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OKLAHOMA AND THE ERA:
ROUSING A RED STATE, 1972 – 1982

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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For the woman who gave me her love of history –

We miss you, Mom.

And for Caitlin and Emily who *hate* history –

Thank you for making life so sweet.

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Department of Libraries, the Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library at the state capitol, and the Cameron University Archives in Lawton, Oklahoma. Thank you, also, for the long-distance aid from the archivists at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee, particularly director Bill Sumners. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the patient and knowledgeable librarians of Bizzell Library at this university, especially Laurie Schrivener and Janet Croft.

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Abstract

From 1972 through 1982, the national battle over the Equal Rights Amendment fomented dissension and unrest. Far from the early and easy passage many Americans envisioned for the amendment, the ERA brought to the nation a ten-year struggle between activists who invested ratification with two differing ideological and personal meanings. For feminists, ratification would guarantee for American women two long-denied principles of the Constitution – equality and justice. For antiratificationists, the amendment would disrupt accepted cultural norms of the day and would continue the dissolution and destruction of the traditional beliefs they held dear, striking at the heart of the nation's founding doctrines. As the first state to deny ratification, Oklahoma became a battleground between those two factions from the moment Congress sent the amendment to the states. Caught between the two sides, politicians used compromise, concession, and avoidance of the issue to negotiate the political dilemma of the ERA and to save their political careers. By the latter years of the decade, the struggle over ratification had politicized large numbers of female state Christian ERA opponents, which helped lead to the Oklahoma political realignment from Democrat to Republican. As founding members of the Pro-Family, Religious Right movement, Oklahoma and other states' anti-ERA Christian women helped initiate, and provided one primary element of, the conservative movement influencing national politics beginning in the 1980s.

Chapter One Oklahoma : A Gendered Heritage

In March, 1972, a proposed constitutional amendment arrived in the separate states to be considered for ratification. Eagerly awaited by many Oklahoma women, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) represented for them the embodiment of equality and the culmination of over 124 years of American women's struggle for parity with men. Conversely, the arrival of the ERA in the state immediately engendered doubt in the minds of at least a few Oklahoma women who thought ratification would ravage the proper functioning of U.S. government and society as well as obliterate the appropriate place of women and men within that society. They began objecting to ratification and like-minded women soon flocked to the cause.[1]

Rather than the anticipated early and easy passage of ERA, the state women who had excitedly awaited the amendment found themselves instead embroiled in a decade-long battle with antiratificationists over the two groups' separate and diametrically-opposed interpretations of the ERA. Caught between those disparate factions and ultimately responsible for the

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[1] "Report of the Woman's Rights Convention, held at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19th and 20th, 1848. Proceedings and Declaration of Sentiments" (Rochester, New York: John Dick at the North Star Office, July 19, 1848), Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911; Scrapbook 6; page 68, Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Washington, D.C. 20540, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbcmil.scrp4006702; According to the National Park Service Women's Rights web site, the Declaration of Sentiments was signed Thursday, July 20, 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York. For this information see "Signers of the Declaration of Sentiments," *Women's Rights National Historical Park, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior*, http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/signers-of-the-declaration-of-sentiments.htm.

fate of the amendment within the state, Oklahoma politicians worked to protect their political careers while simultaneously attempting to satisfy constituents on both sides of the issue. By the end of the ERA decade in 1982, the battle over ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment transformed the state's political landscape, leading to an Oklahoma party realignment. Moreover, the state's political reformation reached beyond Oklahoma's borders and helped to advance a similar and equally enduring transformation within one of the nation's principal political parties.

By the 1970s, the debate over ratification of the ERA revealed that a functioning culture of gender remained embedded in the minds and lives of Oklahoma citizens. That culture permeated the state, having arrived with its earliest settlers. In particular, the pioneering experience of the state's female homesteaders seemed to engender paeans composed of an excess of sentimentality and unrecognized sexism throughout the course of Oklahoma history. Further, extant images of Oklahoma women pioneers suffered from existing gendered and racist beliefs hidden within depictions of female settlers as sublime paragons of virtue. The result is that state pioneer women were all but beatified in representations reminiscent of numerous Americans' portrayals of Native Americans as "noble savages."

Arguably, the most famous female symbol in Oklahoma is Ponca City's Pioneer Woman statue, unveiled in 1930. In this interpretation, the artist portrayed a youthful mother carrying a Bible and striding purposefully

forward while holding the hand of a young boy. Luminaries taking part in the unveiling ceremony included then-President Herbert Hoover, Secretary of War Patrick J. Hurley, Oklahoma Governor William Holloway, humorist Will Rogers, and state philanthropist and oil magnate E.W. Marland, who conceived and funded the statue. An estimated crowd of 40,000 as well as "the whole republic" listened to the "imperishable tribute of the nobility of its motherhood" as Hoover and Hurley gave their addresses over "coast-to-coast" radio hookup from Washington. Particularly eloquent, Hurley revealed that the "real fortitude" of the nation's pioneer women resided in "their hearts." Further, the women who settled Oklahoma learned how to endure the "hardships" of frontier life from "a red-skinned mother whose tender love is unsurpassed by anything in history." In learning their role well and by settling the land, pioneer women "achieved certain immortality."[2]

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[2] For a description of the Pioneer Woman statue see, for example, Gene Curtis, World Staff Writer, "Only in Oklahoma: Pioneer woman's spirit preserved in bronze," *Tulsa World: Oklahoma Centennial Stories*, April 29, 2007, http://www.tulsaworld.com/webextra/itemsofinterest/centennial/centennial_storypage.asp?ID=070429_1_A4_spanc42760; All quotes from Meredith Williams, Oklahoman Staff Correspondent, "Pioneer Statue Unveiled with Impressive Tributes to Heroic Settlers of State - Oklahoma's Founders Honored in Dramatic Form at Ponca City - President Hoover, Will Rogers, Holloway, Hurley and Marland Join in Ceremonies - Vast Crowd Humble at Service - Great Figures of Bronze Are Presented As Symbolic Memorial to Those Who Made Commonwealth Possible," *The Daily Oklahoman*, April 23, 1930, sec. Front page, 1; For Oklahoma's governor in 1930 see "Governor William J. Holloway - 100 Years of Oklahoma Governors - Archives Division - Office of Archives and Records," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/Holloway.htm; For Marland's career, including his later term as a New Deal U.S. Congressman from Oklahoma as well as governor, see Bobby D. Weaver, "Marland, Ernest Whitworth (1874-1941),"

While Oklahoma's frontier women – native, white, and black – faced adversity and certainly earned their place in history, early portraits of state women often emphasized the unacknowledged gendered values of later state citizens rather than the reality of the lives of female pioneers. Illustrating the abiding nature of cultural beliefs passed from parents to children, a gendered society flourished in the predominantly-white state from territorial days forward. Moreover, popular representations hid the true story of Oklahoma's female pioneers, many of whom fought for full citizenship even prior to statehood in 1907.[3]

Like their national counterparts, state women established an early fight for equality, focusing initially on achieving full suffrage. As with many states during the 1800s and early 1900s, Oklahoma granted women limited voting rights in school elections. Since territorial days, however, the legislature restricted this right to female residents of towns with populations of fewer than 2,500 citizens. In answer to the severe curtailment of their voting rights, women of Oklahoma and Indian Territories established separate women's suffrage organizations to lobby for full voting rights. As

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Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture, http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/MA027.html.

[3] Although Native Americans, blacks, whites, and other ethnic groups inhabited the two territories and the later state, the late 1800s and early 1900s' inrush of primarily white settlers "at the rate of a hundred thousand a year" established hegemony from statehood forward. For the history of migration into the two territories and the state see James Ralph Scales and Danney Goble, *Oklahoma Politics: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 1-19, fn quote 3.

the organization did nationally, the Oklahoma Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) joined with suffragists in repeated appeals to both territorial and later state legislators for full enfranchisement, with the first Oklahoma bill introduced in December, 1890. Although the territorial legislature granted women a number of rights, including voting in school elections and the right to hold offices ranging from Congressional Territorial delegate, to county offices, and to all elected offices in towns with populations of fewer than 2,500, full franchise remained elusive. This situation caused one political scientist to note that early Oklahoma women "could run for more offices than they could vote for." Predating national women's suffrage, Oklahoma in 1918 finally granted voting rights to women, albeit through a contentious and contested statewide referendum. For at least twenty-eight years, Oklahoma women thus fought to obtain full suffrage, mirroring the lengthy battles in other states and nationally.[4]

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[4] For the history of women's fight for suffrage see, for example, Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989), especially 122-125, 152-156, and 164-172 and see 127-130 for WCTU activity; For examples of women's voting rights in school elections see Jone Johnson Lewis, "American Woman Suffrage Timeline - Winning the Vote State-by-State," *About.com : Women's History*, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/suffrageoverview/a/timeline_us.htm; See R. Robert Darcy and Jennifer Ford Paustenbaugh, *Oklahoma Women's Almanac* (Stillwater & Edmond, Oklahoma: OPSA Press, 2005), 4 for limiting state women's school board voting rights to towns of fewer than 2,500 citizens and for "could run for" quote; For territorial suffrage organizations see Louise Boyd James, "Woman's Suffrage, Oklahoma Style, 1890-1918," in *Women in Oklahoma: A Century of Change*, ed. Melvena K. Thurman, The Oklahoma Series (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1982), 187, 190; For a short history on the state suffrage fight and the contended 1918 referendum see Diane Brown, "HowWomenGotVote.pdf (application/pdf Object)," 1978, http://norman.ok.lwvnet.org/files/HowWomenGotVote.pdf; Another freedom long denied to

However, much of the early historical literature posited that obtaining the franchise for women in the West was a less difficult struggle than the fight in Eastern states and, thus, focused on that eastern battle. In addition, historians added the complementary argument that Western states typically granted women's right to vote much earlier than in the East due to, among other reasons, a more liberal political atmosphere in the West, strong and exceptional female leaders, and the male need for women to bolster men's political positions. In addition, Western historian Richard White found that women's supposed moral superiority may have played a role in the success of early Western suffrage for women. White also argued that stronger Eastern "ethnocultural obstacles" to female voting rights played a role in women achieving earlier suffrage victories in the West. For example, immigrants in the eastern United States who voted Democratic typically opposed women's suffrage because of the linkage between women's voting rights and the prohibition of alcohol. After citing three separate examples of

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American females, and that reveals the cultural biases women faced both nationally and within Oklahoma, was the right to serve on juries. From 1911 through 1967, individual states' granted American women the right to be state jurors. Lagging far behind its 1918 suffrage amendment, Oklahoma granted jury service privileges to women in 1952. Despite these state concessions, nationally the 1975 U.S. Supreme Court case *Taylor v. Louisiana* finally placed women "on an equal footing with men" in jury service. See Holly J. McCammon, et al., "Movement Framing and Discursive Opportunity Structures: The Political Successes of the U.S. Women's Jury Movements," *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 5 (October 2007): 727 for the 1952 date for Oklahoma granting women's right to serve on juries. See Holly J. McCammon, et al., "Becoming Full Citizens: The U.S. Women's Jury Rights Campaigns, the Pace of Reform, and Strategic Adaptation," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 4 (January 2008): 1108 for the 1975 U.S. Supreme Court case *Taylor v. Louisiana* and for fn quote.

the defeat of suffrage due to the prohibition issue (Oregon, Washington state, and California), White stated those three were the exceptions and that voters "[i]n most of the West" during the 1900s did not link the women's suffrage issue to prohibition. White summed up his theorizing with the statement that early suffrage achievements in the West remained "something of a mystery."[5]

In contrast to White's theory that the majority of Western citizens failed to tie women's voting rights to the prohibition issue, at least one Oklahoma bid for suffrage failed due to anti-temperance efforts. Among other well-known suffragists to campaign in Oklahoma, national leader Carrie Chapman Catt lobbied in the Twin Territories in the late 1890s. She attributed the 1899 Oklahoma Territory suffrage failure to the successful opposition work of a "Saloonkeepers' League." While averring his list of state suffrage victories represented the (presumably Western) states in which "women had secured the vote" before the national ratification of the nineteenth amendment, White did not include the 1918 victories in both Oklahoma and South Dakota. This lack of attention to certain states in histories of the West suggests a need to enlarge the suffrage discussion and

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[5] Tracy Kulba and Victoria Lamont, "The periodical press and western woman's suffrage movements in Canada and the United States: A comparative study.," *Women's Studies International Forum* 29, no. 3 (May 2006): 265-278, doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2006.04.005; Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 355-359, quotes 359. Although White's list of Western state suffrage wins included Arizona's in 1912, he failed to include a discussion of that state.

the collective knowledge of individual state histories as well as, perhaps, that historians' views of precisely which states comprise "the West" may remain muddied and contested.[6]

More recent assertions broaden women's role in garnering earlier suffrage gains in the West, including historian Rebecca Mead's 2004 *How the Vote Was Won*. According to one reviewer, Mead's well-received work "reintegrate[d]" the ideology of justice into a historiographical narrative that had attributed expediency arguments for the Western states' earlier suffrage gains. Mead used both territorial and later state successes, examining regions in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain areas. In addition to arguing that both expediency and justice informed Western suffrage movements, Mead further concluded that successful western female advocates became vital to male reformers' achievement of their goals as well as that female Westerners "inspired Eastern suffragists to use similar [British] strategies." In addition, she found that suffragists established

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[6] Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics; the Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement, by Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler* (New York: C. Scribner's, 1926), 129; See the following citation for the 1918 date of South Dakota's constitutional amendment granting full voting rights to women. Of available web resources, the Scholastic site contained the most reliable guide I could obtain for a timeline of states' adoption of women's voting rights: "Chronology of Woman Suffrage Movement Events | Scholastic.com," *Scholastic.com*, http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4929.

successful coalitions with other interest groups, such as labor and progressives.[7]

Like Richard White, however, Mead also limited her definition of the West, in Mead's case to the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain states. Her work thus lacked Plains states' suffrage experiences, including that of Oklahoma. Moreover, the Sooner state suffrage experience seems to include shifting alliances between interest groups. For example, Populists voted against the 1890 Oklahoma suffrage attempt but, in 1899, "most Republicans and Populists" passed a House bill supporting women's suffrage. This seeming contradiction makes an examination of the political context underlying Oklahoma's suffrage movement vital in understanding the state suffrage struggle. A complete understanding of the national women's suffrage experience also requires the addition of the histories of unexamined states, including Oklahoma.[8]

In 1920, the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment ended one chapter of women's fight for equality. During the half-century between the end of the suffrage fight and the beginning of the ERA ratification struggle, the issues of gender and the family remained barely recognized in the

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[7] Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 2-5; Linda van Ingen, "Reviewed work: How the Vote Was Won : Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914 by Rebecca Mead," *The Pacific Historical Review* 73, no. 4 (November 2004): 673-674, "reintegrate[d]" quote 673.

[8] Darcy and Paustenbaugh, *Oklahoma Women's Almanac*, 4-5, quote 5.

American mind and discourse. Throughout those years, deeply accepted, sexually-delineated cultural precepts regarding men, women, and the family dominated American thought. With the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, however, the belief that gender shaped American society began to enter into the national psyche. In the 1970s, the ERA ratification battle initiated the same process over accepted ideas of the family and of what that construct meant for the nation. Oklahoma amendment activists on both sides of the ratification fight took part in shaping that battle, helping to elicit diverse connotations for the twin concepts of gender and the family, simultaneously cementing the meaning of each construct into Americans' social and political lives.[9]

By the beginning of the ERA decade, Oklahoma feminists and their political allies began investigating the sex-specific statutes that remained on the state's books, which included the original section in the Oklahoma Constitution granting women's voting rights in certain school elections only. While this provision was clearly unconstitutional as well as obsolete, feminists of the decade correctly brought it and others of its kind to the attention of state legislators. In 1974, for example, Oklahoma voters passed a referendum that guaranteed the "right of women to vote at all school district elections and meetings," which appears to be part of the efforts

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[9] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 10th ed. (New York: Norton, 1974). Friedan's work was originally published in 1963.

dating from the ERA decade to bring the state's outmoded and discriminatory Constitution and statutes up to date. Thus, early state feminists and their supporters in the legislature undertook studies of the Oklahoma Constitution and state statutes in order to ferret out existing discriminatory laws.[10]

Revised in 1976, a comprehensive, eighteen-page 1972 Legislative Council study of Oklahoma's sex-specific laws revealed that the state required Oklahoma women and infants to post bond if they were called to testify as material witnesses in criminal cases, barred wives from voting and holding office in certain instances, prohibited girls under sixteen from selling newspapers, magazines, or periodicals in any street or "out-of-doors public place," and imposed limitations on the numbers of hours women could work, among numerous other sex-biased statutes.[11]

By 1976, Oklahoma women still faced discriminatory laws. In July of that year, *The Daily Oklahoman* quoted state Attorney General Larry Derryberry as noting that women faced obstacles in obtaining credit, particularly after a divorce. Among many other sex-specific statutes

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[10] State Legislative Council, Legal Services Division, *State Legislative Council - Memorandum of Law*, 1-15 (Oklahoma Legislature, December 15, 1972, revised September 9, 1976), David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 6, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Oklahoma Secretary of State, "List of State Questions, Initiative / Referendum," http://www.sos.state.ok.us/exec_legis/InitListAll.asp.

[11] State Legislative Council, Legal Services Division, *State Legislative Council - Memorandum of Law*, 1-15 (1972, revised 1976), quote 11.

Derryberry mentioned, he listed inheritance laws that required surviving wives to split equally the deceased husband's estate with one child or, in the case of more than one child, the surviving wife would be entitled to one-third the property. In addition, the statutes ignored the ages of the children in each of the cases. Obviously, this statute harkened back to the centuries-old legal precedent of the "widow's third," which New World British colonials inherited from English common law. [12]

In an example of the state's gendered cultural norms during the ERA decade, a December, 1975, *Tulsa World* editorial complained about the content and aim of a recently released report concerning discriminatory hiring and promotion practices within state agencies. Jointly authored by the Oklahoma Human Rights Commission and the Governor's Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, the report stated that "women and racial and ethnic minorities" were underrepresented throughout state offices. The tenor of the editorial exposed that many Oklahomans, including the publishers of one of the state's conservative newspapers, resented the idea of imposing "quotas" upon state private and public entities with "no regard to whether [employees] can do the work." While supporting the ideal of equal work for equal pay and stating that the three minority groups, "W, R, and E,"

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[12] Jane Menninga, "Equality to Be Busy Women's Reward," *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 23, 1976, unknown; For an explanation of the "widow's third" see, for example, Laura Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives : Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*, First Vintage Books. (New York: Random House, 1991), 7.

should be paid "commensurately with their ability, training and experience," the editorial also called into doubt the commitment of minorities to work, particularly the dedication of women. The editorialist argued that "many others, especially women, may be in state government only for a little while to augment their husbands' incomes and may have little interest in upgrading their jobs." By the early 1970s and throughout the ERA decade, Oklahoma's cultural and political traditions thus included the routine exclusion of women from consideration as responsible individuals along with a great number of gender-biased, discriminatory laws.[13]

At the dawn of the ratification decade, a great many conservative influences shaped the state. Included among those influences were the state's recent segregationist past and a Democratic Party that remained decidedly Southern Democrat in its ideology and practices. While Oklahoma Democrats controlled state and local politics throughout the ten years of the ERA campaign, they also adhered to conservative values and beliefs rather than the more liberal tendencies of their national colleagues. In addition, state citizens voted for Republican presidential candidates from the 1950s through the ERA decade, thus demonstrating an affinity for nationwide GOP candidates and platforms over those of the national Democratic Party. Most telling for the ratification battle, close to 33 percent of Oklahoma's total population in 1971 belonged to conservative Protestant

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[13] "Hiring by the quota system," *Tulsa World*, December 31, 1975, unknown.

fundamentalist denominations, the third highest percentage of any state in the nation. During the amendment decade, many state and national Democrats as well as virtually all feminists failed to recognize or understand these significant Oklahoma characteristics.[14]

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[14] For Oklahoma's history of segregation and its recent integration see, for example, Scales and Goble, *Oklahoma Politics*, especially 36, 46-47 and Douglas Hale, "The People of Oklahoma: Economics and Social Change," in *Oklahoma: New Views of the Forty-Sixth State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 86. Moreover, by 1970 the state retained its homogeneous society with whites representing 89.1 percent of the total population, while blacks constituted only 6.7 percent. Native Americans represented even fewer of the total number of state citizens in the same census year, with only 3.8 percent. By the beginning of the ERA decade, therefore, Oklahoma continued to be a state dominated by whites as well as one only recently attempting integration. Population percentages for 1970 were calculated by the author from figures provided in Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, and States -Table 51. Oklahoma - Race and Hispanic Origin: 1890 to 1990*, Working Paper Series No. 56 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, September 2002), U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab51.pdf; For the state's Southern Democratic leanings see, for example, Cindy Simon Rosenthal, *When Women Lead: Integrative Leadership in State Legislatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 100, David R. Morgan, Robert E. England, and George G. Humphreys, *Oklahoma Politics & Policies: Governing the Sooner State*, Politics and Governments of the American States 4th (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in association with the Center for the Study of Federalism, 1991), 9, and Danney Goble, "Oklahoma Politics and the Sooner Electorate," in *Oklahoma: New Views of the Forty-Sixth State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 170-171; For the state's voting patterns and state voters' modern penchant to vote for Republican presidential candidates see, for example, Danney Goble, "'The More Things Change . . . ' : Oklahoma Since 1945," in *Politics in the Postwar American West*, ed. Richard Lowitt (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 186-187; For Oklahoma's 1971 religious makeup see Samuel A. Kirkpatrick, David R. Morgan, and Thomas G. Kielhorn, *The Oklahoma Voter: Politics, Elections and Parties in the Sooner State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 29-30. See Kirkpatrick, et al., fn 17, for confirmation that the 1971 figure of 33 percent includes state Mormons.

Early in 1972, the possibility of ratification of the ERA precipitated the development of two diverse factions within the state, each motivated by a separate political goal. The study that follows is the story of those two conflicting groups of Oklahomans, of the politicians ensnared in the ratification struggle, and of the shifting era in which state citizens fought the amendment battle. In the autumn of 2006, the topic of an examination of the Oklahoma experience during the ERA years appealed to me as a historian and as a state resident. Over time, this project developed into an intriguing and compelling story of the Oklahomans whose differing ideologies clashed during the ten years of the amendment campaign. As the research progressed, I came increasingly to admire those state citizens who undertook that struggle – the women on each side of the issue who fought diligently for their beliefs. Moreover, the Oklahomans who engaged that fight and those state citizens caught within its political quandary revealed a narrative of human determination, dedication, and fallibility – a story, in my eyes, worth recounting.

