

LD 1412

Race.

Color.

Religion.

Sex.

Sexual orientation.

Gender identity.

Gender expression.

Age.

Physical or mental disability.

Ancestry or national origin of an individual.

These are all basic human rights that Mainers expect to be protected under our state constitution.

But they are not.

LD 1412, an equal rights amendment, seeks to remedy this glaring omission in Maine's fundamental governing document.

Over 75 percent of Maine voters have said they want to see an equal rights amendment added to our state constitution.

Since 2017, Rep. Lois Reckitt has introduced an equal rights amendment in three sessions of the Maine state legislature.

Yet some members in both the state House and Senate have continuously stonewalled attempts in these sessions to pass an equal rights amendment on to the voters of Maine for their rightful consideration to vote either in favor of or against an ERA.

These legislators know fully well that by voting against an equal rights amendment, they are censoring the voice of their constituents and, by extension, all Mainers.

Because constitutional amendments may only be introduced by state legislators--and not through the citizen initiative process--the voters of Maine have been continuously denied their constitutional right by a minority of legislators to decide if Mainers want basic human rights legally protected in our state.

I have been told by some that I am too strident in my advocacy for a Maine state ERA, that my rhetorical rigor weighs too harshly on opposing legislative views.

For me, this kind of criticism is all too reminiscent of the type of censoring of women's voices that has prevailed throughout history. A censoring that has also muzzled--virtually disenfranchised--the voters of Maine during the four recent legislative sessions where an equal rights amendment has been introduced by Rep. Reckitt.

So I say to this committee--and the Maine state legislature at large: It is now time that the voters of Maine be allowed to decide if we want, codified in our state constitution, undeniable protections for the following rights as enumerated in this amendment: race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical or mental disability, and ancestry or national origin of an individual.

How can any Maine legislator deny their constituents any of these rights?

I ask: Should our state legislators be the final arbiters to decide on an amendment guaranteeing equality of rights for all Maine citizens under the law?

I think not. This is not democracy in action.

Let the people of Maine finally speak.

Let us vote on LD 1412, on equal rights for all in Maine.

Respectfully submitted,

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