans.)

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WASHINGTON, D.C., Feb. 24 --- U.S. Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.) announced today his support for the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, which provides that "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. "

The Constitutional Amendment, H.J. Res 208, was passed by the House, Oct. 12, 1971. The measure was sent to the Senate the following day and referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. On Feb. 29, the committee is expected to vote on the Equal Rights Amendment.

The Kansas Senator released today the following statement in support of the amendment:

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

I wish to announce my intention to support ---- without inhibiting or crippling amendments, provisos or conditions ---- the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution.

This is a measure that has become familiar to the halls of Congress, a measure commanding the forces of reason, equity and fairness to which our society's institutions must be responsive if they are to continue to grow and function.

The struggle for women's rights is more than a century old. In fact, it has been with us since the birth of our nation. Recent years have seen some progress after many long years of effort. Some recognition of women's rights ---- brought about by the application of women's political, legal and personal energies ---- has been achieved. But no fundamental, basic guarantee of these rights has yet been indelibly forged. The Equal Rights Amendment appears to be the most effective, direct and desirable means of providing that guarantee.

I support this amendment with a profound sense of the rightness of its cause. But I also support it with an awareness of the historical significance it holds for my state.

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Kansans' Role In Women's Suffrage

The State of Kansas has many proud and longstanding social, commercial and political traditions. Foremost among these great traditions is a strong and sometimes exuberant regard for individual rights and freedoms. Perhaps one of the most widely known incidents of history concerns the Kansas' struggle to assure equal rights for all citizens. During the Civil War era the whole state was made a focal point of contending pro- and anti-slavery forces; but one of the deepest and most enduring civil libertarian traditions in the state is one that took root in those early days of statehood: the effort to ensure for women the fullest participation in life ---- whether on a legal, political or social basis.

When the women's suffrage movement was initiated in the middle 1800s there were two major routes to universal suffrage available. On one hand was the implementation of a constitutional amendment applicable to all the states and on the other were referendum efforts to change the state constitutions.

Referendum Campaigns

In the Nineteenth Century, the suffragette movement focused its early efforts on individual state referendum campaigns. The first of those campaigns was launched in Kansas in 1867. It was led by individuals whose names would become synonymous with the women's rights movement: Olympia Brown, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. They waged a vigorous campaign throughout the state, and, much to the surprise of many observers, they won nearly one-third of the 30,000 votes cast. They did not win the day, but they did set a powerful example to women everywhere. In the next 51 years, 56 referendum campaigns were conducted across the nation, and the suffrage movement gained the strength that eventually led to the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

According to Eleanor Flexner in Century of Struggle:

It was no accident that the first round of the political struggle to win women the vote should have taken place in the State of Kansas. During the violence and upheaval of its territorial period in the 1850s, many New England women had come with their menfolk to try and make Kansas "free soil," bringing with them the ideas sown by Margaret Fuller and Lucy Stone.

Despite a series of defeats for universal woman suffrage, however, certain gains were made in the direction of partial or limited suffrage, on such matters as schools, taxes and bond issues. Kansas had led the way in granting partial suffrage, becoming, in 1861, only the second state to grant women the school vote; and, in 1887 it granted women municipal suffrage, an action hailed as a landmark of progress in the movement.

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Seventh State to Extend Suffrage to Women

Finally, Kansas became the seventh state to extend complete suffrage to women---- a full seven years before Congress passed the 19th Amendment.

The passage of the 19th Amendment was greeted with particular welcome by Kansans. Governor Henry Allen was one of the first two governors to recommend its adoption, and the state legislature complied with ratification on June 16, 1920, within two weeks following Congress' action.

For many, passage of the women's suffrage amendment was the end of the line. Women had the vote: what else did they need? But Kansans did not share this attitude, and in 1923, two members of the Kansas Congressional delegation, Senator, and later Vice President, Charles Curtis, and Congressman Daniel B. Anthony, a cousin of Susan B. Anthony, introduced the measure that has come down to this day in substantially the same form, the Equal Rights Amendment.

I believe the time is long past due for this nation to eliminate every last barrier to women's full exercise of their rights as citizens and to their participation in the life of this country to the maximum extent of their considerable abilities and talents.

I am proud to add my name to the list of distinguished Kansans ---- men and women --- and Americans who have carried forth the cause of women's rights in the United States.

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