Moreover, the Oklahoma ERA experience provided a particularly apt and germane environment for a study of the amendment, especially in light of the burgeoning conservative political atmosphere in the state and the nation dating from the ERA decade. The scarcity of both national and regional studies on the ratification struggle presented an opportunity to expand historical knowledge of the amendment decade's effect on the

political and social cultures of Americans. Focusing on Oklahoma specifically allowed that opportunity within a state variously described as, among other depictions, the "Heartland," the "'Buckle' on the 'Bible Belt,'" a border state, and a southern or western state. Situated in the southwest and the Great Plains simultaneously, Oklahoma thus presented the prospect of examining the ERA debate from an underrepresented as well as a rather unique geographical vantage point, one that influenced the state's political and cultural heritage.[15]

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[15] Although numerous published articles and essays on the ERA exist, simultaneously published monographs are scarce. Several regional studies include one from Jane Mansbridge, who uses the experiences of two pro-ERA groups from Illinois to "puncture the myth of internal unity" that surrounded amendment activists nationally in Jane J. Mansbridge, "Organizing for the ERA: Cracks in the Facade of Unity," in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), 323-338, for "puncture" quote 323. Recent discussions of individual state experiences with the ERA include three dissertations and one master's thesis: Chandra Silva, "Esto Perpetua: The Persistence and Transformation of Feminism in Idaho Through the Struggle to Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington State University, 2005), http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/pqdweb?index=0&sid=2&srchmode=1&vinst=PROD&fmt=6&startpage=-1&clientid=41954&vname=PQD&RQT=309&did=954015471&scaling=FULL&ts=1271179280&vtype=PQD&rqt=309&TS=1271179353&clientId=41954, Jennifer L. Holland, "'Salt Lake City . . . is our Selma': The Equal Rights Amendment and the Transformation of the Politics of Gender in Utah" (M.A., Utah State University, 2005), http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/pqdweb?index=0&sid=6&srchmode=1&vinst=PROD&fmt=6&startpage=-1&clientid=41954&vname=PQD&RQT=309&did=1079659671&scaling=FULL&ts=1271180109&vtype=PQD&rqt=309&TS=1271180268&clientId=41954, and Kristi Lowenthal, "Conservative Thought and the Equal Rights Amendment in Kansas" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Kansas State University, 2008), http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/pqdweb?index=0&sid=1&srchmode=1&vinst=PROD&fmt=6&startpage=-1&clientid=41954&vname=PQD&RQT=309&did=1594498451&scaling=FULL&ts=1271179130&vtype=PQD&rqt=309&TS=1271179138&clientId=41954. Of further interest is Neil Young's dissertation that examines the role of three large U.S. religious groups in the

Through its archives, the state also afforded a promising chance to study the actions of the decade's key players, including the extensive ERA Collection and other relevant collections archived at the Oklahoma Historical Society, the comprehensive records of state governors housed in the Oklahoma State Archives and Records Management Divisions of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, and the records of the state law and legislative reference divisions located in the Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library at the state capitol. In addition, the wealth of state congressional representatives' papers and those of other state political observers archived at the University of Oklahoma (OU) Carl Albert Congressional Research & Studies Center as well as the papers of individual ERA proponents and opponents available to researchers at OU's Western History Collections provided invaluable aid in capturing the attitudes and actions of public and private state citizens alike. Further, primary sources from the Cameron University Archives in Lawton, Oklahoma rendered helpful assistance in examining the state ERA experience. Moreover, Oklahoma State University's Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project helped provide both dates and vital statistics as well as enhanced the account of state legislators, just as the archives of *The Daily Oklahoman* newspaper

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battles over the ERA and abortion rights. One of his theses argued that the political mobilization of those three groups helped elect Ronald Reagan to the presidency and "provided a critical base to the ascending conservative movement." Neil J. Young, "We gather together: Catholics, Mormons, Southern Baptists and the question of interfaith politics, 1972--1984" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2008).

fostered comprehension of the past and of state culture during the amendment decade.

Furthermore, the gracious permission of Ruth Murray Brown's family allowing me access to her invaluable and copious ERA-decade interviews with feminists, pro-family movement activists, state politicians, and other Oklahomans enriched this study immeasurably. Brown's interviews, as well as my own, gave further life and energy to the state ERA narrative. As I carried out my research, the particular reticence of amendment opponents to participate in interviews as well as the dearth of archived materials devoted specifically to state antiratificationists made access to the sociologist's primary sources even more vital to this study. Based on her more than twenty-five years of observation and interviews with participants of the ERA decade and the later conservative Christian Right movement, Brown's 2002 study, *For A "Christian America,"* provided important insight into the amendment debate and offered valuable primary materials. Thus in combination with its unique perspective, the public and private availability of state primary sources made an inquiry into the Oklahoma ERA experience both relevant and feasible. As a result, my work contributes to a broadening of historical analysis and a deeper understanding of the amendment decade.[16]

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[16] Ruth Murray Brown, *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2002).

In addition to work undertaken by political scientists and sociologists, previous analyses by historians laid the groundwork for and framed my perceptions of the American and Oklahoma ERA experiences as well as provided a number of thought-provoking interpretations on the subject. My labors profited significantly from their work and guidance, including an early effort by political scientist Janet K. Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment*. According to Boles' 1979 study, the rise of opposition to the amendment spurred state legislators to attempt to avoid the conflict engendered by ERA proponents and opponents, an avoidance that often took the form of inaction. When forced to choose, however, many state lawmakers based their ERA decision on "personal attitudes on government, society, social change, and the proper role of women," which often resulted in the defeat of ratification within their state legislatures.[17]

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[17] Janet K. Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment: Conflict and the Decision Process* (New York: Longman, 1979), 178. In addition, a number of journal articles provided valuable aid in improving my understanding of the ERA debate, with one serving also as a primary source. These include David W. Brady and Kent L. Tedin, "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Political Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement," *Social Science Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (March 1976): 564-575, Jane Sherron De Hart, "Gender on the Right: Meanings Behind the Existential Scream," *Gender & History* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 246-267, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0424.1991.tb00130.x, David Kyvig, "Historical Misunderstandings and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 45-63, R. Darcy and Jenny Sanbrano, "Oklahoma in the Development of Equal Rights: The ERA, 3.2% Beer, Juvenile Justice, and *Craig v. Boren*," *Oklahoma City University Law Review* 22, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 1009-1050, Neil J. Young, "'The ERA Is a Moral Issue': The Mormon Church, LDS Women, and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2007): 623-644, and Donald T. Critchlow and Cynthia L. Stachecki, "The Equal Rights Amendment Reconsidered: Politics, Policy, and Social Mobilization in a Democracy," *Journal of Policy History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 157-176.

Political scientist Gilbert Y. Steiner in his 1983 *Constitutional Inequality* proposed that a "substantial part" of ERA's downfall came about through the coincidental and simultaneous national debate over abortion policy, which led to the linking of the two issues. Further, Steiner argued that the post-Watergate visibility and prestige of North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin, a Democrat and an outspoken ERA opponent, helped lead to the amendment's defeat. Steiner's third argument was that the December, 1979, Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan provided amendment foes with continued ammunition over the emotional issue of drafting women, further embroiling Congress in the ratification debate. Purportedly, ratification of the ERA would have required women to register for military service. Congressional delegates consequently hesitated to defy the wishes of the many Americans who opposed a female draft. Steiner thus concluded that the optimum time for ratification occurred early in the decade, before the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on *Roe v. Wade* in January, 1973, the mid-1970s' rise in Ervin's popularity, and the later Soviet invasion. As historians Donald G. Matthews and Jane Sherron De Hart noted, Steiner also dismissed out of hand any effect of traditionalist women on halting ratification, writing: "Any woman who by the end of the 1970s still believed marriage to mean a permanent guarantee of support would have been so out of touch with reality as to cast doubt on her credibility as a lobbyist."[18]

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[18] Gilbert Y. Steiner, *Constitutional Inequality: The Political Fortunes of the Equal Rights*

In 1986, political scientist Jane J. Mansbridge addressed the ratification debate in *Why We Lost the ERA*. In this multifaceted work, she argued that if the ERA had been ratified, rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court "would have been unlikely" to force significant changes in relations between women and men. However, Mansbridge revealed that activists on both sides of the issue had a stake in portraying that ratification would bring about those changes. Their efforts convinced many state lawmakers of that possibility, with the result that those legislators eschewed ratification. Moreover, she contended that blind commitment to ideology on the part of both ERA opponents and proponents caused each to harden their stances, furthering the divide between them. In particular, ERA proponents' dedication to doctrine hurt their cause in that they refused to compromise on their principles and to aim instead for the practicality of obtaining ratification. For example, feminists asserted that the ERA would require women to be

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Amendment (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985), Steiner also discounts a number of possible factors leading to ERA's demise, including negative publicity fostered by antiratificationists that connected ratification with an "unfair" three-year Congressional extension. For his discussion of the ERA extension see, for example, 79. For the abortion discussion see 58-66, "substantial part" quote 66. For his discussion of the USSR invasion of Afghanistan see 70-72. For Steiner's discussion of Senator Ervin see 66-69 and for the "Any woman who" quote 49. Matthews and De Hart also used this "Any woman who" Steiner quote in Donald G. Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), viii.

drafted, a position that increased many Americans' opposition to the amendment.[19]

In addition, Mansbridge's comprehensive examination of polling data revealed that national support for the amendment failed to increase over the ERA decade and, in fact, declined in "key wavering states." As well, she argued that the Supreme Court's use of the Fourteenth Amendment in the 1970s to strike down laws discriminating against women weakened proponents' argument that the ERA was necessary to guarantee women's equality. Further, Mansbridge found that states were firmly opposed to relinquishing yet more control to the federal government, particularly in the area of family law. With the entry of opponents into the national ERA discourse, the struggle over ratification became a polarized contest between women, overturning the previous assumption that all women would benefit from the ERA and that all women backed it. Thus, the amendment "lost its chance" to be ratified.[20]

In 1986, Mary Frances Berry's *Why ERA Failed* showed that advocates of earlier successful constitutional amendments built consensus state by state, a vital tactic ERA supporters failed to employ. For Berry, proponents played a game of catch-up in countering ERA opponent

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[19] Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-7, "would have been unlikely" quote 1.

[20] Ibid., 1-7, "key wavering states" quote 2, "lost its chance" 6.

arguments and, in fact, "did too little, too late." Moreover, early ratification successes gave ratificationists a "false sense of security. . . ." and led to "the most obvious reason for [ERA's] failure," which was "complacency in the movement. . . ." Berry's perspective as a legal historian also led her to note that arguments that the ERA was necessary in order to obtain full female equity suffered both from the implementation of individual state ERAs as well as from Supreme Court rulings that expanded equality for women in the 1970s. Moreover, Berry showed that many state legislators gained by opposing ratification and would have risked their careers had they voted for it. In addition, opponents' effective use of emotional arguments depicting the ERA as subverting traditional family values and eliminating legal protections for women put amendment supporters on the defensive, a position they were woefully unprepared to take. Most telling, opponents' arguments against the ERA revealed the depth of many Americans' basic antagonism to changes in men and women's established roles.[21]

In 1990, historians Donald G. Matthews and Jane Sherron De Hart presented a comprehensive examination of the ERA, including the underlying relationship between the battle over ratification to participants'

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[21] Mary Frances Berry, *Why ERA Failed: Politics, Women's Rights, and the Amending Process of the Constitution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 68-69, 82-85, 99-100, for "did too little" and "false sense of security" quotes 68, for "the most obvious reason" and "complacency" quotes 82, for state ERA implementation and Supreme Court rulings' negative affect on the ratification of the ERA see 99-100, for Berry's argument of the efficacy of opponents' use of gender roles against ratification see 83-85.

ideology concerning conventional sex roles, which is perhaps the work's largest contribution among many discerning conclusions. Filled with insights into the psychological makeup of ERA proponents, opponents, and state lawmakers, Matthews and De Hart's *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of the ERA* established the centrality of gender to the debate over the amendment. According to the authors, the two factions of the ERA struggle held separate and ideologically-opposed views on the meaning of the amendment and its effects on Americans. For proponents, ratification meant averring that no differences existed between men and women; indeed they valued "equality above difference" by insisting on the addition of a sex-neutral language to the Constitution via the mechanism of the ERA. Matthews and De Hart noted that the successful suffragists in the early twentieth century, however, obtained the constitutional amendment guaranteeing women's right to vote by refusing to "make a political choice between equality and difference," an error ERA supporters failed to avoid.[22]

Further, Matthews and De Hart contended that antiratificationists' critical objection to the amendment lay in their firm belief in the inherent differences between men and women. For ERA opponents, ratification of the amendment would obliterate those differences, thus requiring that women become men. Using an "apocalyptic style," antiratificationists

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[22] Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, for the authors' conclusions see 212-215, for the centrality of sex to the ERA battle see, for example, x-xi, 222-223, and *passim*, "equality above difference" quote 215, "make a political choice" quote 214.

successfully fought ERA's threat to their gendered ideology, a belief system developed and handed down over generations. Interestingly, this study made the point that ERA opponents had a "firm grasp of reality" in recognizing that the world of the 1970s and 1980s was a gendered world. In the eyes of antiratificationists, feminists used "men as the measure of female value and action" through ERA supporters' adoption of the eighteenth-century language of liberalism, a language of men. In using that language, feminists "became" men. Recognizing that the era in which the battle took place was "still defined by gender" meant that amendment opponents wanted to maintain their special, protected place within society. Explaining well the viewpoints of ERA proponents and opponents alike, the historians revealed that the wide distance between the two sides' separate ideologies meant that both ratificationists and antiratificationists often failed to grasp the meaning behind the language used by the other. At the time of the debate, each side simply failed to understand the other. With the North Carolina ERA experience as their base and example, Matthews and De Hart extrapolated their findings from that state to the larger national scene, noting that the ideology and arguments used in North Carolina were identical to those used throughout the nation. Their work, therefore, became a national as well as a regional study.[23]

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[23] Ibid., especially 216-221, "apocalyptic style" quote 218, "firm grasp," "men as the measure," and "still defined" quotes 220.

Organized both chronologically and topically, my study explores the experiences of proponents, opponents, and state politicians during the amendment decade. Chapter One, “Oklahoma : A Gendered Heritage,” seeks to frame the political and social cultures of Oklahoma, revealing the people and their beliefs that both set the stage for and shaped the ERA battle. In both of the following two chapters, “Struggling for Equality” and “Summoning God’s Forces,” I explore the ideologies and motivations underlying the two opposing state ERA factions. Specifically, Chapter Two focuses on state ratificationists and their actions throughout the decade. In fighting for the amendment, Oklahoma ERA proponents utilized a diverse range and number of state organizations, including chapters of national groups. Those state groups evolved over the decade, showing the adaptive nature of proponent organizations. Moreover, state feminists of the ERA decade undertook a wide variety of women’s issues in efforts to improve women’s lives within the state. In addition, I look at the unsettled relationships between state and national feminists and the effect of those interactions on ratification. In this chapter, I also propose a few of the underlying reasons state ratificationists failed to obtain their central objective, ratification of the ERA in Oklahoma.

Chapter Three concentrates on antiratificationists and the development of their state campaign against the ERA. Furthermore, I examine the mutually-reinforcing relationship between national ERA

opponent leader Phyllis Schlafly and state-level antiratificationists. In addition, this chapter lays the groundwork for the connection between the campaign against the ERA waged by state amendment opponents and the Oklahoma political realignment that occurred over the course of the ERA decade. Chapter Four, "Walking the Tightrope," illustrates the public and private political actions of proponents and opponents and the effect of their actions on state politicians and the state electorate. Moreover, this chapter completes the exploration of Oklahoma antiratificationists' political activities and the significant part they played in halting the ERA in the state. Most important, the chapter articulates the considerable role of state amendment opponents in Oklahoma's political transition from a Democratic to a Republican state by the end of the ERA decade. In addition, I explore the dilemma ERA presented state politicians and the ways in which those officials attempted to cope with the ERA quagmire. Finally, the Afterword briefly revisits the Oklahoma ERA experience and extends the analyses posited in earlier chapters. Moreover, I use the example of Oklahoma antiratificationists to show the definitive connection between the amendment decade's politicization of female antiratificationists to the emergence of a nationwide conservative political movement during the 1980s. I argue that the ERA debate politicized Oklahoma female antiratificationists and they, along with female amendment opponents in other states, became one of the founding constituencies of the nationwide conservative Christian Right movement.

Chapter Two Struggling for Equality : Fighters for the ERA

1. *Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.*
2. *The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.*
3. *This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.*

--- Complete text of the Equal Rights Amendment[1]

Oklahoma feminists engaged the ratification battle with energy, determination, and faith in the legitimacy and justice of their objective. Over the course of the ERA decade, the women who fought for ratification proved their ability to both evolve and adapt in response to the needs of the amendment effort. In conjunction with that crucial struggle, they committed wholeheartedly to a number of worthwhile and valid women's causes and organizations, each of which was aimed at increasing women's civil liberties, political power, and standing within society. However, the great number of causes feminists undertook divided their time and energies, while the diverse nature of amendment activists' groups at both the state and national levels splintered their ratification efforts. Doyennes of the emancipating sixties, many feminists also brought with them to the ERA fight a propensity for outspoken defense of their rights and their opinions. As a result, state and national feminists aimed reproachful volleys at dissenting voices, the voices not only of amendment opponents but those of their feminist sisters as well.

[1] Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1.

Moreover, the presence of those diverse groups allowed feminists to reach many of their goals for women's progress. Conversely, the existence of those groups, in conjunction with feminists' penchant to disagree with one another both privately and publicly and a dearth of concord among their organizations, reveals that Oklahoma and national proponents lacked two vital components of success – solidarity and the focus of one overarching organization under which to fight for ratification. Despite the ten-year efforts of state proponents, the Equal Rights Amendment failed in Oklahoma. Nevertheless, state ratificationists achieved lasting advancements for women and increased women's participation in the civic affairs of the state and the nation. As did their counterparts across the country, Oklahoma feminists of the amendment decade also engendered within the state a greater and lasting consciousness of women's abilities, their needs, and their rights.

On March 22, 1972, Congress approved the Equal Rights Amendment and sent it to the states. Schooled in the successful rights activism of the 1960s, a decade in which "social justice became a national priority," many Americans believed that ratification of the ERA would come quickly, easily, and naturally. In particular, the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s had awakened the majority of Americans to the injustices of their society as well as to the realization that the promises and guarantees of the Constitution had been denied to many. In the case of the ERA, arguments against an amendment that promised recognition of, and equality for, over half of America's citizens

seemed to many to be, at best, counterintuitive and, at worst, illustrative of ignorance and a retrogressive stance that had been consigned to the recent past. Quite simply, in the turbulent and heady years leading up to Congressional approval of the ERA, an apparent spirit of ensuring equality for all Americans had swept the nation. In this spirit, seven state legislatures ratified the amendment within the first seven days of receiving it from Congress, with unanimous votes in "the very earliest states . . . [while] in the other early states the votes were rarely close." In that spring of 1972, Oklahoma seemed as though it would be no different.[2]

On March 23, 1972, the day after receiving the amendment from Congress, two separate resolutions for ratification were introduced into the Oklahoma Senate. A slight parliamentary tussle ensued, with a number of Democrats *and* Republicans seemingly anxious to be a part of the ERA drive. Republican and then-state senator James "Jim" Inhofe authored Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 108, while Democrats Senator Bryce Baggett and Representative Hannah Atkins co-sponsored SCR 110. When Baggett introduced SCR 110 to a vote in the Democratically-controlled Senate, Inhofe objected, "contend[ing] that his resolution [SCR 108] had been placed on the desk first." After the Senate pro-tem overruled the objection, Inhofe "challenged the ruling . . . and requested a roll call." By a vote of twenty-four to seven, with

[2] David R. Farber, ed., *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 5; For information on the numbers of early state ratification as well as the timeline see Ruth Murray Brown, *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), 29 and Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, quote 12.

seventeen excused, Inhofe lost his bid to be the initial primary author of the ERA in Oklahoma. Along with four other senators, at least three of whom were Republicans, Inhofe "asked to be made" co-author of the Baggett resolution. Their request was granted and the Oklahoma Senate approved the ERA with a "unanimous voice vote," sending it to the House. The approved Baggett and Atkins senate resolution, however, "died in [the] House Constitutional Revision and Regulatory Services" committee. Within one week, a separate resolution, House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 1093 – again sponsored by Representative Atkins and Senator Baggett – "failed in [the] House" on Wednesday, March 29, 1972, by a roll call vote. Further, the Oklahoma Senate did not vote on Senator Inhofe's SCR 108, and it was "stricken" from the senate's legislative agenda on Thursday, March 30. Although the measure would be reintroduced into one or the other of the Oklahoma legislative houses during each session for the next ten years, the 1972 Oklahoma Senate approval of SCR 110 was the closest the ERA would come to official state sanction.[3]

[3] Legislative Reference Division, Legislative Reference Division, "Legislation for ratification of U.S. Constitution - Equal Rights Amendment," 1, Legislative Reference Division, Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library, Oklahoma Department of Libraries; Ray Parr, "State Senate Approves Women's Rights Amendment," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 24, 1972, 1; Jerry Scarbrough, "Equal Rights Positions Aired in City Hearing," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 10, 1972, 7; According to the Oklahoma Senate glossary, as of today Joint Resolutions "passed by both houses of the legislature [and] signed by the Governor [have] the force and effect of law." In contrast, Concurrent Resolutions are those resolutions "passed by both houses of the Legislature to ex-press facts, principles, opinions, wishes and purposes of the Legislature. . . . A concurrent resolution does not have the force and effect of law . . . ." from "Oklahoma State Senate - Legislation: Glossary," *Oklahoma State Senate*, R, http://www.oksenate.gov/legislation/glossary.html In 1972, however, Oklahoma legislative concurrent resolutions did have "the force of law" and, therefore, constitutional amendments

