

Testimony in opposition

LD 1412: A Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine Establishing That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law.

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Andy Levesque, I am a resident of Gorham. a member of the Knights of Columbus, a board member of Maine Right to Life, and a practicing Catholic.

I come before you today in opposition to LD 1412.

When I read your resolution, my initial reaction was, Isn't this the same ERA of the 70's?

On March 22, 1972, in accordance with the constitutional amendment, the ERA passed the Senate and the House of Representatives by well over the required two-thirds majority and was sent to the states for ratification.

When the ERA had received only 35 of the necessary 38 approvals, Congress passed a bill by a simple majority extending the deadline to June 30, 1982.

Although Article 5 does not give the president any role in the amendment process, President Jimmy Carter signed the extension bill as a symbolic show of support for the ERA.

A November 1983 floor vote in the House of Representatives under a suspension of the rules failed to achieve the required two-thirds majority by only six votes, and the ERA failed.

Since then, the ERA has continued to be reintroduced in every session of Congress.

So why does Maine need an ERA?

Over a century after it was ratified, the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was first interpreted by the Supreme Court to prohibit sex discrimination, classifications of race, religion, and national origin.

Our current laws protect all our citizens. From Kittery to Madawaska we all enjoy the freedom to choose the way we want to live our lives.

The ERA bill you propose would limit those freedoms to churches, religious organizations and companies wishing to exercise their right to hire an individual best suited for a position.

LD 1412 presents no safeguards for these institutions from lawsuits that offer opposing political or social views.

For these reasons I cannot support LD 1412.

I thank you for this opportunity and encourage you to vote "OUGHT NOT TO PASS."

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