



Rachel Talbot Ross
Senator, District 28

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross in support of
**LD 260, "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine
to Establish That All Maine Residents Have Equal Rights Under the Law"**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
March 4, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Senator Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28 which includes part of Portland and Peaks Island. Today, I am honored to speak in support of LD 260, a resolution that would enshrine equal rights in the Constitution of Maine. This amendment is not only necessary but long overdue.

I want to thank Representative Holly Sargent for leading this effort and continuing the work that she and so many have championed before her. I also must recognize the late Honorable Lois Galgay Reckitt who was the centerpiece of this movement here in Maine for years, right up until her unfortunate passing. It is in her honor that I give this testimony to you today.

The fundamental principle behind this resolution is simple: equality under the law is a core American value and a reflection of who we are as Mainers. It speaks to the deep-rooted ideals of fairness, dignity, and opportunity that have shaped our state and our nation.

Throughout our history, Maine has stood at the forefront of progress, always striving to uphold justice and ensure that every individual is treated with respect. This amendment affirms that commitment, making it clear that our state believes in protecting the inherent worth of all people. By adopting this amendment, we reinforce the values of freedom, inclusion, and equality that define our communities.

We would certainly not be the first to pass an Equal Rights Amendment. Thirty-eight states have ratified the federal Equal Rights Amendment — the required threshold for constitutional adoption. However, legal and political obstacles have prevented its official recognition.

Initially passed by Congress in 1972, the ERA was sent to the states for ratification with a deadline of 1982, by which only 35 states had approved it. Decades later, in 2020, Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the amendment, fulfilling the requirements outlined in Article V of the U.S. Constitution. However, the federal government has yet to certify the ERA due to debates over the legitimacy of a deadline for ratification. Efforts continue in Congress and the courts to affirm that the ERA should be enshrined in the Constitution.



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This amendment is about more than just legal protections. It is about reaffirming our values as a state that believes in fairness and justice for all. It tells Mainers — regardless of their race, gender, disability, or identity — that they belong, that they matter, and that their rights are a fundamental part of our shared identity.

There is great power in the Constitution of Maine as it is the bedrock, the foundation of our entire legal system. I want to share the words of United States Representative Shirley Chisholm who, in 1986, became the first Black woman elected to Congress. Representative Chisholm noted in November 1970 when discussing the Equal Rights Amendment that was before Congress at that time, “of course laws will not eliminate prejudice from the hearts of human beings. But that is no reason to allow prejudice to continue to be enshrined in our laws — to perpetuate injustice through inaction.”

This amendment is a critical opportunity to strengthen the foundation of our state and uphold the promise of equal rights for all. The people of Maine deserve the opportunity to affirm this principle for themselves, and it is our responsibility as lawmakers to give them that chance.

I urge you to support LD 260 and allow Mainers to vote on this vital amendment. Thank you for your time and attention, and I welcome any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Talbot Ross".

Rachel Talbot Ross
State Senator, District 28
Representing part of Portland and Peaks Island