The Oklahoma House of Representatives' March, 1972, defeat of the ERA marked the amendment's first state legislative roadblock in its national struggle. That early defeat owed much to the rapid response of Oklahoma women who used their influence and personal contacts to bring about the ERA's initial rejection by the Oklahoma House. Interviewed in 1978 and 1982, ERA opponent Ann Patterson recalled that she discussed with a female friend their "question[ing]" of the state senate's Thursday, March 23, approval of the resolution. Believing that the House also would pass the resolution the following Monday, she then "called a friend on Sunday evening," a Democratic member of the House of Representatives, and "we got [the member] to agree to hold it up in the Rules committee and then on Monday we went out to the Capitol and talked to people." Further, Patterson believed that had the second resolution, HCR 1093, been put to a House vote on Monday "it would have passed," but that their efforts also had caused the House sponsor, Hannah Atkins, to delay the vote until Wednesday in order to make certain the resolution had the needed numbers. The delay, Patterson believed, enabled the women to cultivate "more opposition" in the House and the measure failed. From this point forward, proponents and opponents of the amendment engaged in a contentious and impassioned ten-year campaign for the votes of Oklahoma

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could be ratified by a concurrent resolution, which was a cause of debate and concern for some members of the Oklahoma legislature at the time.

politicians, marking the state as a key battleground in the nationwide ERA struggle.[4]

The day after the resolution's defeat in the Oklahoma House, Atkins publicly called on the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus (OKWPC) to "mobilize and motivate women throughout the state" in support of the ERA. Convened on October 24, 1971, by six Oklahoma women, including Atkins, LaDonna Harris, a recent co-founder of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) and well known American Indian rights activist, and then-University of Oklahoma (OU) undergraduate Cleta Deatherage, the OKWPC had approximately 200 members at the date of Atkins' call. Describing the anti-ERA women who helped stop the resolution in the House as "an ad hoc group of frightened housewives," Atkins also called a meeting immediately after that first defeat for the purpose of forming an Oklahoma organization expressly to fight for ratification. First titled the Equal Rights Assembly, this group enlarged into an umbrella organization in February, 1973 – the Coalition for Equal Rights – which was then established formally as the Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights in February, 1974. Organized specifically for the 1975 vote and not designed to "stay around," the formal Oklahoma Coalition disbanded after the ERA failed in

[4] For Oklahoma as the first state to defeat ratification of the ERA see "Rights Amendment Ratification Predicted," *The Daily Oklahoman*, April 20, 1972, 77 and Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 29; Ann Patterson, "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript of recording, November 18, 1978, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma and Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 23, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Brown's work on this subject, Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 29, states the House member Patterson phoned was a Republican. However, Brown's transcripts of those original interviews at least twice provide the name of the House member and, in 1972, that Representative was a member of the Democratic Party.

the 1975 Oklahoma House. From August, 1976, through the end of the campaign in 1982, OK-ERA (Oklahomans for the Equal Rights Amendment) became the principal Oklahoma ratification umbrella organization. [5]

Coming in response to the requirements of a ten-year campaign, these organizations illustrate the adaptive and evolving nature of the state's formal pro-ERA forces, which were, at times and as needed, somewhat quiescent, while at others extremely active. The Equal Rights Assembly and the Coalition's core support groups in 1972 and 1973 included representatives of

[5] John Greiner, "Rep. Atkins Serves Notice on Equal Rights Foes," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 30, 1972, 59. This article quoted Atkins for the "nearly 200" OKWPC members; For the history of Oklahoma's ratification organizations, including the Equal Rights Assembly, the OKWPC, and later groups as well as that Atkins called a meeting immediately after the defeat to form a specific pro-ERA group see Janet Chase (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview and transcript of interviewee's files," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, May 8, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For additional history of state proponent groups see Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, "The Equal Rights Amendment Ratification Effort in Oklahoma," September 1974, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; For LaDonna Harris' activism on behalf of Native Americans and her role as NWPC co-convener see Sarah Eppler Janda, *Beloved Women: The Political Lives of Ladonna Harris and Wilma Mankiller* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 55; For Deatherage as "one of the five original conveners of the" OKWPC see Cleta Deatherage Mitchell, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project," interview by Tanya Finchum, transcript of recording, June 21, 2007, 7, Digital Collections @ Oklahoma State University, http://dc.library.okstate.edu/u?/women,2970; For the history of the 1974 Oklahoma Coalition and, also, that Hilbert-Price told me the 1974 Coalition was not designed to "stay around" see Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview," interview by Jana Vogt, digital recording, March 21, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma. During the ERA decade, Shirley Hilbert-Price's name was Shirley Hilbert. I will use "Hilbert-Price" throughout the body of this study. Primary and secondary documents will be cited as "Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price."; "OK-ERA - OK-ERA Group Formed," August 13, 1976, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Becky Patten, "History of the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus" (Transcript of speech presented at the National Women's Political Caucus Convention, unknown, December 1980), Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For February, 1973 formation of the Coalition of Equal Rights see Connie Blaze (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 9, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Primary sources from the time period variously use two acronyms for the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, "OWPC" and "OKWPC." This study uses OKWPC throughout as well as the acronyms NWPC for the National Women's Political Caucus and Norman WPC for the Norman, Oklahoma, Women's Political Caucus.

the “United Auto Workers, . . Communication Workers of America, . . some local Leagues [of Women Voters (LWV)] . . . and Church Women United [(CWU)],” with the “most active groups” the OKWPC and the Business and Professional Women (BPW) of Tulsa. While eventually OKWPC and the three umbrella associations would be joined by other homegrown groups, by state chapters of national organizations, such as Common Cause, NOW, and the Religious Coalition for the ERA (RCERA), and by representatives of national organizations, the state caucus and the Equal Rights Assembly comprised the earliest Oklahoma organized vehicles for pro-ERA support. Having been formed in response to that first March, 1972, national defeat, the Equal Rights Assembly appears to be one of, if not the, nation’s earliest state organizations formed expressly to fight for ratification of the ERA.[6]

The state’s pro-ERA leaders, like their nationwide counterparts, believed fervently that ratification of the amendment was vital in order for women to obtain true equality. Throughout the ten year struggle, interviews with Oklahoma proponents, their correspondence, campaign literature, and press releases, for example, showed their abiding faith in the ERA as the path to women’s equity. Mirroring their national colleagues, those in the forefront of the state’s proponent campaign often were middle-class women. As an African American, Representative Atkins fell outside the common national profile of

[6] For quotes for the specific core women’s support groups see Chase (pseud.), “Unpublished telephone interview and transcript of interviewee's files,” May 8, 1982; For confirmation of League of Women Voters participation in coalition building see Blaze (pseud.), “Unpublished telephone interview,” March 9, 1982.

pro-ERA leaders, however. She and other Oklahoma leaders, both white and black, continued to fit that profile by being well educated and, in many instances, employed professionally. At the same time, a number of Oklahoma's leading ratificationists did not conform to the national model of professional employment, particularly at "the beginning of the movement (1972)" according to Oklahoma ERA proponent leader Shirley Hilbert-Price. These well-educated women, instead, remained at home because "[m]any of us had small children" and "in those days, it was expected that we would not work outside the home until our children were in school." Additionally, a transcript from late 1972 public hearings on the ERA, as well as contemporary newspaper articles and other sources from the ten year campaign, affords insight into the demographics, experiences, and convictions of Oklahoma's amendment proponents. The transcript, as well as a variety of other sources, confirm ERA supporters' disposition and reveal the ideology behind their choices to become advocates for ratification. Further, that ideology remained common to Oklahoma's ERA defenders from the 1972 interim hearings through the end of the campaign in June, 1982.[7]

[7] For explanations of ERA proponents' social and other characteristics see, for example, Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, 15, Donald G. Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 124, and Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 83; Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton, "Equal Rights Amendment Oklahoma demographics - background details," interview by Jana Vogt, email and attached files, July 28, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For quotes see Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price, "Equal Rights Amendment Oklahoma demographics - background details," interview by Jana Vogt, email, August 11, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma.; State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings on the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution," January 10, 1973, 1, Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. The Legislative Council transcript of the hearings explains that all those who testified before the subcommittee were

Two days after the amendment failed to pass the Oklahoma House in March, 1972, the legislature passed Democrat C. H. Spearman's House Joint Resolution (HJR) 1105 authorizing a series of public hearings to garner state sentiment concerning the ERA. Representative Spearman chaired the joint House and Senate Legislative Council subcommittee that undertook the hearings on October 9, 16, 23, and November 9, 1972. According to two October articles in *The Daily Oklahoman* that year, Spearman both "led the fight against the amendment" during the previous legislative session and was able "to push equal rights into [the] interim study." In November, Spearman stated he had "held [ERA] up" the previous March "because there had been no opportunity to study it," which mirrored Ann Patterson and other conservative women's March 27 calls for hearings on the amendment. While lacking the full 1972 testimony, the State Legislative Council's 168 page transcript of the four October and November public hearings provides a cogent reconstruction of the first organized pro-ERA action undertaken by OKWPC and the Coalition for Equal Rights. Although the focus in this chapter is on ratification supporters,

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"requested" to provide the subcommittee with paper copies of their statements, but that "not all persons testifying" did so. The transcript, therefore, contains copies of statements from those persons who submitted a copy of their own testimony or who submitted copies of statements from others "who did not appear in person." In addition, the transcript contains "statements or remarks sent to the subcommittee by mail or otherwise during the time period when the subcommittee was studying the equal rights amendment." Due to "time and reproduction limitations," however, the transcript "does not contain items submitted to the subcommittee such as petitions, printed or published materials and documents, etc. . . ."

utilizing opposition arguments presented at the hearings provides a helpful foil for exploring proponents' reasoning, strategy, and beliefs.[8]

Ratificationists' testimony at the 1972 interim hearings illuminates their ideology. At the same time, their statements at the hearings reveal the substance and style of proponent arguments that would change little during the decade-long battle with opponents. The often succinct but effective visceral statements from the anti-ERA camp seemingly forced proponents to use lengthy, involved refutations, whether from the need to overwhelm their opponents' arguments or, perhaps, because proponents were following their own proclivities. Amendment advocates' interim hearing testimony serves as a good example of their initial tendency to present their evidence in an overpowering manner. Long-time Tulsa attorney and women's rights advocate Jewell Russell Mann submitted the most lengthy statement at twenty single-spaced pages, while a significant number of other pro-ERA statements ran from three to seven pages in length. Anti-ERA statements, on the other hand, most often consisted of one to two pages of testimony, although a few were also from three to seven pages long. The sheer length of proponents' testimony, both individually and collectively, and its often erudite nature may have favorably impressed the audience and subcommittee members. On the

[8] Legislative Reference Division, "Legislation for ratification of U.S. Constitution - Equal Rights Amendment," 2; "Women to Battle for Amendment," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 7, 1972, 21; State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings," 1; Scarbrough, "Equal Rights Positions Aired in City Hearing," 7; "Rights Amendment Passes - Spearman Switches Stand," *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 11, 1972, 18; "Women to Ask for Hearings," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 27, 1972, 24; For the interim hearing testimony as OKWPC and the Coalition's first action see Chase (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview and transcript of interviewee's files."

other hand, to sit through the readings of numerous long, at times repetitive, submissions might seem to test the attention spans of the most diligent. However, the frequently emotional, sometimes provocative and, certainly, easily grasped arguments used by early ERA opponents necessitated step-by-step, detailed refutations as well as apparently overwhelming evidence in rebuttal. Thus, amendment proponents provided a variety of lengthy arguments in support of ratification, arguments that proclaimed both the positive good that would come with ratification and the shortcomings of their opponents' assertions. At that early date, however, pro-amendment testifiers may have misjudged what might have been more effective – brief, concise, and memorable statements enumerating the benefits of the ERA.[9]

Representing an early logistical advantage for state ratificationists, a count of the testimony included in the transcript shows a tally of forty-eight pro-ERA versus twenty-nine anti-ERA statements. Proponents' numerical advantage at the 1972 hearings resulted from the lack of an established antiratificationist network as well as from amendment supporters' propensity to be drawn from local and national civil rights and women's organizations, a proponent tendency that continued throughout the decade-long struggle. Like their opponents, ratificationists did not "have networks in place" before the amendment went to the states. Instead, pro-amendment activists relied on "a

[9] Melissa DeLacerda and Martha Rupp Carter, "Women in the OBA," *The Oklahoma Bar Journal* 75, no. 25 (September 11, 2004): 51-57, specifically 54-55, http://www.okbar.org/obj/journals_full/OBJ2004sep11.pdf; State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings," Mann pages 23-42. Mann's original page 17 (page 39 of the transcript) is missing.

coalition of existing organizations, most of them created for non-feminist purposes."[10]

Oklahoma ratificationists at the 1972 hearings reflected this reliance on established organizations. In addition to the unions and other core Oklahoma groups mentioned above, proponent hearing testimony contained submissions from both local and national organizations. Group appeals included, for example, those on behalf of the National Association of Women Lawyers, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Oklahoma, American Association of University Women, United Presbyterian Women [of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana], Oklahoma Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Association of Classroom Teachers of Oklahoma, and Business and Professional Women's Club of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. Moreover, those who spoke in support of the ERA identified themselves, among other vocations, as university professors and lecturers, officials of women's groups, attorneys, law students, members of the religious community, a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, a labor relations consultant, chair of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women (GCSW), and as people who spoke simply as citizens of Oklahoma.[11]

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[10] State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings." 3-168; For proponents' reliance on existing networks and for quote see Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 216. Moreover, Mathews and De Hart also assert that, in contrast to early twentieth century suffragists, ERA advocates were unaware of the need for the amendment "much before it passed the U.S. Congress," 216.

[11] State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings." 3-168. At the 1972 hearings, Maxine Looper identified herself as the chair of the state GCSW. However, at that date the formal title

In contrast, statements by the antiratification community most often represented a single citizen speaking on behalf of him or her -self. Indeed, ERA opponent Mrs. Jack W. Davis of Midwest City emphasized these differences with her testimony to the subcommittee:

> As a Member of 'un-organized' Women of Oklahoma . . . who has spent my life rearing six fine children who are not protestors, peace-marchers, etc., I feel I must speak for the women like me, who, although college educated, feel that my talents have not been wasted in staying home. . . .

Clearly, Davis displayed antagonism toward the ERA proponent women's organizations represented at the hearings. Her testimony underscored her unease with the professional, well-educated women who constituted the core of the ratification movement. In addition, Davis clearly conflated ERA advocates with activists from other movements including, for example, the protestors and peace marchers motivated by the Vietnam War. Davis' words also revealed her conviction that professional women, thus pro-ERA women, displayed a radicalized, class-based snobbery toward women who chose not to have jobs outside the home. In stating that her "talents have not been wasted in staying home," Davis recognized that members of women's groups supporting the ERA often emphasized that ratification would equalize, among other disparities, employment and educational opportunities. Nevertheless, Davis' testimony also implied that Oklahoma proponents at this early date rarely spoke directly to

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of Governor Hall's commission was the Governor's Commission on the Rights of Women. In contrast, the title of the national group at that time was the Citizen's Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Thus, in Oklahoma, "commission on the status of women" often was used. Looper, 114.

opposition statements warning of unknown ramifications inherent with ratification, particularly ramifications for women who chose traditional roles. In this belief, Davis may have been influenced by local newspaper ratification coverage.[12]

While the state's largest paper, Oklahoma City-based *The Daily Oklahoman*, provided coverage of both sides during the hearings, its reporting of ratificationists' statements infrequently highlighted their rebuttals to the specific concerns Davis raised. In contrast, the newspaper widely reported those opponent concerns. As the hearings were ongoing in Oklahoma City, for example, the newspaper's coverage included an article quoting OU professor of social work Lennie-Marie Tolliver as a "spokesman for [the] women's rights group. . . . Women for Responsible Legislation." In the article, Tolliver mirrored Davis' concerns by warning that ratification "may lead to incredibly grave consequences for present and future generations," in particular consequences regarding "domestic relations laws." The same article quoted the "chairman" of the group, Mrs. Pat (Ann) Patterson, as saying the amendment was "unnecessary and dangerous." Although Tolliver stated the group did not "oppose equal rights," the two primary reasons the WRL women gave for "questioning" the ERA were that the amendment, if ratified, would be open to "such a variety of [legal] interpretations" and that it lacked "enforcement

[12] Ibid., 22, emphases Davis; ERA opponent citizens testifying at the hearings included attorneys, university professors and lecturers, members of the clergy, and at least one medical doctor.

provisions should rights guaranteed by [the ERA] be violated." However, the article failed to provide specifics from either woman as to how the amendment would be "dangerous."[13]

In a separate article published at the time of the hearings, *The Daily Oklahoman* quoted Oklahoma City attorney Lana Tyree as stating ratification of the amendment "would prove to be either 'very dangerous or not worth a damn.'" While Tyree endorsed equal educational and employment opportunities for women, the attorney's reasons for opposing ratification included that the ERA would "strike down" protective legislation aimed at women such as "laws that make it a crime 'to force women into prostitution.'" In these two examples, Oklahoma's most widely circulated newspaper made certain to give prominent coverage to amendment opponents' fears and did so by including quotes with inflammatory terms such as "grave consequences" and "dangerous" as well as by linking the possibility of forced prostitution to ratification. In shading its reporting in this manner, *The Daily Oklahoman* may have negatively influenced readers' perceptions of ERA.[14]

However Davis' apprehensions may have arisen, she was, in fact, conflating ratification of the ERA with the rhetoric and ideology of women liberationists who, in the late sixties and early seventies, rebelled loudly and publicly against women's traditional roles of wives and homemakers. Anger

[13] "Aftereffects Study Urged - Amendment Questioned," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, October 22, 1972, 16. This article uses the name "Lennie P. Tolliver," while other variations are used by different primary sources. However, I will use "Lennie-Marie Tolliver" throughout this study.

[14] "Amendment Foe Talks at OU," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 28, 1972, 6.

toward those liberationists and their feminist ideology motivated Davis to assure her listeners that her "talents" – her life – "had not been wasted" in choosing to stay at home and raise children. In calls for women's "liberation" from housework and children, radical feminists rejected culturally-defined gender roles. Davis, however, saw that rejection and her role differently. For her, women liberationists' arguments were a repudiation of Davis' chosen way of life. Davis saw her preferred role in life not as culturally-defined and socially determined. Instead, her life represented an essential, natural order. Thus, liberationist rhetoric and ratification entwined to rebuff Davis' traditionalist way of life and her view of the world. Her anger with many feminists and her opponent stance emanated from Davis' belief that feminism and ratification subverted the natural order. Simultaneously, Davis decried the large numbers of professional organizations represented at the hearings because they seemingly ignored the value of women's work in the home. In failing to value that work and by equating women's rights with women's work outside the home, pro-ERA organizations had abandoned as "unworthy" women like Davis who chose to remain in traditional roles. Careful to state her status as "college educated" and, thus, equal to the proponent groups' representatives, Davis admonished those same professional women for working outside the home and for contributing, in her eyes, to the "misfit" youth of the day. In Davis' words, "not <u>enough</u> hands rock the cradles, rather than the other way around."[15]

[15] For explications of radical feminism and women's liberationists see, for example, Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, "Second-Wave Feminism," in *A Companion to American*

As Davis' testimony suggested, the bulk of ERA supporters' submissions focused on issues such as unfair employment and promotion practices, educational quotas, wage inequities, protective legislation, and other laws that discriminated against women. In essence, proponents repeatedly addressed those issues most closely identified with the liberal feminists of second-wave feminism and the issues that touched the lives and concerns of professional women working outside the home. For example, ERA advocate Donna Meyer spoke of her early years as "a housewife and mother of three" before entering the waged workforce in 1964. Most of her testimony, however, discussed her professional experiences with discrimination in pay as well as promotions denied based on her sex. On her final page of testimony, Meyer related her belief that the ERA "would discourage the practice of sex-discrimination." Other testimony included that of Betty Outhier, "a poverty attorney in Tulsa," who explained that "the poverty group in America . . . is largely women – aged widows and women who head a household." Outhier contended that women constituted the largest group in poverty "[b]ecause our society has presumed that every woman will have a male protector to provide for her and the family" as well as inequitable pay based on sex and higher unemployment rates among women. Outhier concluded the ERA "can solve the legal problem finally and

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Women's History, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 416-419, http://www3.interscience.wiley.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/cgi-bin/booktext/117860480/BOOKPDFSTART, Flora Davis, "The Birth of Women's Liberation," in *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 69-93, and Sara M. Evans, "Personal Politics," in *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York: Free Press, 2003), specifically 26-27; This study's discussion of the threat ERA and feminism presented antiratificationists' views on gender roles drew from Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 162-164; State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings," 22, emphases Davis.

immediately." As historian Flora Davis put it, such a solution aimed at "opening up the male world to women at all levels."[16]

However, pro-ERA activists at the hearings also recognized the alienation from women's rights organizations felt by many Oklahoma women who chose to work inside the home exclusively. Proponents' testimony, as well as their later actions, attempted to bridge that gap in order to refute opponents' objections to ratification. Advocates' submissions, therefore, spoke to antiratificationist concerns about those issues more closely identified with the other branch of second-wave feminism, including proponents' attention to family, marriage, sexual equality and difference, as well as personal relationships between women and men. That attention took the form of attempting to reassure opponents that the ERA was not antagonistic to the family nor would it upset accepted cultural values of the day. For instance, attorney Terry Pendell of Oklahoma City, testified:

> This amendment does not say anything about taking women out of their homes, wifes [*sic*] away from their husbands and mothers away from their children. . . . ERA applies only to government action and legal rights – not to social customs, [which] are determined by the individuals involved.[17]

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[16] For discussions of liberal feminists and their ideology see, for example, Baxandall and Gordon, "Second-Wave Feminism," specifically 414-416 and Flora Davis, "The Resurgence of Liberal Feminism," in *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 27-48 and 49-68. All interim hearings testimony from State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings," Donna Meyer, 11-13; Betty Outhier, 84-85; Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), quote 68.

[17] For explanations of radical feminism see again Baxandall and Gordon, "Second-Wave Feminism," specifically 416-419 and Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's*

While some proponents emphasized that ratification of the amendment "would affect only governmental action," feminist Shirley Hilbert-Price described herself as a "housewife and mother of four sons" and addressed society's "low regard" for women who worked at home. Hilbert-Price used as an example Oklahoma's inequitable "estate tax law," which failed to tax husbands at their wives' deaths and thus treated their shared property "as though it were solely his." Conversely, the state taxed widows "on the total amount of the property," as though "her services as a housewife . . . contributed nothing" to the marriage. In valorizing males and denigrating females, this Oklahoma statute epitomized the state's hidden, discriminatory preconceptions concerning men and women's significance to society.[18]

In a second example of society's low esteem for housewives and their work, Hilbert-Price quoted from a "recent editorial in one of the local newspapers." The editorialist argued for eliminating "KP" duty in the armed forces because KP work was "demoralizing" and the country "cannot afford to treat military personnel like slave labor." Hilbert-Price pointed out that KP consisted largely of the traditional duties of housewives. She concluded that the editorialist classed KP as slave labor "because it is work . . . done in the home and in most commercial establishments by our second-class citizens, that

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Movement in America Since 1960; State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings," Pendell, 106-108, quote 106.

[18] Ibid., 4-5, for "would affect only . . . action" quote see Atkins, 5; Hilbert-Price, 130-131, quotes 130.

is, by women." Hilbert-Price asserted that ratification of the ERA would "improve" attitudes toward women and the traditional role of homemaker. With ratification, women would be free to choose their roles in society "as equals," including choosing the role of housewife, rather than "because the law limits their options." Hilbert-Price's second example in particular underscored the state's gendered culture and the inability of many Oklahomans to acknowledge society's ingrained acceptance of women's low station and its simultaneous devaluation of women's long-established work. Concealed within layers of tradition, women's conventional employment as housewives remained unrecognized as an important contribution to society by many Americans in 1972, including numerous Oklahomans.[19]

Additional testimony from antiratificationists echoed Davis' concerns and reflected the threat opponents felt from the assertions and goals of both stripes of feminists. Anti-ERA hearing submissions often insisted that the female sex held a "special place" and "proper role" in society. Many opponents contended that implementation of the ERA would lead to the imposition of a single, overarching legal definition of a gender neutral "human being," which would compel all aspects of society to treat both males and females the same and, thus, obliterate women's "special place." Opponents' arguments in this vein included, for example, claims that the ERA would require all women to work outside the home, be eligible for the draft, and serve in the military, including during times of war. Ratification, they argued, would blur and redefine

[19] State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings," Hilbert-Price, 130-131.

contemporary, culture-specific gender roles, leading to the destruction of the traditional family unit as well as precipitating individual and institutional chaos within the U.S. At the subcommittee hearings, opponents stated their fears that ratification of the amendment would make it impossible for government agencies, laws, or the courts to recognize the physical differences between women and men. Such differences were real and, in antiratificationists' estimation, "to attempt to do away with sex discrimination is unrealistic and would be unworkable."[20]

For example, antifeminist Dora Wood's two-sentence objection as to why she did "not want the Women's Equal Rights Amendment" stated simply, "I think the place of a woman is her home." Once again speaking to the topic of recent changes in society that were precipitated by "the women's liberation movement" and that would be advanced by ratification, professor and "housewife" Lennie-Marie Tolliver testified that the amendment "concern[ed]" her because it would be a "catalyst" for societal change, particularly in the "roles and responsibilities" of men and women, with "future generations . . . affected." She told of two recent news reports, one a study by three New York psychiatrists who were treating a "number of young men with problems of sexual impotency." According to Tolliver, the psychiatrists attributed the young men's sexual problems "to the increased aggressiveness of the young women with whom they have contact," an aggressiveness fostered, in Tolliver's opinion, by the

[20] Ibid., Wightman, 17, Mrs. L. E. Bailey, 15-16, for "attempt to do away with. . . . quote 16.

ideas and actions of radical feminists. Thus, feminists and their ideology emasculated young American men, constituting a threat to the nation's health and well being. In Tolliver's eyes, ratification would deepen and spread that threat.[21]

In another example, ERA opponent and attorney Nan Patton wrote that ratification "will not benefit women, but change the woman, at least legally, into a man. . . . yield[ing] a 'unisex' creature." In a letter addressed to and submitted by attorney Lana Tyree at the October 16, 1972, hearing, Oklahoma City attorney Wendell E. Wightman avowed the ERA would be an unjust measure because it would force "the average female" to be drafted, required to pay alimony and child support, "and otherwise be deprived of being a mother and a homemaker." Other objections included Helen D. Evans' assertion that "I <u>like</u> being dependent upon my husband – I do not want to be his equal."[22]

In contrast, proponents of the ERA expressed their belief that the amendment would apply to, protect, and be a step forward for women, men, and the family. Moreover, ratificationists addressed differences between males and females, stating the amendment would allow that recognition by the courts. Attorney Blanche Bradshaw, for instance, testified that the ERA "is for legal rights for both sexes . . . ." She was seconded in that opinion by Mary Dees, an International Representative of Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO,

[21] State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings." Wood, 68; Tolliver, 64-67, quotes 64 and 66.

[22] Ibid., Patton, 20-21, quote 21; Wightman, 17; Evans, 68.

who testified: "Protective legislation will only withstand court tests if it protects men and women alike." Attorney Jewell Russell Mann averred, "Equality under the law does not mean that the sexes must be regarded IDENTICAL and it DOES NOT prohibit states from requiring that there be a reasonable separation of the sexes under some circumstances." In addition, Gloria Weber, Chair of the State Board of the Oklahoma ACLU, asserted "this is NOT a women's Rights Amendment, but an Equal Rights Amendment – a legislative effort to equalize the rights of both men and women."[23]

ERA proponent Brenda S. Griffin, an OU "Special Instructor," spoke to the opposition position that ratification would require women to assume "masculine roles." According to Griffin, implementing the amendment would, to the contrary, recognize the differences "between masculinity and femininity," which would result in "rewarding them equally." In regard to the supposed "loss of rights and privileges peculiar to women" under the ERA, Griffin argued that ratification would make compulsory the equal treatment of both males and females and, in so doing, would help to bring about improvements in working conditions for both sexes, "rather than merely prohibit women" from certain employment opportunities. In her final paragraph, Griffin stated her belief that the amendment "would not result in the nightmares of the unisex world." Elaine Kumin of Norman tried to allay similar fears in her October 16 testimony. She addressed the common concern that ratification would require women to work

[23] Ibid., Bradshaw, 82-83, quote 82; Dees, 71; Mann, 23-42, quote 31, emphases Mann; Weber, 116-120, quote 116, emphasis Weber.

outside the home and, thus, mothers would be separated from their children. Specifically speaking to opponents' apprehension that ratification jeopardized a new mother's ability to nurse her infant, Kumin explained she "would like to counter certain statements about breastfeeding" made by those opposed to the amendment:

> I do not think that the ERA endangers in any way the right and the privilege of women breastfeeding their babies. Breastfeeding has been and can be compatible with work outside the home, if work is necessary. I do not believe that the ERA . . . will force separation of mother and infant.[24]

The interim hearings brought into focus the gap between feminists and antifeminists' understanding of the amendment, particularly an understanding of the effect ratification would have on each side's differing conceptions of sex roles. Feminists believed sex or gender roles were, at least in part, socially constructed. Hence, the basis for the equality that feminists argued the ERA would provide was a "sex-neutral language" to be exchanged for the prevailing sex-specific one. Particularly in the area of law, feminists believed women would achieve full rights and equality through the addition to the Constitution of that sex-neutral language. As Mathews and De Hart wrote in *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, "Purging the law of classifiction [*sic*] by sex meant [women] could at last claim equality." In their battle for equality via the Constitution, feminists also insisted that women were the equals of men. For feminists,

[24] Ibid., Griffin, 43-46; Kumin, 70, emphases Kumin.

traditional recognition of "differences" between the two sexes, and discriminatory laws based on sexual difference, lay at the heart of women's oppression and continued the types of injustice women had faced for millennia. Thus, feminists "chose equality over difference" in their beliefs and arguments. Antifeminists, however, were biological essentialists who believed an individual's sex determined each person's role in life.[25]

In attempting to assure ERA opponents that ratification of the amendment would neither change family life nor invert culturally-defined, separate private roles for males and females, ratification proponents faced a paradox, at least in the eyes of their opponents. At the hearings, proponents' arguments that ratification would not, for example, require women to work outside their homes or assume "masculine roles" appeared to contradict feminists' other assertion that the amendment would eliminate differences between the sexes. On the surface, the two arguments seemed antithetical. The key, however, lay in the distinction between legal differences and the culturally-defined differences central to private life. Ratification would abolish existing blanket and discriminatory laws denoting women as inferior to males or that categorized women by cultural, gender-defined characteristics. Statutes would be repealed, for example, that limited women's choice of professions because societal expectations of the sexes dictated which roles were

[25] Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 214-216, quotes 215. This treatment of the paradox facing Oklahoma's ERA proponents owes much to Mathews and De Hart, especially pages 214-216 and Chapter 2, Donald G Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart, "Physiological and Functional Differences," in *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 28-53.

appropriate for each sex. In addition, proponents argued that the courts, which would interpret the ERA, would recognize distinctions between the sexes by delineating the amendment based on individual cases. However, for opponents at the hearings and throughout the campaign, feminists' arguments appeared contradictory and, in the case of how the courts might interpret the amendment, unknown. For antiratificationists, the addition of sex-neutral language to the Constitution meant that males and females would be viewed legally and socially as sex-neutral beings, with no recognition of the characteristics antifeminists believed were inherent to each sex. Consequently, the nuanced arguments of Oklahoma's ERA proponents regarding the amendment's effect on women's "proper place," families, marriage, and private relationships between the sexes ran headlong into a maelstrom of skepticism and protest.

After listening to the testimony garnered at the hearings, the joint House and Senate legislative subcommittee voted their endorsement of the ERA on Friday, November 10, 1972. The following day, an article in *The Daily Oklahoman* titled "Rights Amendment Passes – Spearman Switches Stand" reported that the subcommittee chair "cast the tie-breaking vote approving" the amendment after "changing his previous stance." The same article noted that Spearman had "led House opposition that killed the amendment" in the spring. The Democrat explained his apparent change in position by asserting that he had wanted an opportunity for legislators to study the amendment and, further, that he had not "oppose[d] the amendment in the last session but objected to

ratification of a constitutional amendment by concurrent resolution." The following Monday, the full joint committee "voted 8 to 7" recommending ERA ratification in the next legislative session. On January 31, 1973, during that next session, the House voted on Representative Atkins' House Concurrent Resolution 1001, defeating the ERA measure on a roll call vote of forty-five to fifty-three. Spearman did not have the opportunity to cast a ballot that January as he lost his reelection bid on November 7, 1972, three days before he and his subcommittee voted to approve the amendment. His opponent and the winner of the race, Republican Janet "Jan" Turner, voted against ratification.[26]

In preparation for that ratification vote, the Coalition for Equal Rights organized a lobbying effort and a pro-ERA conference to coincide with the opening of the 1973 legislative session. In late November, 1972, Representative Atkins had pre-filed the ERA, as HCR 1001, in order to be able to introduce the amendment early in the 1973 legislative session. The Coalition arranged a gathering of amendment proponents at the state capitol on Tuesday, January 2, 1973, the opening day of the legislature. Barbara Davis, "coordinator for the Assembly for Equal Rights," and Astrid Clark, "state

[26] "Rights Amendment Passes - Spearman Switches Stand," 18; Ray Parr, "Equal Rights Clears Hurdle : Panel Approves Rights Proposal," *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 14, 1972, 1, 2, quotes 2, 1; Legislative Reference Division, "Legislation for ratification of U.S. Constitution - Equal Rights Amendment," 1, 6-7; "Subcommittee Passes Rights Amendment," *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 11, 1972, 61; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - District 81, 1965-1975 (C. H. Spearman, Jr. 1965-1971)," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx.

coordinator for" NOW, along with seventy-five representatives of other groups within the Coalition, lobbied the legislature for an early adoption of the ERA.[27]

Hoping to combine the lobbying effort with a larger demonstration of state ratification support as well as to publicize their cause and provide an opportunity for education about the amendment, the Coalition coordinated an "Assembly for Equal Rights," held on Friday evening and Saturday, January 5 and 6, at Oklahoma City University. This Assembly was "co-sponsor[ed]" by the "Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies, University of Oklahoma" and the GCSW. The Southwest Center was an "income producing unit" of the university and "host[ed] hundreds of meetings for various groups each year" with "each group pay[ing] for the administrative support" provided by the Center. Assembly speakers included "principal author of the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress," Michigan Representative Martha Griffiths, and proponent of ratification, Illinois state Representative Eugenia Chapman, as well as Catherine East, "executive secretary" of the Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Six years earlier, East had become the "'midwife' to the birth of the women's movement" by virtue of convincing others of the necessity of a

[27] For organizing the Assembly conference see Chase (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview and transcript of interviewee's files."; "Equal Rights Bill on File," *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 28, 1972, 69; "Equal Rights Backers Gather at Capitol - Omission by Hall Criticized," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 3, 1973, 18.

national organization to fight for women's rights and, as a result, in June 1966, by having co-founded NOW.[28]

As part of the publicizing efforts for the Assembly, OU adjunct professor Gregory E. Shinert, under the aegis of the Southwest Center, mailed three separate letters announcing the Assembly and notifying recipients of the "$5.00 registration fee" as well as, in two of the letters, a "$1.00 charge per child for child care." Shinert explained that the registration fees had been "purposely set at these low figures" so that "working women and housewives" and "students and working men" could afford to attend. Each of the three letters also explained that the low fees would not cover the expenses of the Assembly and solicited donations from the organizations and, presumably, individuals to whom the letters were mailed in order to "cover the balance of the costs." Shinert wrote two of the letters on OU stationary, while he signed each of the three letters from the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies. The two letters sent on OU stationary also identified Shinert as an adjunct professor in OU's Human Relations Department. One of those two letters, sent to "MEMBERS – and 'FRIENDS OF NAHRW' – The National Association of Human Rights Workers," also identified Shinert as the "Chairman – Oklahoma Chapter

[28] Gregory E. Shinert to blank, letter template, undated , Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Bill Kronholm, "OU's Role in Letter Explained" (*The Norman Transcript*, June 15, 1973), Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, F14, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; For proposed speakers at the Assembly see "(Illegible) Lawmakers Will Address Rights Meeting," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 1, 1973, 16; Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960*, 52-55. Davis quoted Betty Friedan's use of the word "midwife" to describe East's role in the second wave of the feminist movement, 53.

N.A.H.R.W." In one letter, Shinert stated a purpose of the assembly was to "increase awareness of what the Equal Rights Amendment is throughout the state." In another letter, intended for groups and/or individuals who showed "past interest in human relations," Shinert failed to mention the Assembly's purpose, but the two largest paragraphs solicited donations to help defray the upcoming assembly's costs. Each of the three letters, however, made clear that "brochures" providing information about the Assembly accompanied the letters. In the letter addressed to "MEMBERS and 'FRIENDS OF NAHRW'" Shinert stated, "[o]ne purpose" of the Assembly was "to generate . . . support for the Equal Rights Amendment in Oklahoma." This letter noted to its recipients that the "National Organization with which your group is affiliated supports passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. . . ."[29]

Unfortunately for its sponsors, the weekend of the Equal Rights Assembly brought an ice and snow storm with "attendance [at the Assembly] . . . way down." The low attendance also necessitated further fundraising to cover costs well after the Assembly occurred. At least one letter from Shinert on OU letterhead, sent in May, 1973, asked for donations after the fact. Perhaps in response to articles in the papers announcing the assembly and providing the names of the organizations that "sponsored" it, including the Southwest Center at OU, the antiratification group Women for Responsible Legislation (WRL)

[29] Gregory E. Shinert to Wanda Grey, letter, December 1, 1972, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Gregory E. Shinert to Members and Friends of NAHRW, letter template, December 4, 1972, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Shinert to blank, undated.

immediately announced plans to "examine" the Assembly's funding and "If public funds were used . . . we object strenuously." In June, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported that Oklahoma House of Representatives member and ERA opponent Jan Turner had mailed a letter to OU president Dr. Paul F. Sharp, accusing the University of "acting as a collection agency for the Equal Rights Coalition" as well as "being 'a lobby for the highly controversial amendment.'" Turner's letter came in response to a newspaper article the previous week reporting that a "letter seeking funds for the coalition was mailed on OU stationary" with that letter "addressed to 'Dear Equal Rights Amendment Supporter.'"[30]

President Sharp replied to Turner on July 10, 1973, assuring the Representative that the letters had been sent "at the expense of the Human Rights Coalition" to appeal for donations from "those people who had preregistered [*sic*] for the conference but did not attend or pay a registration fee. . . ." Presumably the "Human Rights Coalition" either was an offshoot of the national organization (NAHRW) of which Shinert was a member and/or simply reflected a mistake in the wording of Sharp's reply. Either way, a contemporary newspaper account quoting Shinert stated the "Equal Rights Coalition paid for the mailing." In his reply, Sharp also stated that sending such letters was "very unusual and . . . not a regular practice. . . ." He further assured Turner that the

[30] Kronholm, "OU's Role in Letter Explained."; "(Illegible) Lawmakers Will Address Rights Meeting," 16; "Rights Amendment Foes Plan Funding Investigation," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 8, 1973, 7; "Amendment's Foe Rips Use of Stationary," *The Daily Oklahoman*, June 20, 1973, 23.

"University will not be responsible" for collecting debts and that the "sponsoring agency," in this case the Coalition for Equal Rights, "is not to use the name of the University to collect donations for purposes other than in connection with educational programs sponsored at the Center."[31]

Representative Turner, WRL, and the press would have been interested in Shinert's earlier letter addressed to members of NAHRW. In that letter, he stated that "one purpose" of the Assembly was to "generate . . . support for" the ERA and "[t]he participation of your organization is important if we are to achieve the goals of the Assembly." Undoubtedly, antiratificationists' calls against the use of public funds and the University's name for partisan political purposes would have generated more debate as well as further ill will toward pro-ERA forces and the University. Shinert's earlier publicity letter appears to skirt the divide between public funds and partisan activity. Even without that additional tumult, however, the state's pro forces' second large-scale effort to promote the amendment in Oklahoma concluded both with success, as "more than 100 persons" attended, and in frustration due both to the inopportune snow and ice storm and because of the published accusations that the Equal Rights Coalition used a public university's funds for a partisan purpose. Those accusations, in particular, served to bring negative press to the ERA's cause.

[31] Paul F. Sharp to Jan Turner, "The Honorable Jan Turner," letter, July 10, 1973, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 14, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Kronholm, "OU's Role in Letter Explained."

And that press was but a continuation of the attitude and coverage provided by *The Daily Oklahoman*.[32]

The day after the Assembly, *The Sunday Oklahoman* ran an above the fold, three-column report on the conference titled "Foes of Law Described." The headline referred to Illinois state representative and Assembly speaker Eugenia Chapman's characterization of ERA foes "as 'fearful, insecure people.'" A photo of Chapman with Oklahoma legislator Hannah Atkins accompanied the article, which described Chapman's Saturday "luncheon session" talk, including her admonition to ERA proponents to "have their hair done, wear their most feminine dresses and speak with soft voices" when lobbying legislators. In an afternoon session led by "the only [Oklahoma] woman legislator [Atkins] giving strong backing to the amendment. . . . participants decided to lobby for the [ERA] proposal" the next time it came up in the state legislature. The article did include Chapman's more relevant advice including, for example, that Oklahoma's ratificationists "should establish a system of getting current information to voters throughout the state" and Atkins' "warn[ing to participants] . . . to be prepared" for opponents' arguments such as "states' rights, contentions that the amendment is related to school busing, [and] worries about separate restroom facilities and the . . . draft." Still, the article ended as it

[32] Shinert to Members and Friends of NAHRW, December 4, 1972. In addition, Shinert submitted testimony supporting ratification at the November 9, 1972, interim hearing. See State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings," 155; Bryce Patterson, "Foes of Law Described," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, January 7, 1973, 12.

began, quoting Atkins as saying that ERA opponents were "'flamboyant' and 'persistent' and are capable of capturing the voters' emotions."[33]

The article's headline, lead in, and closing focused on apparent proponent attacks on ERA opposition, rather than reporting on the conference itself. In this way, the publisher shifted attention from ratification efforts and, instead, concentrated on possible bullying of women absent from the Assembly who were unable to defend themselves. The article slyly and subtly portrayed ERA advocates as name-calling harridans bent on attacking their opposition. Simultaneously, the purpose of the Assembly, to show state support for the ERA, fell almost unnoticed. Oklahoma's amendment proponents by mid-1973, therefore, had suffered a number of setbacks in their early attempts to organize a strong ratification effort in the state, including thinly-veiled "unbiased" press coverage.

Throughout the ERA decade, the Oklahoma women who undertook the ratification drive joined the movement for diverse ideological and personal reasons. Exploring their histories and the conditions that motivated proponents to fight for the amendment provides a deeper understanding of the state ERA experience as well as the cultural environment proponents' labored within. Furthermore, the numerous women who led state ratification efforts during the decade evolved, along with their tactics and strategies, in accord with political needs, their individual growth, and their opponents' campaign. Often unfamiliar

[33] Ibid.

in the early years with the reality of Oklahoma politics, ratificationists were familiar with their personal and collective situations within the era's gendered culture. Wanda Jo Peltier, for example, became an activist in the 1970s following "several life experiences," including learning "from the League of Women Voters" that Oklahoma's "Head of Household" statute discriminated blatantly against married women. The law stated flatly that the husband was the head of the household, who had the right to choose the "mode" and "place of living" while "the wife will conform thereto." This Head of Household law in conjunction with Oklahoma's "estate tax" law discriminated against surviving wives, particularly those who did not earn outside incomes. Oklahoma law at the time assumed that "whoever earns the money, owns the property" and, further, that such person was automatically the husband as the "Head of the Household." If her husband had died intestate, Peltier would have had to prove that she had contributed "money or money's worth" toward the farm before being allowed automatically to inherit her "very own property." She and her husband of the time, a Baptist minister, promptly made certain he had written a will leaving the farm to her.[34]

Furthermore, Peltier worked at Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) as an English professor in the early 1970s. While there, she watched as male professors with less education received better pay for equal work as well as often having their choice of classes, while Peltier repeatedly and solely taught

[34] Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton, "Personal interview," interview by Jana Vogt, digital recording, November 20, 2008, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

"freshman English." After informing Peltier that she needed a Ph.D. in order to be eligible for tenure, OBU in 1973 "denied [Peltier] tenure" as well as "a leave of absence" to obtain her doctorate. With the help of "Donna Meyer and the national Women's Equity Action League (WEAL)," Peltier filed a class-action suit with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against OBU, a suit she won in 1977. According to a 1980 article written by Peltier and published in *The Oklahoma Observer*, the EEOC ruled that OBU had "violated Title VII" with discriminatory practices targeting women "because of their sex." Specifically, the EEOC ruled OBU had "violated the Act by denial of tenure and leave of absence" to Peltier. According to Peltier, because the EEOC ruling did not "have the force of law," OBU did not have to comply with the EEOC ruling. In 1980, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported that Peltier and OBU "settled [Peltier's] sex discrimination complaint" against the university "when they paid [Peltier] a substantial cash settlement."[35]

Peltier cited these experiences as making "a different person out of me; it freed me, in a way, to fight for women's rights." She now credits those life experiences and her education, particularly the "classics that I read and the teachers that I had" in college, for providing her with the knowledge and ability to become a ratification leader. Otherwise, according to Peltier, "I would have

[35] Ibid.; "Case Cited As ERA Argument - OBU Accused of Sex Bias," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 23, 1977, 5; Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton, "More Than Mormons," *The Oklahoma Observer*, March 25, 1980, 10. See also Associated Press, "OBU denies count of discrimination," *unknown*, March 23, 1977, unknown; "OBU, Woman Settle Bias Suit," *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 15, 1980, unknown. This article further noted that, according to the terms of the agreement, Peltier was not at liberty to disclose the amount of the settlement.

been on one of those church buses against the ERA." That education and, from it, her exposure to differing views, changed her "from an extremist fundamentalist" to a feminist. Consequently, Peltier was an active member and, later, chair of the GCSW during the ERA campaign. She went on to help revitalize a faltering OKWPC beginning in late 1980 and to lead the organization through the final two years of the ratification struggle. Following the ERA decade, among other accomplishments, Peltier became a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, serving from 1987 through 1996.[36]

While many of Oklahoma's ERA leaders experienced pay or employment discrimination, which spurred them to become amendment advocates, others cited exclusion from full church participation as among their reasons for joining women's rights organizations and becoming activists for the ERA. Donna Meyer, for instance, "left [her church] when women were denied service on major church committees." Her minister "laughed" when Meyer suggested he assign a woman on each church committee. After taking an informal poll of the views of the church's all-male committee chairs, Meyer learned that "only one

[36] Stapleton, "Personal interview," November 20, 2008; Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton to Dear Commission Member, "Dear Commission Member," typed, March 10, 1978, David Boren, RG 8-T-5-1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries; On Peltier's role in revitalizing OKWPC see Betty Amos (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, December 11, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Wanda Jo Peltier," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx.

said he would accept a woman member." Among other proponent efforts, in the mid-1970s Meyer served as chair of OKWPC and became a "citizen lobbyist."[37]

Other Oklahoma proponents became ratification leaders through a variety of organizations. After the National League of Women Voters publicly supported the ERA in 1974, women such as Helen Arnold, president of the state League of Women Voters from 1971 to 1975, spoke to groups around the state in support of ratification. Among other proponent efforts under Arnold's direction, the League organized letter-writing campaigns within state legislative districts. Either having constituents write their own or sign sample pro-ERA letters, Leaguers would then deliver those letters to individual state legislators. Arnold later became a member of the state House of Representatives from 1976 through 1982, again supporting the amendment while in the House. One of the original OKWPC conveners in 1972, Shirley Hilbert-Price of Norman also served at one time as coordinator and head of the Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights as well as chair of the highly active Norman Women's Political Caucus (Norman WPC). OU professor of journalism, Junetta Davis, spanned the ten year campaign as a dynamic member of the OKWPC and the Norman WPC. Hilbert-Price recalled she "consulted" often with Davis during Hilbert-Price's tenure as "chairperson of the caucus." She also related that Davis, like other leaders as well as rank and file workers, participated in a large number of proponent activities, including letter-writing campaigns and walking "door-to-door" in support of politicians who endorsed women's issues. In

[37] Junetta Davis, "Breaking the Bonds," *Oklahoma Monthly*, 1975, 12.

addition, Davis' pro-ERA articles appeared in *The Oklahoma Journal, The Oklahoma Observer,* and *The Norman Transcript* and she wrote numerous letters in support of the amendment to the editors of these papers as well as to *The Daily Oklahoman.*[38]

Other women took similar paths to leadership of the pro-ERA side of the struggle. During the amendment decade, Bernice Mitchell served as an active member of the GCSW and chaired the Stillwater chapter of OKWPC. In the years following the ERA decade, Mitchell became the "first African-American and first women" to be elected as a County Commissioner in Payne County, Oklahoma. Among a multitude of other accomplishments in later years, Mitchell served as chair of the GCSW as well as headed OKWPC. Prague resident Mattie Morgan served as vice chair of the Governor's Commission at one period during the amendment decade and as "ERA spokesperson for the United Methodist Women [(UMW)]." Along with numerous other proponent activities, Cleta Deatherage served on the GCSW, as a president of the Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, and as a state representative from 1976 to 1984. During her legislative years, Deatherage emerged as, arguably, the most recognizable "face" of Oklahoma's amendment proponents both locally and

[38] For the Oklahoma LWV as well as the national LWV's support of ratification see Blaze (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview."; Helen Arnold, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project," interview by Tanya Finchum, transcript of recording, January 9, 2008, 3, Digital Collections @ Oklahoma State University, http://dc.library.okstate.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/women&CISOPTR=2794&CISOSHOW=2788; Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview."; For background information on Junetta Davis see Hilbert-Price, "Equal Rights Amendment Oklahoma demographics - background details."

nationally. Marion Jordan served as president of the Oklahoma BPW before becoming, in addition, a national BPW officer who "helped to lobby the Equal Rights Amendment through . . . Congress in 1972."[39]

Identified in 1976 as the "undisputed leader" in state legislative attempts to ratify the ERA, Democrat Hannah Atkins served as a member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 1968 through 1980. By the 1977-1978 legislative session, Atkins had authored or co-authored seven ERA resolutions to amend the U.S. Constitution and one ERA resolution to amend the Oklahoma Constitution. She remains the undisputed leader of legislative resolution attempts during the amendment decade. Atkins was the first African American woman elected to the House and became Oklahoma's first female committee chair when she was appointed to that leadership position on the House Public and Mental Health Committee. After her retirement from the lower chamber in 1980, President Carter appointed Atkins as a U.S. Delegate to the 35th General Assembly to the United Nations. On returning to Oklahoma, she served in various high-level state government positions, culminating in

[39] For Bernice Mitchell as a member of GCSW during the ERA decade see "Members named to women's commission," *The Tulsa Tribune*, March 1, 1975, unknown; For Mitchell as leader of the Stillwater WPC see Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview." and Hilbert-Price, "Equal Rights Amendment Oklahoma demographics - background details."; For Mitchell's accomplishments since the ERA decade see, for example, "Contemporary Oklahoma Women," *Oklahoma Women's Network*, http://www.oklahomawomensnetwork.com/notable/today.html#m; For Morgan as Vice Chair of GCSW and for "ERA spokesperson" quote see Junetta Davis, "The Shakers and Movers," *Oklahoma Monthly*, 1975, 19. For Deatherage as president of the Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights see Ibid., 18. For Marion Jordon's accomplishments and proponent activities see Ibid., 20; For the remainder of those mentioned as well as others of Deatherage's proponent activities see, for example, Mitchell, "Cleta Deatherage Mitchell OSU interview," 3 and "Governor's Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, Minutes of Meeting June 25, 1976," June 25, 1976, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 1, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

1987 with her concurrent appointments, by second-term Republican Governor Henry Bellmon, as Oklahoma's Secretary of State and Secretary of Human Resources. During her long career, Atkins held membership in and various leadership positions with numerous state and national organizations, including the ACLU, NAACP, and the Democratic Party, where she served for eight years as a national committee member for the Democratic National Committee. She also founded the Oklahoma Black Political Caucus. During the ERA decade, Atkins co-founded the OKWPC, served on the GCSW, and was an alternate state delegate to the national International Women's Year (IWY) conference in 1977.[40]

The women who drove ratification efforts in Oklahoma for ten years typify the dynamic makeup of state ERA proponents. They came from the ranks of housewives, mothers, and students as well as were business and legislative leaders. Further, amendment activists represented both executives and the rank and file of women's clubs and professional institutions. In addition, many of the state's proponents identified themselves as affiliated with religious organizations or simply as church members. They often held overlapping memberships within proponent groups and served in leadership positions in a

[40] For "undisputed leader" quote see Junetta Davis, "The Shakers and Movers," 17; Legislative Reference Division, "Legislation for ratification of U.S. Constitution - Equal Rights Amendment," 1, 2; Hannah Atkins, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project," interview by Tanya Finchum, transcript, June 22, 2007, 3, Digital Collections @ Oklahoma State University, http://dc.library.okstate.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/women&CISOPTR=1711&REC=5&CISOSHOW=1682; "Atkins, Hannah Diggs (1923-)," *Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture*, http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/A/AT002.html; "Document 139: 'Delegates to the National Women's Conference'," *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000*, 1977, http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/dp59/doc139.htm.

number of those bodies at various times during the amendment decade. In addition, the numerous and evolving associations ratificationists represented illustrate the broad range of state ERA proponent organizations during the decade.

Throughout those ten years, proponents divided their time and energy, working both for ratification and for a number of related women's causes. In working on issues beyond the ERA, ratificationists gained important advancements in women's status and condition in the state. One example is early work undertaken jointly by the Caucus and the Governor's Commission on the Rights of Women (GCRW). The two groups investigated conditions for Oklahoma's incarcerated women. Among other findings, they learned that female inmates "could not earn money, as men could" and, although women trained under a prison cosmetology program, "Oklahoma law prohibited convicted felons from practicing cosmetology." Governor David Hall acted on the groups' recommendations by initiating the women's prison relocation from McAlester to Oklahoma City, with "better housing, better recreation, [and] better rehabilitation" facilities. Minutes of later meetings confirm Governor's Commission members' enduring interest in reforming sex discrimination in Oklahoma's correctional facilities. In 1976, for example, minutes from a Commission meeting communicated members' dissatisfaction that discussions with state officials, including one state senator, "had not produced the desired appropriations to improve conditions of women in Oklahoma penal institutions."

The minutes further noted that "a follow-up will be made to determine why women, under the work release program, are not paid for going to the Oklahoma City Manpower Skills Center since the men are paid."[41]

These two and other ratificationist groups tackled additional women's issues, including comprehensive assessments of sex-based discriminatory laws in Oklahoma as well as an analysis of insurance and credit statutes and state courts' interpretation of those laws regarding women. Moreover, feminists also examined Oklahoma's legal status for rape victims and helped to establish the Rape Crisis Center at the YWCA in an effort to improve women's lives in the state. In addition, proponent activists undertook such work as founding "women's resource centers" to help women "reexamine their own lives" and explored daycare center funding options for the children of working women. Ratificationists also organized numerous conferences and other events to focus on women's issues, including a July, 1976 "Women's Action Conference" slated to be held in Norman and a "Bicentennial Pilot Study on Oklahoma Women" in addition to numerous other projects and events. Pro-ERA groups also sponsored a significant number of presentations to be offered to groups around the state including, including proponent leader Kaye Teall's slide production "A History of the Women's Movement in the United States," for example, and

[41] For Governor Hall's Commission on the Rights of Women's efforts toward penal reform see Governor's Commission on the Rights of Women, *Governor's Commission on the Rights of Women 1973 Program Proposal*, undated , 10-11, David Hall, RG 8-S-25-1, Box 5, Folder 16, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; For Hall's implementation of recommendations and for "could not earn money," "Oklahoma law prohibited," and "better housing" quotes see Junetta Davis, "Breaking the Bonds," 12; "Governor's Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, Minutes of Meeting June 25, 1976."

another prepared by Carmel Wilson and Valerie Couch of Norman ERA titled "The Law and the Oklahoma Homemaker." The projects mentioned represent only a portion of the women's causes Oklahoma amendment activists addressed during the ERA decade.[42]

Undoubtedly, ratificationists' work for the advancement of the state's female population significantly improved women's lives while, at the same time, those efforts both lessened Oklahoma's gendered atmosphere and increased women's visibility as effective advocates and leaders. Additionally, proponents' study of Oklahoma statutes and unfair employment practices, for example, helped reveal discriminatory laws and customs, which in turn emphasized the need for ratification. These types of studies also provided a necessary refutation of antiratificationists' statements that existing legislation protected women in Oklahoma and the nation from gender discrimination. Nonetheless, the numerous women's issues feminists addressed served also to limit the time and energy ERA advocates could devote to ratification. In 1979, a prominent

[42] For proponents' work on a variety of women's issues including the Bicentennial Pilot Study and the Norman ERA slide presentation see, for example, Mary Jean Pepper, Secretary, "Governor's Advisory Commission on Status of Women Minutes of Meeting of July 17, 1975," July 17, 1975, 2, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 1, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Governor's Commission on the Rights of Women, *Governor's Commission on the Rights of Women 1973 Program Proposal*, 1-12, and Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton, "The Oklahoma Homemaker and the Equal Rights Amendment," undated, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. For feminists' work on daycare centers see, for example, Dian Copelin, Administrative Assistant to the Governor and Governor's Commission on the Status of Women to Jean O'Hara, Director Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women, "Dear Ms. O'Hara," typed, February 16, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 3, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; For Rape Crisis Center information see Junetta Davis, "Breaking the Bonds," 12; For "women's resource centers" and "reexamine" quotes see Junetta Davis, "The Shakers and Movers," 20; Kaye Teall, "What Do Women Want? A History of the Women's Movement in the United States," 1-5, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

pro-family movement leader averred that amendment "pros work on too many issues." She believed proponents' frequent "meeting[s] and rall[ies]" exhausted their followers. Moreover, "[t]hey are always trying to promote something [and] have their names in the paper." However legitimate, necessary, and significant feminists' causes were, undertaking a wide range of women's issues increased demands on proponents' limited time, resources, and attention – ultimately hampering ratification efforts.[43]

Some issues, however, could not be allowed to go unchallenged. Pro-ERA groups and their leaders spoke publicly against women's inequality and confronted those who would continue to foster an unfair culture. In one blatant example of gendered prejudice, the Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, Ben T. Williams, speaking in 1975 to "nearly 500 lawmen and their wives," stated "he agreed with an eastern woman judge that 'women are responsible for the country's moral decay.'" In response, OKWPC organized a "peaceful protest" in an Oklahoma City park, with protestors holding the state flag upside down in the universal sign for distress. One feminist at the rally held "the narrowness of organized religion" responsible for Williams' attitude toward women. Another outraged protestor felt that the judge's words were "indicative of the regressive thinking in Oklahoma." The editor and publisher of *The Oklahoma New Woman*, Peggy J. Durham, wrote to Governor David Boren, telling him that, as governor, he had "an obligation to defend the honor of the

[43] Joanna Hargrove (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, June 1979, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

citizens of the state" from Williams' statement as it both "attack[ed] the entire female population" and "suggest[ed] that men hold no responsibility for moral standards." Durham further noted she thought Williams "should be chastised." Barbara Webb, "Assistant to the First Lady," replied on behalf of the governor to Durham's letter, noting that the Oklahoma Constitution "clearly defines three separate branches of government" and that it "would be inappropriate" for the governor, as head of the Executive Branch, "to possibly upset the check and balance system by publicly chastising any public official—particularly the Chief Justice of the Judicial Branch." Webb further noted that, under the Bill of Rights, Williams had "a right to express his opinions." Included with her letter to the governor was a copy of Durham's "I am enraged" letter to the editor of the *Oklahoma Journal*, the paper that had published the story of Williams' remark. Durham's letter to the newspaper, along with a letter from ratificationist Junetta Davis written directly to Justice Williams and copied to the Oklahoma Bar Association and the American Bar Association, expressed the indignation, disdain, and outrage feminists felt at his statements. Davis, in fact, wrote to the Chief Justice insisting he "would serve us all better if [he] resigned . . . so that someone better informed, more objective and more intelligent could assume the reins of justice in Oklahoma."[44]

[44] Steve Hoffman, "Judge Blames Women," *Oklahoma Journal*, May 16, 1975; Junetta Davis, "SOS," Unpublished magazine article, 1975, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 17, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Peggy J. Durham to David Boren, "Dear Governor Boren," typed, May 16, 1975, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Barbara Webb to Peggy J. Durham, "Dear Ms. Durham," typed, May 20, 1975, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright

That the Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court publicly held women accountable for an assumed "moral decay" within the United States demonstrated the reactionary atmosphere in which Oklahoma proponents of the ERA labored. Moreover, Williams' views represented the fears of many Oklahomans in the 1970s. His words conjured images of women who flaunted traditional mores by asking, at times demanding, equality of place within that society. In Williams' mind, these undisciplined women betrayed both their purpose in life and their country, contributing to a moral decay that worsened with each feminist display and that would, ultimately, destroy the foundations of social order. For conservative Oklahomans, Williams spoke the truth. For feminist Oklahomans, Williams spoke an incomprehensible and unequivocal lie.

State ERA advocates' central cause, of course, was to ratify the amendment in Oklahoma. In part, they undertook to do so by educating state legislators and the general public. Oklahoma's pro-ERA organizations spent countless hours lobbying legislators, providing educational information about the amendment, studying ERA's effect on Oklahoma law, providing information on Oklahoma's employment situation for women, and proffering further amendment information both to legislators and the general public. For example, proponents attended "Women's Day" and organized "Equal Rights" days at the state capitol, reputedly in response to the effective mass

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Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Peggy J. Durham to Editor, *Oklahoma Journal*, "Letter to the Editor, *The Oklahoma Journal*," typed, May 16, 1975, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Junetta Davis to Ben T. Williams, "Justice Ben T. Williams," typed, May 20, 1975, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

demonstrations at the capitol first used by Oklahoma's antiratificationists. One announcement for an "ERA Day At The Capitol" slated for January 5, 1982, showed by the final days of the campaign that the state's pro-amendment groups were able to execute a well-organized lobbying effort, albeit with support from national organizations.[45]

Encompassed within a green pocket-folder with a darker green, round "ERA Yes" sticker on the front, the packet of materials for lobbyists' use included a schedule of events, a map of the capitol designating legislators' offices, and a list of "DO's" and "DON'T's." Among other "DO's" on the list, the guide explained to pro-ERA lobbyists they should, for example, "Know the status of the legislation," its authors, and "Be brief" as well as "courteous, calm and friendly." The packet also included "lobby reports" for each interview completed, which were to be filled out immediately after each interview, and asked proponents to note "all arguments" used by the legislator, "especially . . . any <u>new arguments</u> for/against." Further, packet materials reminded workers to "Identify your opposition. Your legislator will often tell you who it is." The "DON'T's" included not to "Be arrogant" or "Back him/her into a corner" and "Don't talk about your interviews . . . in front of strangers." The two admonitions that mention the "opposition" and "strangers" illustrates proponents' awareness of anti-ERA groups' lobbying efforts, which were often carried out at the same

[45] Junetta Davis, "Breaking the Bonds," 10; For proponents' lobbying efforts at the capitol as coming in response to opponents' efforts see Joanna Hargrove (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 9, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "ERA Day At The Capitol," January 5, 1982, John Dunning Political Collection, Box 56A, Folder 7, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original.

time. In addition, a reprint of Tulsa attorney Jewell Russell Mann's 1973, seven-page "The Equal Rights Amendment" comprised a study of how ratification would, and would not, affect Oklahoma Law. Housed in files for the Commission on the Status of Women under Governor David Boren, hand-written margin notes appear under Mann's section titled "Religion and the Bible," demonstrating that Commission members, at the least, used Mann's study to help inform themselves and others of the amendment's ramifications.[46]

Moreover, proponents penned large numbers of articles in support of ratification. For instance, Jan Dreiling, Chair of the GCSW under David Boren and later District Judge in Washington County wrote "In pursuit of Equal Rights: [W]hat was the [P]roblem?" The piece appeared in January, 1977, in anticipation of "Round #4" in the ERA Oklahoma "saga" as the new state legislature convened. In the article, Dreiling quoted Oklahoma family, education, and income statistics from the 1970 U.S. Census to provide facts proving that sex discrimination existed within the state and that the amendment, therefore, was a "real bread and butter issue." Further, proponent groups held numerous public meetings and debates throughout the state to discuss ratification and to educate the public. Particularly active in this regard, the Norman, Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights sponsored a large number of meetings, both in the name of the Coalition and of their Feminist Speakers

[46] Ibid., emphases original; Jewell Russell Mann, "The Equal Rights Amendment," October 1973, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Bureau. Early debates between proponents and opponents took place at universities, local community colleges, political groups' meetings, and other venues.[47]

Proponent organizations also researched the issues and circulated reports in newsletters sent to individuals, groups, and legislators. Extant records include a large number of "educational" tracts and information, some provided by national organizations, but many written by Oklahoma ratificationists. Written and distributed by OKWPC, one example is a leaflet titled "The Oklahoma Homemaker and the Equal Rights Amendment," which provided information on homemakers' rights under Oklahoma law. Others include informational tracts prepared by the "Government Relations" board of one large and active ratification group, the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA). By the latter years of the campaign, these tracts conveyed pro-amendment messages in concise sentences that would better serve their message and their audience. For instance, a 1980 OEA "Fact Sheet" provided a number of telling and germane statistics on American families including that,

[47] For Dreiling as chair see Pepper, Secretary, "Governor's Advisory Commission on Status of Women Minutes of Meeting of July 17, 1975."; For Dreiling's tenure as district judge see M. Courtney Briggs, "Women in Law Conference to Highlight 80th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage," *Oklahoma Bar Journal Articles* 71, no. 23 (August 5, 2000), http://www.okbar.org/obj/articles_00/fs080500.htm; Jan Dreiling, "In pursuit of Equal Rights: [W]hat was the [P]roblem?," *The Oklahoma New Woman*, January 25, 1977, 6; For sponsored meetings see, for example, a series of undated press releases from the Norman Coalition for Equal Rights and Feminist Speakers Bureau written by Junetta Davis, "Undated press releases," undated, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 30, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma and Junetta Davis, "The Shakers and Movers," 19; For early debates see, for example, "Amendment Debate Set," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 1, 1974, 71, "Women's Rights to Be Discussed At Junior College," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 18, 1974, 7, and "Republican Unit to Hear Debate on Equal Rights," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, January 28, 1973, 73.

in 1980, “only 7%” of American families “reflect the traditional stereotype” of fathers working outside the home as mothers stayed “in the home” to raise the children. Another 1980 OEA sheet spoke directly to the presumed effects of ratification with such statements as “ERA will create equal employment opportunities” and “will strengthen the family unit by ensuring . . . true partnership” in marriage. The sheet included seven “ERA will not” statements; for example, “ERA will not deny the right to privacy” and “will not legalize homosexual marriage.”[48]

In these and other ways, Oklahoma proponents poured time and energy into the ratification effort and into education about the amendment. Believing their cause was “a matter of justice,” ratificationists also were certain that providing a straightforward education of the ERA’s substance and consequences would result in early passage in Oklahoma. As Wanda Jo Peltier recalled in 2008, she “went to the capitol thinking: ‘Well, if we look good, and smell good, and sound good, and make sense – that’s all there’ll be to it and, you know, it’ll be over with.’” However, the amendment campaign just “dragged on and on and got worse and worse.”[49]

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[48] Stapleton, “The Oklahoma Homemaker and the Equal Rights Amendment.”; Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), Government Relations, “Fact Sheet,” September 1980, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 19, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), Government Realtions [*sic*], “ERA will,” September 1980, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 19, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, emphases original; Stapleton, “Personal interview.”

[49] Mary Falk (pseud.), “Unpublished personal interview,” interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 14, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Stapleton, “Personal interview.”

By 1975, both proponents and opponents in Oklahoma had honed their separate groups into viable organizations supporting differing views on the ERA. Specifically, proponents geared up for the 1975 legislative vote trusting they would achieve their goal. Having suffered defeats in 1972 and 1973, many proponents wanted to bring the ERA again to a legislative vote in 1974. But a February 7, 1974, letter from state lawmaker Hannah Atkins and mailed to amendment supporters explained why state ratification leaders, including legislators, decided "legislative action [on the ERA] should be postponed until 1975." According to the letter, a January 23 joint meeting of the GCSW with Senators Terrill, Randle, and Funston along with Representative Atkins concluded that, although the ERA in 1974 would have been introduced first in the Senate, the amendment resolution ultimately would have ended up in a House "graveyard committee." Proponent forces used the intervening year to campaign for passage, sinking their efforts and hopes into that year of hard work.[50]

Early in 1974, ratificationists met to form a new umbrella organization from the remnants of the older, more informal Coalition for Equal Rights. As they did so, proponents continued the flexible evolution characteristic of their organizations throughout the campaign. With a slightly different name, the Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights originated on February 16, 1974, opening

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[50] Hannah D. Atkins to Dear Friend, "Dear Friend," typed, February 7, 1974, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

its first office in March. The Coalition received initial funding for an office and staff from the League of Women Voters, Business and Professional Women, American Association of University Women, and NOW. With its focus aimed at influencing members of the House of Representatives, Coalition coordinator Shirley Hilbert-Price recalled that the group's principal tactic was to "organize women around the state [in order] to cover all the legislative districts" so that the Coalition could mobilize their members "when it was time to go up to the legislature." One 1974 Coalition proposal noted that the organization had established local chapters in four cities around the state, with the branches of seven additional cities "in various stages of organization."[51]

Moreover, the Coalition sponsored workshops and debates as well as provided proponent speakers to organizations around the state. Workshops included a "Public Relations" session, which taught supporters "how to get the ERA information to the media." In a further example, a workshop held in October utilized the expertise of former State Senator Bryce Baggett to instruct Coalition attendees in "lobbying techniques and legislative action." In particular, the organization attempted to garner support from the state's religious community. In one example, a Coalition mailing to the "Agency for Christian Cooperative Ministry" included proposing that Coalition ERA educational programs be held at meetings of church organizations in addition to providing

[51] Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, "The Equal Rights Amendment Ratification Effort in Oklahoma."; Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview."; Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, "Agency for Christian Cooperative Ministry, Proposal," 1974, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

pro-ERA articles for inclusion in church publications. To this end, Coalition members in central Oklahoma, for example, held five September, 1974, forums at five different metropolitan area churches. Furthermore, Coalition mailing lists included twelve hundred people as well as providing pro-ERA articles for Coalition member organizations, including the "ACLU, Home Economics Association, YWCA, [and the] Oklahoma Nurses Association." In an apparent addition to previous proponent tactics, the Coalition also wrote to state legislative candidates before the upcoming November, 1974, elections, asking for each candidate's stand on the ERA and promising to include those responses "in our October newsletter." In reply, the Coalition received positive answers of ratification support from a number of candidates. After the elections, letters signed by Coalition Chair Ann Savage, and sent to at least thirty-nine winners, congratulated the legislators and thanked them "for your affirmative stand on the Equal Rights Amendment." With the advent of the Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights and its numerous efforts to build support throughout the state, the eleven months from March, 1974 through the first three weeks in January, 1975 represented the first statewide coordinated effort to ratify the amendment in Oklahoma.[52]

[52] Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview."; Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, "Agency for Christian Cooperative Ministry, Proposal."; "Baggett to Speak to Rights Group," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 8, 1974, 81; Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price to Neal A. McCaleb, "Dear Candidate," typed, September 27, 1974, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Ann Savage to Gidion [*sic*] Tinsley, "Mr. Gidion [sic] Tinsley," typed, November 14, 1974, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

By late 1974 and early 1975, the efforts of the Coalition and other pro forces in the state appeared to have paid off. Ratificationists seemed cautiously optimistic about their chances as opening day for the 1975 legislative session approached. At the December meeting of the GCSW, for example, Ann Savage of the Coalition reported that ERA prospects "look[ed] good in the House and pretty good in the Senate." Earlier at the same meeting, however, Governor Elect Boren had warned that mail, presumably to his office, was "running more against ERA than for it." The governor then proposed that commission members "reorganize the grass roots effort on letter writing." At the meeting, Commission Chair Mary Lou Thompson also reported on the achievements of a recent Day at the Capitol and related that roughly five hundred ERA supporters attended, implying that lobbying efforts for ratification had gone well.[53]

In early January, 1975, Senate President Pro Tempore Gene Howard agreed with Savage's assessment concerning the Senate. Howard stated he believed the upper house would pass the amendment "if the House of Representatives approves the measure." On January 15, six days before the amendment was brought up for a vote, the Tulsa Area Coalition, led by Mary Lou Thompson and encompassing representatives of eighteen state and national groups, including two Tulsa area churches and "Religion in Action,"

[53] Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, "Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, Meeting Minutes December 10, 1974," January 13, 1975, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 1, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

again lobbied legislators at the capitol. On the day of the vote, January 21, 1975, proponents and opponents "jammed" the House gallery in "almost equal" numbers during the public hearing held prior to the chamber's decision. The resolution needed fifty-one votes in order to succeed. Following the hearing and "[a]fter nearly an hour and a half of argument" on the House floor, the ERA joint resolution failed by a vote of forty-five ayes to fifty-one nays, never making it to the Senate. Further, after the resolution failed, the House then approved a "do not pass motion" governing the amendment, effectively denying legislators the ability to reintroduce the measure for the remaining two years of that legislature. The ERA was dead in Oklahoma until at least 1977.[54]

Within a few days, angry proponents began divulging evidence and speaking publicly about the reasons behind the amendment's failure in the House. The day after the vote, *The Daily Oklahoman* quoted Representative Atkins as saying "some last minute defections" were responsible for the resolution's failure and that she believed the vote had not followed the "will of the people." In a separate article published the same day in *The Oklahoma City Times,* Atkins stated "several young politicians bowed to 'pressure'" and reneged on their campaign promises, voting against the ERA. She then named

[54] "OK on Rights Measure Seen," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 10, 1975, 13; "Statement by Mary Lou Thompson, Chairperson, Governor's Commission on the Status of Women," January 15, 1975, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Legislative Reference Division, Legislative Reference Division, "Legislation for ratification of U.S. Constitution - Equal Rights Amendment," 1; "ERA Heads for House Vote," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 21, 1975, 3; Wain Miller, "Lawmakers pressured to kill ERA?," *The Oklahoma City Times*, January 22, 1975; John Greiner, "House Scuttles Equal Rights Amendment," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 22, 1975, 1.

nine House members who had defected, five of whom were "first term legislators." Although Atkins "declined [to name] who exerted 'pressure'" to defeat the measure, the article quoted her as citing the Churches of Christ, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, and "a lot of internal pressure" as sources of persuasion and the reasons why legislators switched their votes. In the following paragraph, however, the article's author named Democrats Bill Bradley and John Monks as leading a group of "veteran House members" in opposition to the ERA, alluding subtly that the two named legislators and their group may have been central in applying pressure on the new members. Further in the article, Representative Bradley denied vehemently any involvement, including the assertion that his pre-election opposition to then-candidate for governor and amendment supporter David Boren would be a reason Bradley might have worked to defeat the ERA. The legislator stated, "I don't care what David Boren stands for," continuing "[i]f there was [*sic*] any personalities involved, . . it was because Common Cause was after me" during the recent elections.[55]

Two days after the appearance of these articles, the Coalition issued press releases presenting evidence of two separate legislators reneging on pre-election promises to vote for the ERA. One release, signed by Coalition Coordinator Shirley Hilbert-Price, affirmed Democratic Representative Victor

[55] Ibid.; Wain Miller, "Lawmakers pressured to kill ERA?." The nine House members Atkins named were three first-term legislators and Democrats Guy Davis, Bill Robinson, and Tom Stephenson, first-term Republicans included James Holt and Neal McCaleb. Veteran legislators Atkins named included John Miskelly, Carl Twidwell, Jr., Victor Wickersham, and George Vaughn, Jr., Democrats all.

Wickersham had given “signed statements” of ratification support to the Coalition, Common Cause, and the Oklahoma Federation of Democratic Women. Attached to the press release was a copy of the Representative’s signed and dated letter on official House stationary and addressed to the Coalition in which Wickersham stated:

> Gentlemen: Please notify all of the ‘State Organizations Supporting the Equal Rights Amendment,’ that I have decided to support Legislation in the Oklahoma Legislature to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Thanks.

The second Coalition press release also provided evidence in the form of a signed and dated letter from one of the new 1975 legislators who had reneged on the ERA vote. In that letter addressed to Ann Savage, Chairperson, Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, Edmond Republican Neal McCaleb stated his preference that the ERA should be “submitted by referendum to the entire electorate.” However, if that course was not taken and if “ratification . . . is done solely by the legislature,” the Representative wrote, “it is my intent to vote yes on the proposed Equal Rights Amendment.” Between the date of McCaleb’s letter to the Coalition and the House vote, the state attorney general had ruled that “only” the state legislature could decide the fate of the amendment. In addition, Savage’s press release avowed that copies of “signed pledges” to the Oklahoma Federation of Democratic Women were “on file in the Coalition office.” According to Savage, those pledges included that “Rep. [Mark]

Bradshaw and Rep. [Guy] Davis not only promised to vote for the ERA but to co-author the bill."[56]

In response to these allegations from Atkins and the Coalition, several of the accused legislators defended their 1975 amendment votes. One newspaper article, for example, quoted Representative McCaleb as calling the Coalition's accusations "a malicious misrepresentation of the truth.'" Democrat Mark Bradshaw claimed his name had been forged on a card in support of the amendment. Furthermore, Democrats Carl Twidwell and Guy Davis avowed they had a right to change their minds. Oklahoma Common Cause in the same article, however, named seven legislators who had, before the vote, "signed a Common Cause questionnaire" indicating their support for ratification, but who then had voted no to the resolution. The seven legislators Common Cause named also appeared on Atkin's list of nine representatives. Pre-vote ratification commitments to the Coalition and Common Cause by House members who had defected numbered in total ten legislators. Eight of the ten legislators were Democrats. Those ten legislators represented the six votes necessary to carry the House. Within a short time, the impact of those

[56] Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price, "Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights Press Release 1975," January 24, 1975, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Victor Wickersham to Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, "Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights," typed, August 5, 1974, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price, "Ann Savage, Chairperson Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights Press Release 1975," January 24, 1975, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Neal A. McCaleb to Ann Savage, "Ms. Ann Savage, Chairperson," typed, December 2, 1974, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; "Derryberry Says Only Legislature Can OK Rights Amendment," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 16, 1975.

defections would cause a number of ERA proponents to alter their beliefs about and approach to politics, in particular modifying and shaping their future approach to the ratification campaign. Ultimately, the way in which the ERA had been defeated in the 1975 vote would precipitate changes in the strategy of Oklahoma's pro-ERA forces.[57]

Disappointed, frustrated, and angry over the failed 1975 vote, ERA proponents also had learned valuable political lessons. As a result, state proponents altered their strategy from "changing minds in the legislature" to electing those who would support the ERA as well as to defeating anti-amendment candidates. In the 1976 elections, feminists helped elect Norman Democrat Cleta Deatherage to the Oklahoma House. Deatherage served in the House until 1985. In 1980, ERA proponents backed Rebecca Hamilton from Oklahoma County. As they did in Deatherage's and the political campaigns of other ERA supporters, ratificationists canvassed for Hamilton by walking "door to door," distributing her literature and raising campaign funds. With "a tremendous amount of help from people in the women's movement at that time," Hamilton won in 1980, serving until 1986. In 2002, Hamilton again won her district and has remained in the House through the 2009 elections.[58]

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[57] "ERA Vote Switch Defended," *unknown*, unknown, unknown. Legislators named by Common Cause in this article were Democrats Carl Twidwell, Guy Davis, John Miskelly, Victor Wickersham, George Vaughn, Tom Stephenson, and Bill Robinson; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - 1975 House Historic Membership," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx.

[58] Junetta Davis, "Breaking the Bonds," 11; Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*, Spoken word compact disc, 2 vols., Oklahoma Voices (Recorded at the

In 1980, one particular bit of campaign strategy and contribution from proponents helped push Hamilton through to a win. Before the 1980 election, feminist Shirley Hilbert-Price was at the state capitol to attend a hearing and, while there, "picked up a copy of [a divorce] bill right before it was to be voted on." Representative L. H. Bengtson, Hamilton's opponent in the 1980 primary race, had authored the bill. Hilbert-Price found an error in Bengtson's legislation. In the bill, he had specified a divorcing wife's rights to child support, a monetary settlement, and the marriage's property but had failed to include similar rights for a husband. The law, therefore, "appeared to say that only women" were entitled to support or settlements when divorcing. Democrat Bengtson was a staunch opponent of ERA and Hilbert-Price thought "maybe I could get on his good side" by letting the representative know of the error before the bill came to a vote. She visited his office and told him she would "like to talk with [him] about this divorce bill." The representative was suspicious of Hilbert-Price, ultimately asking, "Didn't I see you up here trying to get the Equal Rights Amendment passed?" When Hilbert-Price answered "yes," the House member told her to get out of his office, adding "you don't care

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Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library, Oklahoma City, OK, 2007); "Women's groups helped to get [Rebecca] Hamilton elected, same for Cleta [Deatherage]" in Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview."; Mitchell, "Cleta Deatherage Mitchell OSU interview," 3 and "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Cleta Deatherage," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; For Hamilton quote of "tremendous amount" of feminist help to get elected see Rebecca Hamilton, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project," interview by Tanya Finchum, transcript of recording, July 14, 2008, 7, Digital Collections @ Oklahoma State University, http://dc.library.okstate.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/women&CISOPTR=3391&REC=6&CISOSHOW=3368; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Rebecca Hamilton," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx.

about women." His divorce bill passed. When the error was noticed, the state legislature "had to put a hold on divorces in Oklahoma for the next two weeks" until they could pass a divorce bill specifying the rights of both men and women. Thanks to the ERA proponents working for Hamilton, the candidate's campaign literature included details of this episode, helping her to win against the sixteen-year incumbent.[59]

Through the efforts of a recently arrived member from the New Mexico Caucus and of Wanda Jo Peltier, a revitalized OKWPC also took part in election campaigns, particularly after Peltier became head of OKWPC in December, 1980. From its approximately 200 members in 1973, membership in the Oklahoma State Caucus had fallen to "a handful" by the late 1970s. Peltier was instrumental both in rebuilding the Caucus and in organizing women from various proponent groups to take action directly in support of ERA and against incumbents who opposed the measure. A November, 1980, OKWPC "Equal Time" newsletter reported that pro workers were "going door to door" in central and southeastern Oklahoma, obtaining "thousands" of signatures on pro-ERA post cards to be mailed to legislators. In addition, evidence that their hard work paid off came when one undecided "far southeastern," rural Oklahoma state senator credited ERA proponents and their activity for his yes vote in 1982. Stating the "women were really well-organized," he also related that letters from

[59] Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - L. H. Bengtson, Jr.," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx.

his constituents supporting ratification "just snowed us under." Before proponents' efforts in his region, the Senator assumed "people would be against it" but changed his mind when he "tallied" the mail and phone calls endorsing the ERA.[60]

OKWPC also targeted and helped defeat at least six additional ERA opponents around the state, both incumbents and new candidates. In the 1980 elections, for example, OKWPC mailed to OKWPC-favored candidates their opponents' complete voting records, published those records in regional newspapers, flooded the targeted regions with flyers distributed by OKWPC "SWAT" teams, and wrote letters to editors of regional newspapers. In one instance, the Shawnee Chapter of OKWPC "put 17 people to work" in the campaign after the leading candidate "refused to endorse the ERA." That candidate lost, while the pro-ERA candidate won. In addition, the Caucus funneled state, local, and national money into candidates' campaigns in 1978 and 1980. Requested and distributed by OKWPC, National Caucus

[60] For confirmation of Peltier as OKWPC Chair as well as the New Mexico Caucus member and Peltier's revitalization of OKWPC see Amos (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview." and Patten, "History of the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus."; For OKWPC membership figures see Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, "Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus - Press Release, 1981," July 1981, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 30, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. In addition, the Oklahoma City Caucus, by 1980, had a membership of only "about nine people" as per above OKWPC Press Release and Junetta Davis, "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 9, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Patten's report to the NWPC ("History of the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus") included a more specific OKWPC membership figure. According to Patten, OKWPC, under Patten's direction, "recruited 30 new members." Although Patten failed to be specific as to when these members joined, it occurred sometime in "1979-80."; Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, "OKWPC Equal Time" 1, no. 5 (November 1980): 3; "Lawmaker Learned From ERA - Rural Constituents Made 'Yes' Vote for Him," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, sec. A.

contributions for those two election cycles totaled $34,200.00. In the 1980 Oklahoma elections, for example, NWPC funds backed wins in twenty-nine primary races, three in runoff elections, and eight in the general elections.[61]

During the ERA decade, ratificationists also fashioned counterattacks on their foremost organized opposition – Oklahoma's evangelical and fundamentalist Christians. By 1974, proponents had begun to identify the state's religious traditionalists as one of the principal groups resisting ratification. To combat this opposition, the Coalition for Equal Rights in 1974 enlisted the aid of religious groups that backed the ERA. For example, Oklahoma City metropolitan area forums held by the Coalition garnered an appreciable number of positive responses from volunteers in various religious organizations. The respondents indicated they would help the ratification campaign by, for example, scheduling ERA programs in their churches, publicizing the amendment, and volunteering time to help with mailings or phone calls. Organizations with positive responses included five Christian, two Episcopal, ten Methodist, and five Presbyterian churches as well as one institution each for the Lutheran, Greek Orthodox, Baptist, and United Church of

[61] Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton, "Political Losers Because of Their Anti-ERA Stand," Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 13, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; See Patten, "History of the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus." for 1978 NWPC contributions to Oklahoma candidates ($18,000.00 total); See the following three NWPC reports for NWPC contributions to the 1980 campaigns of Oklahoma candidates ($16,200.00 total): "NWPC ERA Update Report," August 1980, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "NWPC untitled page three of National Women's Political Caucus report on funds disbursed to OKWPC in September 1980 for runoff campaigns," September 1980, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "NWPC ERA Update," November 1980, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

Christ denominations. However, this early attempt to organize the proponent Christian religious community by necessity was understaffed as one person, Shirley Hilbert-Price, was responsible for coordinating the whole of the statewide Coalition and its many diverse elements.[62]

In 1975, proponent Mattie Morgan became Oklahoma's United Methodist ERA coordinator, while also serving on the GCSW. To replace the now defunct Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights, in August 1976, OK-ERA debuted as the new statewide umbrella organization. Morgan continued as a member of GCSW and as the United Methodist ERA coordinator. In 1976, she also became coordinator of the Oklahoma Religious Committee for the ERA, although it remains unclear whether at that time the OK-ERA group was associated with the national organization of the same name. With the formation of this committee, Oklahoma ratificationists had begun to engage in better coordinated efforts to counter the opposition's bastion of strength. In a January, 1977, press release, Morgan described the Religious Committee as "an interfaith organization of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish groups" with the purpose of securing ratification of the amendment as well as to "give visibility to [state] religious support for the ERA." The release listed thirteen committee members, including representatives of the Southern Baptist Convention,

[62] Lydia Gill to Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price, "Agency for Christian Cooperative Ministry (AFCCOM)," typed, September 30, 1974, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Lydia Gill to Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price, "Agency for Christian Cooperative Ministry (AFCCOM)," typed, October 8, 1974, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Hilbert-Price stated to me that she was state coordinator of the Oklahoma Coalition in Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview."

Temple B'Nai Israel, the State Conference of Churches, the Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, and the Disciples of Christ, noting that "many other religious bodies" also were members.[63]

Two years later, in October, 1977, Morgan resigned both her positions as coordinator, though she promised to "spend every spare moment assisting" the new coordinator(s). In the report that included her resignation, she listed a number of the achievements during her tenure, as well as suggestions of items that should be initiated. Among these achievements, the Commission on the Role and Status of Women of the United Methodist Church had "contacted each United Methodist minister in Oklahoma" concerning the distribution of "bulletin inserts" available from the Commission. Also, Commission members as well as a group from Disciples of Christ had lobbied at the capitol "on separate days." Morgan related that radio ads, sponsored and paid for by the religious committee, better achieved the goal of "dispel[ing] the fears in so many minds about E.R.A." than did a large ad published in *The Sunday Oklahoman.* She recommended using the radio ads either exclusively or as a model for any further newspaper ads. She sought and gained permission from "eighteen

[63] Mattie Morgan, *Report of Religious Activity for ERA*, October 15, 1977, 2, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; "OK-ERA - OK-ERA Group Formed." Although the Oklahoma Coalition for Equal Rights officially disbanded after the 1975 legislative vote, many proponents still spoke of "the coalition" or their "coalitions" during the year and a half between the Coalition's demise and the formation of OK-ERA. In addition, the use of the name "coalition" continued after OK-ERA came into being, most often referring to OK-ERA.; Mattie Morgan, "Religious Committee for the ERA - 1977 Press Release," January 22, 1977, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

denominations or religious organizations" to use their names on letters to the editors to "all newspapers in Oklahoma."[64]

Morgan's report, however, also revealed the woeful state of Oklahoma proponents' preparations and efforts in dealing with their religious-based opposition. Morgan stated that the proponent religious groups she contacted "would probably become more involved if leadership could be recruited and a plan of action . . . formulated." She "firmly believed" that the majority of Oklahoma's religious leadership agreed "with our stand" and recommended a "gathering of representatives from each and every church and religious organization that supports E.R.A." Such a meeting, Morgan lamented, "should have been arranged months ago." She then apologized that the meeting had not been undertaken. Morgan's further advice included fostering "involvement by Christian and Jewish men," designating "a "religious coordinator" for each of Oklahoma's counties as well as in each House and Senate district, and ERA inserts "for all church bulletins." Although a few of Morgan's recommendations would be partially fulfilled, the majority of her propositions failed to materialize, particularly in adequate amounts and in time to offset ERA opponents' advantage.[65]

Oklahoma's pro-ERA religious community, however, continued its efforts. In December, 1978, immediately before the January 1979 legislative session,

[64] Morgan, *Report of Religious Activity for ERA*, 1.

[65] Ibid., 1-2.

pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, Dr. Gene Garrison, appeared at a "Religious Panel" discussion sponsored by the Oklahoma City Chapter of OK-ERA. In his address, Garrison related that, from the time "my name appeared in the newspaper" as participating in the panel, he had been "besieged" by those both for and against the amendment. Highlighting that the issue called forth "lots of emotion" for both proponents and opponents, Garrison delivered an emotional, yet well-reasoned, speech in favor of the amendment. Also in December, 1978, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Norman, Dr. Robert A. Chesnut, penned an article in support of ratification that appeared in *The Oklahoma Observer*. Chesnut's article, like Garrison's speech, favored ratification. In addition to arguments based on justice, both authors used Biblical evidence to support their stances. Chesnut also noted that he was publicly supporting the amendment because "so many conservative religious groups are speaking and acting so effectively that they are leaving the impression that Christian opinion is united in opposition" to the ERA."[66]

Despite her resignation, Mattie Morgan in 1979 continued to work for the Oklahoma Religious Committee for the ERA, which by this time definitely was affiliated with the national Religious Committee for the ERA (RCERA). Morgan, for example, sent out letters notifying Oklahomans of the RCERA-sponsored "People of Faith for E.R.A.: National Days of Prayer and Action," to be held

[66] Gene Garrison, "Remarks made at a Religious Panel discussion," December 1978, 1-2, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Robert A. Chesnut, "About The Bible And ERA," *The Oklahoma Observer*, December 25, 1978, 8.

January 12-15, 1979. An RCERA flyer, announcing the same national days of prayer and exhorting volunteers and groups to "assume responsibility" for carrying out events in their communities, carried Morgan's name, address, and phone number as an Oklahoma contact. Moreover, in February, 1979, Chesnut invited men to the "Oklahoma Men's Conference on Religion and the E.R.A." fulfilling, in part, Morgan's 1977 recommendation for greater involvement by Christian men in the ERA struggle. Speakers at the Saturday conference included Baptist pastor Gene Garrison, editor of *The Oklahoma Observer* Frosty Troy, House member Cleta Deatherage, and OU Philosophy professor Tom Boyd as well as ministers from Norman and one from Shawnee, with the registration forms to be returned to the Reverend Robert Younts of Duncan. Although the speakers and the conference organizers heavily represented the Norman area, both groups also represented church organizations from around the state. Handwritten organizers' notes included the information from Mattie Morgan that "[a]lmost no turnout for activities in OKC from Tulsa," which may have spurred conference organizers to double their efforts to include men and religious organizations statewide. Churches as far away as Pawhuska, Oklahoma, received invitations. On his returned conference invitation, Pawhuska Church of Christ minister V. O. Williams twice scolded the organizers, one admonition reading, "I can't believe people who call themselves 'spiritual' leaders would sanction something so immoral and destructive!!!!!"[67]

[67] Mattie Morgan, "Oklahoma Religious Committee for the ERA," ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder

Two years later, in a June, 1981, "Letter . . . to all People of Faith for E.R.A.," volunteer Mattie Morgan began "Have you been asking 'Whatever happened to Mattie?'" and then introduced her substitute: "[T]wo years ago, I sent out the plea for a replacement" and "[s]he has arrived." Oklahoma City resident Eloise K. Dycus became the new Oklahoma Field Organizer for RCERA during the amendment's final year. Hired for one year's work in April, 1981, Dycus and her few Oklahoma RCERA co-workers fought an uphill battle, despite the support of a national organization. One RCERA operative recalled that reorganizing the vanished state RCERA steering committee took the better part of five months before they were able to have an effective meeting of the committee, leaving only four months before the opening of the 1982 state legislative session.[68]

Although the Oklahoma group achieved numerous successes that included a November 16, 1981 Statehood Day Prayer Vigil, the production of a number of 30-second television ads, and a joint press conference of

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8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Robert A. Chesnut to Colleague, "Dear Colleague," typed, February 14, 1979, 1-4, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1-5; V. O. Williams, "Returned Registration Form, Men's Conference on Religion and ERA," 1979, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis Williams.

[68] Mattie Morgan, "Letter From Mattie Morgan to All People of Faith for E.R.A. in Oklahoma," typed as part of "RCERA in Oklahoma Action Alert", June 1981, 2, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1-2, emphases Morgan. Morgan apparently sent out another "plea" in 1979, however, 1977 is the date of one extant request from her asking to be replaced; For the date of Dycus' hiring as well as the late reorganization of Oklahoma RCERA see Catherine McDonald (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, May 4, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's "major denominational leaders" the day before the January, 1982 ERA vote, a variety of problems hampered the group's effectiveness. For example, while the religious leaders' press conference "was a first for Oklahoma," the media basically "ignored it" because the press conference fell on the same day as former Vice President Walter Mondale's visit to the state capitol to urge legislators to ratify the amendment. In addition, Oklahoma's RCERA staff later complained they lost valuable time in paperwork and other clerical duties required by the national RCERA as well as in unproductive meetings with OK-ERA and NOW representatives that covered the same ground repeatedly. State RCERA workers felt they would have been more productive if they had been free to implement such basic tasks as "go[ing] into the local communities." Among other complaints about national NOW, staffers resented that the national group "imposed" a NOW-authored, identical campaign plan on Oklahoma and other Countdown states. By instituting this plan and failing to include local proponents' input, Oklahoma RCERA workers believed NOW undermined the ratification efforts in each Countdown state.[69]

Despite the 1974 and later attempts to present a unified state religious effort on behalf of ERA, many Oklahoma proponents were late in comprehending the threat state evangelicals posed to ratification. At the same time, proponents failed adequately to involve the state's pro-ERA churches and

[69] For all information and quotes in this paragraph see Ibid.; For Mondale's pro-ERA visit to the state see Randy Splaingard, "Mondale Lobbies for ERA," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 13, 1982.

religious organizations which, by October, 1981, included at least eighteen state organizations on the Oklahoma RCERA steering committee list. As has been noted by historians and political scientists, a lack of early state by state organization and planning severely impeded ratification of the ERA. In Oklahoma, a particular deficiency of adequate funding, efficient and coordinated organization, and the absence of an effective strategy – as well as their opponents' clear affiliation with organized religion – stymied ratificationists' success. These impediments coupled with the almost eleventh-hour national and state pro-ERA religious effort used to counter a strong and motivated opposition proved fatal. Unfortunately for Oklahoma's amendment proponents, Mattie Morgan's 1977 recommendations fell on overworked, understaffed, and disorganized ears.[70]

In addition to the debate over religion, state and national feminists after 1977 faced a revived onslaught from antifeminists over several recurring and pernicious issues, one of which in particular would help foster dissension, frustration, and tension within state proponents' ranks. The 1977 November International Women's Year (IWY) conference held in Houston, Texas, provided ERA opponents with an arsenal of powerful tools with which to attack feminists. The United Nations (UN) designated 1975 as International Women's Year and

[70] Eloise Dycus, "Religious Committee for the ERA - RCERA in Oklahoma," October 15, 1981, ERA Collection, Box 36, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; For explications of proponents' failure of early planning in the separate states see, for example, Mary Frances Berry, *Why ERA Failed: Politics, Women's Rights, and the Amending Process of the Constitution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) and Jo Freeman, "A Model for Analyzing the Strategic Options of Social Movement Organizations," in *Social Movements of the Sixties and Seventies*, ed. Jo Freeman (New York: Longman, 1983), specifically 206.

Americans participated in the UN IWY Mexico City conference held in June that year. Earlier in 1975, President Gerald Ford had established the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year. In late 1975, Congress approved a bill that "directed the National Commission to convene a National Women's Conference, to be preceded by State or regional meetings." That National Women's Conference would become the 1977 IWY Houston meeting. Congress also "appropriated $5 million" to fund the state and national IWY conferences.[71]

The purpose of the IWY national conference was "to evaluate the discrimination" American women faced as well as to assess women's contributions to society and make recommendations to the country's leaders for improving women's status. Feminists supported the conferences and hoped that the state and the national meetings would prove successful venues for women's rights issues, including ratification of the ERA. Attendees of each state meeting elected delegates to the national conference. In addition, the National Commission sent to each state a slate of resolutions for individual state conferences to consider. State approved resolutions would comprise the "agenda to be considered at Houston." Once approved at Houston, the agenda

[71] United States. National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, *The Spirit of Houston: The First National Women's Conference: An Official Report to the President, the Congress and the People of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year : for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1978), 9-11, quotes 10.

became the National Plan of Action, a slate of recommendations for improving American women's lives and presented to the country and its leaders.[72]

Eleven state delegations to the IWY national conference, however, "were predominantly against" the slate of resolutions sent to the state conventions. Oklahoma and six other states defeated all of the IWY core recommendations. Thanks to the effective organizing efforts of the pro-family faction, attendees at the June 18, 1977 Oklahoma state IWY meeting also elected a national conference delegation constituted entirely of antifeminists. After returning from the Houston conference as one of the Oklahoma delegates, pro-family activist Grace Haigler assembled a traveling display of lurid, emotionally-charged materials that reputedly had been on exhibit in Houston. Amendment opponents effectively married the display to proponents and asserted that exhibit materials proved that feminists advocated socialism, "abortion on demand at government expense," and "full homosexual rights." Further, the dramatic display tied the amendment itself to those three issues as well as to military "disarmament" and to increased federal intervention in citizens' lives. Antiratificationists' fulsome use of Haigler's display encompassed Oklahoma and "thirty" other states, including the Oklahoma and national capitols. In particular, the January, 1978, timing of the exhibit at the Oklahoma state capitol

[72] Ibid., 10-11, 112, quotes 10 and 112.

seems well-orchestrated, coming as it did during the opening month of the 1978 state legislative session.[73]

State ERA proponents attempted to distance themselves from and discredit the antifeminist exhibit. For example, Jan Dreiling, who attended the national conference as an alternate delegate, echoed the doubts of other state advocates when Dreiling publicly "said she was not sure [opponents] actually collected the material at the Houston meet." While the display was on exhibit in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, Dreiling, an OU law student at the time, brought the exhibit to the attention of Washington County Assistant District Attorney Bruce Peabody. She alleged that the antifeminists "were violating the law and displaying obscene materials." Dreiling, Peabody, and Police Chief Harry Bruno then viewed the display together. According to a *Tulsa Tribune* front

[73] Ibid., 112, 114-115, quote 112; For confirmation that antifeminists constituted Oklahoma's official delegation to the IWY Houston conference see Debbi Davidson, "'Both Sides' to Represent State at Conference - Equal Rights Amendment Central Issue," *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 18, 1977, 26; For Haigler as a delegate see "Document 139: 'Delegates to the National Women's Conference'."; For Haigler's assembling of the exhibit see Fred Marcus (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, September 12, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For antiratificationists' linking ERA to volatile issues see Glenda Mattoon (Mrs.), "Reader wants to link lib movement to issues - Letter to the editor" (The Norman Transcript, November 30, 1977), ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 13, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and "Taxpayers You Have a Right to Know," ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 13, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; For an analysis of the national IWY conference's significance to ratification of the ERA see Anna Leigh Bostwick, "'Federal Festival for Female Radicals Financed with Your Money': The Impact of the IWY National Women's Conference on Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment" (M.A., University of Oklahoma, 2005). Bostwick provides a comprehensive study of Oklahoma antifeminists' use of IWY materials. She argues that, through the IWY national conference, ERA opponents succeeded in the "marginalization of the feminists supporting the amendment," which in turn "augured the decline of liberalism," quote 45. See also Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 117-120 for a description and analysis of the antiratificationists' IWY display and its success. In addition, Brown, 118, states that antiratificationists exhibited the IWY display in thirty states; For the Haigler exhibit's appearance at the Oklahoma and U.S. capitols see "Feminists Set to Take Control - Oklahoma Delegates Silenced," *Oklahoma Rural News*, February 1978, 9 and Dianne Edmondson, "Point of View - A Feminist Fiasco," *The Tulsa Tribune*, May 10, 1978, unknown.

page article, the display's sponsors, women from Washington County Eagle Forum and Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women, "claimed the prosecutor threatened to arrest them." The police chief, however, saw no violation of the law and took no action. A later article in what appears to be a Bartlesville paper, however, noted the materials in the display were those that had been "given away and sold at various meetings throughout the country," although "[m]ost of the material, according to display sponsors, was collected at the recent IWY conference in Houston." Further, the article quoted the "chairman" of the two sponsoring organizations, Martha May, as saying "this is quite a terrible thing he has done," referring to Peabody and claiming that the assistant D.A. spoke in "harsh tones" and "threatened legal action." In contrast, Peabody stated, "In no way was I harsh and I never said they [the display's sponsors] were in violation of any statute." The article also noted that the original news accounts concerning the display had been picked up as "a wire story," ensuring national publicity for the exhibit and its sponsors. With the success of the display, its attendant national publicity, and its revitalization of morality issues, frustrations and dissension grew within Oklahoma's feminist ranks.[74]

[74] Susan Witt, "ERA Slugfest - Lesbian Literature Stirs Pro-Anti Fight," *The Tulsa Tribune*, April 6, 1978, 1A, 4A, quotes 1A; For additional proponents' attempts to discredit the display and to refute ERA opponents' assessment of the IWY conference see, for example, Helen Duchon, "Duchon answers IWY letter - Letter to the editor" (The Norman Transcript, December 11, 1977), 5, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 13, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Bostwick, "Federal Festival for Female Radicals Financed with Your Money"," 37; Ken Miller, "Legal Action Denied In IWY Display Dispute," *unknown*, April 1978, 1, 12.

As it did for feminists around the nation, the connection of feminism and the ERA to homosexuality and lesbianism proved exasperating and divisive for many Oklahoma ratificationists. The NOW state convention held October 3-4, 1981, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, exemplified those frustrations. Sociologist Ruth Brown attended that convention and her notes emphasized and described the "very wide diversity of dress styles" used by attendees. Brown's adjectives included "neat," "clean," and "stylish" to describe older women, while female attendees in their late teens to early twenties most often garnered adjectives such as "grody," "sloppy," and other critical terms. At the evening meeting to "outline plans for the ratification drive," a member of the "blue-jean crowd seated on the floor" disrupted the planning with a complaint that NOW failed to hire a male Stillwater worker for a permanent, paid position "because he was gay." NOW state and national officials denied the accusation, stating the meeting "wasn't the place to deal with that problem," and attempted to restore the meeting to its purpose. However, members on both sides of the issue would not defer. One questioner asked the accuser to name the person who provided the information, and then defended her question stating, "I'm sick and tired of being made to feel guilty because I'm straight." The person who made the original accusation eventually "stormed out" of the meeting.[75]

[75] For a discussion of divisions within NOW and other women's groups over radical lesbians' feminist ideology see, among others, Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960*, 262-267, Deborah Siegel, *Sisterhood, Interrupted: From Radical Women to Girls Gone Wild* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 55, 87-89, and Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 46-53; Ruth Murray Brown, "Unpublished notes - NOW 1981 Oklahoma state

The next day, the issue arose again. Before the election of state officers, the "gay faction" had asked for and received an amendment to the rules allowing a "question and answer period" after campaign speeches. After the speech of one Tulsa woman, who was "as neat as can be" in a black dress with high heels, the same blue-jeaned disruptor of the night before announced that the speaker "was no longer endorsed" by the Gay Caucus. A member of that caucus, who was running for a NOW state office and who was "dressed in the same sloppy clothes of yesterday," then announced that because her opponent was "supported by [NOW's] national staff" the Gay Caucus member would "not make a campaign speech nor [would she] answer questions." She then "stalked out" of the room. After the elections, Brown asked heterosexual NOW members "if there had been problems before" between straight and gay NOW members. Answers Brown received averred that the issue of lesbianism and the inclusion of lesbians in NOW "has been a constant problem for the last two years throughout the country" and the member was "really tired of it." Another person noted that "[p]eople resent having to dress up to avoid the image of lesbianism." After the convention experience, one person reflected sadly that she "was forming a new [and negative] stereotype of gays after trying to debunk all the old ones."[76]

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convention," October 3, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

[76] Ibid.

Moreover, in a letter addressed to Junetta Davis and written by then-Oklahoma House member Cleta Deatherage, the state legislator spoke candidly about the gay and lesbian issues affecting both ratification and feminists, the Oklahoma and national IWY conferences, and Congresswoman Bella Abzug in particular. On March 28, 1977, President Jimmy Carter had appointed the flamboyant and outspoken congresswoman Presiding Officer of the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year. In her letter, Deatherage explained her "motives" behind her public "disagree[ments]" with Abzug and with the inclusion of gay rights as a part of the women's movement. Deatherage stated that she did "not think homosexuals should be discriminated against;" however, she was "sick and tired of having the gay rights issue assigned to the women's movement as a women's issue." Further, Deatherage explained that "a great deal of dissension [existed] within the IWY Commission nationally because there was a decision made that the gay issue should not become part of the plan of action" but that "Bella made the decision that it should, in order to placate the gays, and strengthen her position with the gay community in NYC to help in her mayoral race."[77]

Further, Deatherage turned down a White House offer asking that she serve as co-chair with Abzug on a "new National Advisory Committee for

[77] Cleta Deatherage to Junetta Davis, "Dear Junetta - 1," typed, undated , Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, emphasis Deatherage; See United States. National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, *The Spirit of Houston*, 9-10, for Carter's appointment of Abzug.

Women." After learning that Abzug was "in line" to chair the new commission, President Carter "insisted that another person be added" as co-chair in order to provide "balance." *The Daily Oklahoman* reported that Deatherage said the new commission "would perpetuate recommendations of the controversial" IWY Houston conference and that Abzug, with her national reputation and connection to the IWY national conference, "would come to 'epitomize the [new] commission.'" Explaining her decision to Davis, Deatherage spoke of her concerns about serving with Abzug. According to the Oklahoma legislator, she did not "have the time to spend fighting with Bella about policy" because "I wouldn't win [as] I'll never outweigh her in terms of clout." In addition, *The Daily Oklahoman* article quoted Deatherage as saying "it's better to try to forget that IWY happened" and that she and "a lot of people" were "really tired" of national women's movement leaders who were "out of step" with the majority of American women. The legislator further commented: "I don't want to be a sacrificial lamb," revealing that Deatherage believed her political career would fail if she were associated with Abzug or with the negative publicity perpetuated by antiratificationists and their successful linking of homosexuality to the women's movement after the IWY conference.[78]

In addition, Deatherage wrote to Davis that the lawmaker had "more important things to do working on E.R.A. here in Oklahoma." Deatherage also revealed that she had been "told by people in a position to know that my role as

[78] Vivian Vahlberg Washington Bureau, "Thanks, But No Thanks, Cleta Tells White House," *The Daily Oklahoman*, May 19, 1978, 35; Deatherage to Davis, "Dear Junetta - 1."

assigned by the White House was to try and balance Bella, to 'hold my own with her' and to help keep her from doing too much damage." The state Representative followed this statement with: "Thanks, but no thanks." Deatherage reiterated her deep belief in the ERA and that she did not "intend to stop [working for ratification] until the stroke of midnight on March 22, 1979." But, she also believed that Abzug was "not the person the President should choose to represent the E.R.A. during this last most important year of its life" as the congresswoman was "anathema" to people in Oklahoma, including state legislators, and "to most people who are decent people everywhere." Deatherage ended with her belief that Abzug "[i]s killing us, the gay rights issue is killing us." Further, the representative stated she intended to continue to work toward ratification and she would "be damned if I'm going to throw . . . away" that chance "just to appease people who don't have to live with the screwballs in the legislature to get it done."[79]

As Deatherage's letter, her statements to the press, and the NOW state convention notes and interviews make clear, she and other state ratificationists struggled daily against the prejudices of Oklahomans concerning homosexuality and lesbianism and against the connection of feminists and the ERA to lesbianism. Fostered by the antifeminists' IWY display, the image state feminists fought proved a daunting task and generated tensions and strife within proponent organizations. In addition, pro-family activists' successful connection

[79] Ibid., emphasis Deatherage.

of feminists and the ERA to the popular IWY exhibit severely harmed the ratification cause. Unfortunately for ratificationists, the sentiments expressed by one state ERA opponent about the IWY display appeared prophetic: Antiratificationists "found out they had dynamite."[80]

During the final years of the amendment struggle, with three states needed to attain ratification, additional national pro-ERA organizations earmarked Oklahoma as a battleground state. Although national groups had provided money and other forms of support to Oklahoma earlier in the ten year campaign, an additional cohort of these largest and most well known groups focused their efforts on the state during the final campaign spanning 1981 and 1982, including the AFL-CIO and ERAmerica. Most important, the national office of NOW "targeted" six states for its ERA Countdown year, including Florida, Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, Virginia, and Oklahoma. Realizing proponents needed a national strategy and, further, that "when one state ratified," the "experience and knowledge" garnered by NOW state workers was lost as those workers dispersed, president of NOW Eleanor Smeal sent out a nationwide call for experienced volunteers to work in the targeted states for the final eighteen months of the campaign. In 2007, Oklahoma proponent Junetta Davis remembered she had been touched by "all of these wonderful women from across the country who came into Oklahoma to help us try to ratify." In early 1981, Smeal phoned ERA activist and grandmother Ruth Adams, who had led the successful Indiana ratification effort in 1977. Smeal asked Adams if she

[80] Marcus (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview."

would volunteer to work in Oklahoma for the final year and a half. Adams agreed, first visiting Oklahoma in May, 1981, and removing to the Sooner state two months later to head NOW's Oklahoma campaign.[81]

With the advent of a large, national pro-ERA presence into Oklahoma, it seemed state feminists might finally have the resources and support needed to push ratification through the legislature. In response to NOW and other national groups' call for workers, women and men came to Oklahoma from across the country, some volunteering for the full eighteen months, some for shorter periods. Between July 1981 and February 1982, NOW opened ERA Countdown offices in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Norman, and Pawhuska, "a key district." NOW staff included approximately fifty core workers, both volunteers and paid staff, with both groups including people from Oklahoma and from out of state. Those key staffers worked full time, putting in fourteen hour days, often seven days a week. Roughly two hundred part-time workers supplemented the core group. NOW generated support from local ratificationist groups' lists of "about 35,000 names [with] about 2,000 key staff" of ERA proponents within the state. Those 35,000 people were the backbone of NOW's Oklahoma campaign, staffing phone banks, leafleting districts, and

[81] For the NOW targeted states as well as Smeal's "call" for NOW workers, including Ruth Adams, see Georgia Dullea, "Women Give Up Careers To Crusade for Equality : Campaign Pressed in 6 States Significance of the Deadline A Memorial to Her Mother Decision Was a Joint One," *New York Times (1857-Current file)*, November 8, 1981, http://www.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/; See also Mary Johnson (pseud.), "Unpublished interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma for Smeal's realization that the experienced and successful workers should be employed in unratified states and also for Adam's history of moving to Oklahoma to head NOW's final effort; For Junetta Davis quote see Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*.

attending rallies, among other efforts. With the addition of those workers, NOW had contacts and organizational endeavors in from sixty-five to eighty Oklahoma cities and towns. However, the majority of those workers and contacts were not NOW members; instead they came together to work for the ERA effort under NOW's aegis. In addition, NOW had spent $200,000 on the Oklahoma Countdown campaign as of January, 1982. The money, experienced staff, logistic, and other support provided by NOW and other national organizations during the final campaign bolstered the efforts of local proponents, filling gaps in the essential elements required to assure ratification.[82]

Unfortunately for both local and national ERA proponents, the diverse ratification organizations involved suffered frustrating problems of communication, infighting, and disunity at times throughout the ten-year struggle, including during the final Countdown drive. Within Oklahoma, feminists experienced problems internal to proponent groups and between state organizations. As one proponent put it, state ratificationists "never could agree on a single strategy" and "[e]very group thought it ought to be in on" each decision made. ERA activists also spoke of "jealousy and power struggles" that occurred among state proponent leaders. Similar troubles developed between national and state feminists. As early as 1973, after national groups provided local leaders with advice on coalition building, one prominent state ratificationist

[82] Johnson (pseud.), "Unpublished interview," 1982.

thought the national leaders "didn't really understand Oklahoma and . . . some of their organizing plans weren't the right ones." Her thinking proved prophetic. In conjunction with heightened tensions between a number of state politicians and proponents during the latter years of the campaign, each of these problems certainly lessened ERA advocates' ability to wage an effective ratification fight.[83]

One example of misunderstandings and tension between a national organization and its Oklahoma affiliate occurred in 1978. In that year, the national LWV raised one million dollars to support ratification efforts in four states, Illinois, Florida, North Carolina, and Oklahoma. OK-ERA was the Oklahoma coalition group at that time and included the "League, AAUW, Common Cause, BPW, ACLU, UMW, [and] CWU" among other groups. Interviewed in 1979, an Oklahoma LWV staffer recalled that the state League had been promised a portion of the million dollars and asked by the national LWV to send in a budget, which the state League did, requesting $100,000.00 for their ratification effort. Further the Oklahoma LWV, in conjunction with OK-ERA, spent at least part of the promised funds, then "sent in the vouchers, but got no money." The Oklahoma worker explained that by February, 1979, "only about $6500" had been given to the state, but she thought that the Oklahoma League might "eventually" receive around $12,000.00. Moreover, several of the state workers were embittered over the fact that others of the targeted states received funds in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. In

[83] Blaze (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," March 9, 1982.

attempting to explain why Oklahoma failed to receive funding, state LWV personnel reasoned: "Apparently, the Oklahoma organization is one of the best in the country" and that the national office did not "know what to do when there is a well-functioning organization" as the national office was "accustomed to planning it all from Washington." According to state staffers, the national LWV hired "paid political consultants" who visited Oklahoma for "a few days," but whose high salaries then were charged to the state League. In addition, national workers came into the state, bypassed the state proponent organizations, and attempted to organize pro-ERA efforts by contacting local "community leaders and newspaper people." However, state Leaguers believed the national staffers "often did more harm than good by talking to the wrong people at the wrong time."[84]

Other troubles included further rivalries and miscommunication between organizations. For example, Ruth Brown related that national leaders at the 1981 NOW Oklahoma convention gave the impression "the local people have been floundering" and that the ratification effort was "getting on its feet only . . . after the national people have come in." Further, at an Oklahoma City rally for the kickoff of the ERA Countdown Campaign attended by representatives and leaders of state organizations including OK-ERA, OKWPC, AFL-CIO, and LWV, national NOW chair Eleanor Smeal gave a rousing ratification speech and then,

[84] "League of Women Voters to Spend 1 Million in Equal-Rights Campaign," *New York Times (1857-Current file)*, May 7, 1978, http://www.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/; Connie Blaze (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, February 5, 1979, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

"in a rather patronizing way," asked the local groups "what they plan to do to help," which irritated and humiliated local leaders. In a letter dated January 14, 1982, and copied to Smeal, the NWPC, and the national office of ERAmerica, OKWPC chair Wanda Jo Peltier wrote of her disappointment over the lack of cooperation between proponent organizations. The OKWPC chair stated to NOW's Ruth Adams and Ann Savage, head of OK-ERA, that Peltier was "dismay[ed] that the flow of information during the ERA . . . campaign has all gone one way – from us to you." Peltier then listed several instances of resources shared with and work done for NOW during the campaign. In addition, the OKWPC chair accused NOW and OK-ERA of "publicly snub[bing] the Caucus on several occasions." Of the four occasions listed, perhaps the most telling two were that Peltier was left off the invitation list for "a reception for full-time ERA workers" as well as excluded from a press conference at the state capitol "at which you displayed the array of leaders of the ERA effort in Oklahoma" while Peltier was present. She concluded "[i]f women are to be a strong political force, they simply must work together and share information."[85]

Numerous other examples of infighting and disunity existed both between local and national organizations located in the state and within state organizations. Differences in approach and strategy concerning the Countdown

[85] Brown, "Unpublished notes - NOW 1981 Oklahoma state convention."; Ruth Murray Brown, "Unpublished notes - ERA Countdown Rally, Lincoln Plaza, Oklahoma City," July 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton to Ruth Adams and Ann Savage, "Dear Ruth and Ann," typed, January 14, 1982, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 13, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

Campaign, in particular, contributed to the unintended slights, bickering over resources, and territorial clashes that ensued. Like the North Carolina, Florida, and Illinois campaigns, Oklahoma proponents struggled "with NOW's sectarian refusal to make this final push a genuine team effort." In spite of the tensions during the final campaign months, proponents in 1982 believed fervently they would triumph. Many Oklahoma feminists had worked for ratification throughout the ten year campaign, becoming experienced and savvy political operatives in the process, at the same time developing state organizations that adapted to the evolving needs of the campaign. With the influx of knowledgeable national leaders and workers as well as national funding, diligent and dedicated Oklahoma proponents believed the final push could win the struggle. Moreover, Oklahoma ratificationists in early June 1982 rallied over 10,000 activists at the state capitol in "an impressive river of white" to lobby the governor to call a special legislative session to reconsider the amendment.[86]

Despite their fervor and heartfelt support for a cause amendment activists believed in deeply, Oklahoma's political and social culture worked against feminists and the ERA. In addition, the problems among proponent organizations, in conjunction with national NOW's entry into the state just six

[86] For disagreements between ratificationist organizations in North Carolina see Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 114. See also Mathews and De Hart fn54, 255-256 for those tensions, including that "[s]imilar difficulties were reported in Florida and Oklahoma. . . ."; For the Illinois experience see, for example, Jane J. Mansbridge, "Organizing for the ERA: Cracks in the Facade of Unity," in *Women, Politics, and Change*, ed. Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990), 323-338, and Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, 136-137 (*Why We Lost the ERA* page references courtesy Mathews and De Hart, fn54, 256); Randy Ellis, "ERA Activists Rally for Special Legislative Session," *The Daily Oklahoman*, June 7, 1982, 1. The lobbying effort failed as Governor Nigh did not convene a special session in 1982.

months before the final legislative vote on ratification, showed that both state and national ratificationists neither planned nor organized well. Far worse, they failed to understand and critically underestimated their opponents, which assisted the establishment of an efficient and viable ratification countermovement. However, the rise of a capable and resourceful state and national antiratification faction was a phenomenon that, for the majority of feminists, was both inexplicable and unforeseeable given the national mood, particularly during the early years of the ERA campaign. As in the rest of the nation, ratification in Oklahoma faced daunting obstacles that grew over the decade, making it likely the optimum moment for state ratification occurred early in the struggle.

As previous historians have noted, a lasting impact of the second wave women's movement and of the ERA campaign has been a broadening awareness of women's issues, a deepening involvement of women in local, state, and national politics, and great strides in national and state laws equalizing opportunity between the sexes. In 1982, one Oklahoma NOW leader related that a state legislator complained to her that he could no longer vote the "way he thought best" for his district. The legislator blamed the ERA campaign for his having "to listen to constituents I've never had to listen to before." The lawmaker's odd complaint reflects the lasting legacy of the ratificationists' struggles. Despite ERA's failure to pass, the fight over ratification of the Equal

Rights Amendment fostered an enduring expansion of citizens' voices raised in support of women's issues.[87]

[87] See, for example, Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960*, 410-411 and Winifred D Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 201-202; For the story of the Oklahoma politician who had now to "listen to his constituents" see Johnson (pseud.), "Unpublished interview."

Chapter Three

Summoning God's Forces : Crusaders against the ERA

In March, 1972, conservative Ann Patterson and other like-minded Oklahoma women halted the ERA in the state's House of Representatives. Shortly after that victory, Patterson and her colleagues formed the antiratification organization Women for Responsible Legislation (WRL), choosing that "unwieldy" name "because we thought the ERA was irresponsible legislation." Over the course of the next three years, the women of WRL joined with other Oklahoma political conservatives as well as with religious fundamentalists to become the vanguard of New Right conservatism within the state and the nation. In a state that often leaned to the right in its ideology and politics since statehood in 1907, the ten-year ERA battle gave voice to an apparent and increasingly dissatisfied portion of the electorate frustrated both by their previous silence and by what they saw as the dangerous and overtly liberal excesses of the 1960s and 1970s. Particularly for women, the antiratification campaign became both training ground and motivating force for a groundswell of advocates embracing traditionalist causes. Remaining firmly ensconced within the precepts of conventional ideology, Oklahoma's conservative women became the elementary force behind the state's growing and increasingly articulated traditionalism. Simultaneously, state ERA opponents' successful antiratification campaign in the 1970s and early 1980s

provided both the foundation of and impetus for an Oklahoma political realignment from Democrat to Republican.[1]

In many ways, the Oklahoma women who organized WRL mirrored their national counterparts; indeed, Oklahoma's anti-ERA activists exemplified the conservative profile that has emerged from contemporary sources and in the historical literature. Mirroring ratificationists in many ways, the majority of Oklahoma's pro-family leaders were white, middle-class, and married; many were also well educated. Rank and file state ERA opponents also were predominantly white and married. "Thirty-eight percent" of all state antiratificationists worked in their homes, while "only 22 percent" were "professionals." Like state opponent leaders, many of the rank and file were also middle-class. However, a large number of Oklahoma participants fell into lower socio-economic levels. In fact, sociologist Ruth Murray Brown found that her 1970s and 1980s' Oklahoma antifeminist interviewees "were diverse in age, educational level, . . . and type of residence – urban or rural." A perusal of those extant interviews confirms her findings. Brown also noted that the accustomed correlation of urban dwellers with liberal political and social views, and rural inhabitants with more traditional standpoints, "was more accurate" for Oklahoma during the early years of the ERA contest as she found that amendment opponents "were more likely to have been reared in rural areas (40 percent)." As Brown explained, this correlation became less visible in the latter

[1] Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, May 8, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

years of the campaign: "Although most of [Oklahoma's anti-ERA activists] are no longer rural, the religion of their rural origins is still important to them."[2]

As has been well documented in the literature and is borne out in the Oklahoma experience, religious affiliation and belief systems, especially adherence to fundamentalist doctrines, comprised two of the principal motivations for antiratificationist activism nationwide. In particular, Christian fundamentalist ideology underlay numerous Oklahomans' decisions to oppose the ERA. With a southern heritage and a citizenry that often refers to their state as the "buckle" on the "Bible Belt," many Oklahomans by tradition regularly attend houses of worship. In 1980, during the ERA drive, Oklahoma's total

[2] For demographics of anti-ERA activists see, for example, Donald T Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 221, the 1975 study of Texas anti-ERA activists: David W. Brady and Kent L. Tedin, "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Political Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement," *Social Science Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (March 1976): 564-575, and Donald G. Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 153; Ruth Murray Brown, *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), quotes and descriptions 83 and 286. A portrait of antiratificationists' income level appears from Brown's written comments included with her interview transcripts and based on Brown's descriptions of interviewees' places of residence and her written impressions. A large number of Brown's comments describe Oklahoma anti-ERA participants as belonging to lower socio-economic levels. For historical literature descriptions of age and educational levels that run slightly counter to Brown's, see, for example, Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 153, who state that ERA opponents "were a little older [and] somewhat less educated" than the often well-educated ERA proponents; and Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 221: Within a paragraph describing and comparing ERA proponents to opponents, Critchlow states: "Many ERA supporters were young," implying that anti-ERA activists were generally older than pro-ERA advocates. Critchlow also states, however, that many anti-ERA women's class backgrounds included "above-average family incomes and many had college educations and worked outside the home."; For a view of anti-ERA women's class backgrounds as including women from a widely diverse socio-economic background, and with which this study concurs, see Rebecca E. Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Temple University Press, 1987), 223, fn34: Using the divergent anti-ERA demographic descriptions of, in particular, Janet K. Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment: Conflict and the Decision Process* (New York: Longman, 1979) and Brady and Tedin, "Ladies in Pink: Religion and Political Ideology in the Anti-ERA Movement." Klatch described those studies' results for ERA opponents to be "discrepant, varying . . . from lower-middle-class . . . [to] finding [anti-ERA activists] to be from upper-middle-class backgrounds. . . ."

population was over three million, with 57.5 percent of all residents adherents of various religious bodies. Of those adherents, 65.9 percent worshiped in evangelical congregations. Or viewed another way, 37.9 percent of Oklahoma's total population in 1980 attended fundamentalist religious institutions. In addition, followers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons; LDS) constituted a large number of ERA opponents nationally, particularly after the Mormon Church publicly opposed the amendment in early 1975. In 1980, LDS members made up only 0.5 percent of the total Oklahoma population; however, they represented "9 percent" of state antiratificationists in the 1980 ERA campaign, "a percentage almost twenty times as large" as their proportion of all Sooner residents. Including LDS members, at least 38.4 percent of Oklahoma's total population in 1980 attended religious institutions whose hierarchy either opposed publicly the ERA or whose tenets ran plainly counter to both ratification and feminist goals. Most important, Ruth Brown discovered that the greatest numbers of 1980 antiratificationists came from adherents of the Churches of Christ and Baptist denominations. While, *in toto*, those two denominations represented 32.4 percent of Oklahoma's population, Brown's figures revealed the two fundamentalist sects alone contributed 60 percent of the state's ERA opponents in the antiratification movement. Along with a significant percentage of LDS women, therefore, Oklahoma's Christian evangelical church women successfully mobilized great numbers of activists in opposition to the ERA.[3]

[3] For descriptions of anti-ERA participants' religious affiliations see, for example, Ruth Murray

While later anti-ERA participants would come from the ranks of less politically seasoned Oklahomans, many of the original organizers of WRL had experience in Oklahoma politics as well as ties to the national Republican Party. From the beginning, according to WRL leader Ann Patterson, it was "obvious [ERA] was going to be a political campaign" and, since "most of us had had some experience in political campaigns," the women used techniques and strategies developed from their earlier exposure to politics. Patterson, for example, garnered her government familiarity as well as political contacts through "some lobbying" work and during her husband's 1966 candidacy against Democratic U.S. Senator Fred Harris. She later used those experiences and contacts in organizing WRL and in the anti-ERA campaign. At the time of the first ERA defeat in the Oklahoma legislature, Patterson also remained in contact with conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly, having supported Schlafly during the Illinois Republican's failed 1967 bid to become president of

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Brown, "Women Who Want to be Women," in *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), 63-80, Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 221, Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment*, 108-109, and Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 153, 175-180; For 1980 Oklahoma population and religious adherence percentages see Glenmary Research Center, "'Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1980' distributed by the Association of Religion Data Archives | Maps & Reports, Oklahoma Denominational Groups," *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/state/40_1980.asp I calculated a number of the percentages used in this study from 1980 Oklahoma figures provided by ARDA; On Mormons' participation in the ERA opposition movement see, for example, Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 217 and Neil J. Young, "'The ERA Is a Moral Issue': The Mormon Church, LDS Women, and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2007): 623-644; For the 1975 LDS public denouncement of the ERA see Ibid., 626-627; For quotes in this paragraph of 1980 percentages of LDS, Church of Christ, and Baptist ERA opponents, see Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 69, 76, 69. According to Brown, 69, Church of Christ members constituted 43 percent and Baptists constituted 17 percent of 1980 state antiratificationists. My calculation of a total 1980 LDS state adherence rate of 0.5 percent agrees with that reported in *"For a Christian America,"* 69

the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW). Eventually, Patterson became the "de facto head" of Oklahoma's antiratificationist campaign for the duration of the decade-long struggle.[4]

Another WRL founder and friend of Patterson's, Elizabeth Johnson, had been a campaign manager for at least one Oklahoma politician, was a former Oklahoma County Republican Party chair, and had been "active in politics in lots of ways" by the time of the 1972 Oklahoma House vote. According to Patterson, Johnson soon consulted South Carolinian Connie Armitage, then-president of NFRW, discussing the March, 1972 ratification attempt in Oklahoma. The WRL co-founder told Patterson that Armitage wanted the Oklahoma women to "get a state resolution opposing [ERA]" because a large number of national Republican women favored the amendment. The NFRW in 1972 officially endorsed the ERA, as did the Republican Party platform. That NFRW official endorsement ended, however, when the Republican Party withdrew its support of the amendment in its 1980 platform. According to historian Catherine Rymph, second-wave feminism and the debate over the ERA segmented the Republican Party and proved particularly divisive among Republican women at the national level. The Oklahoma women's continued support of and connection to Schlafly, together with Armitage's association with

[4] Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," May 8, 1982; Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 23, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For Schlafly's failed bid to become NFRW president see Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 219. According to Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 61, fn 2, Patterson was "at the meeting" that took place immediately after Phyllis Schlafly's failed 1967 bid to become the president of NFRW.

Oklahoma's WRL leaders, illustrates that segmentation among female Republican leaders of the time and heralds the growing influence of conservative women in the NFRW and the Republican Party. This evidence also highlights ties that existed before the ERA decade between Oklahoma's conservative political women and their countrywide counterparts, including national leaders.[5]

The inauguration of the state's antiratification movement took place in 1972 with the first Oklahoma legislative vote on ERA. After reading a Thursday, March 23, newspaper front page article detailing the U.S. Senate approval of the ERA, Ann Patterson phoned a friend and "raised a question about [the amendment]." When the state Senate passed the resolution that same day, Patterson and her friend began phoning other like-minded Oklahomans, although those friends and acquaintances "didn't think it [the ERA] was much of a problem." Through mutual acquaintances, Patterson contacted OU Professor of Social Work Lennie-Marie Tolliver the next day and, on Saturday morning, they met to discuss options to delay ERA adoption by the House. According to Patterson, "At that point, we had no position, we just thought it [the ERA] should be questioned." On Sunday evening, she also phoned a state House of

[5] Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," May 8, 1982. The name "Elizabeth Johnson" is a pseudonym; For Armitage's two terms as NFRW president see "National Federation of Republican Women," http://www.nfrw.org/aboutnfrw/history/convention.htm; For the segmentation of Republican women see, for example, 81, 203, 217, and 228 in Catherine E. Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage Through the Rise of the New Right* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006), http://www.netlibrary.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/Reader/. See again Rymph, *Republican* Women, 185 and "The Rise of the New Right," 213-238, for an explanation of the divisiveness of both second-wave feminism and the ERA for Republican women.

Representatives Democratic member and enlisted his aid to "hold it [the ERA resolution] up in the Rules Committee." Receiving a largely unsupportive response to many of their phone calls, the women on Saturday decided to send out a press release, which appeared in *The Daily Oklahoman* the following Monday, March 27. The article stated, "A group of women have organized to fight for hearings on the Equal Rights for Women Amendment" and identified "Mrs. Pat J. Patterson" (Ann Patterson's married name) as the group's leader. The article also relayed Patterson's concern that the state Senate had "hastily passed" the amendment and that she "hope[d] to ward off a similar happening" in the House.[6]

When Patterson and her friends lobbied the House on that Monday, they visited Tulsa District Democrat Representative John W. McCune's office. McCune asked: "Where have you ladies been?" The Representative then showed the women an unfavorable ratification editorial written "by [conservative columnist] Patrick Buchanan [and that was] based on the Congressional debates." According to Patterson, Buchanan's editorial "was the first written piece of information [on the ERA] I had seen." As noted previously, Patterson and her colleagues' lobbying efforts succeeded in delaying and then defeating the amendment in the subsequent Wednesday, March 29 House vote. In doing

[6] Ann Patterson, "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript of recording, November 18, 1978, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," March 23, 1982; "Women to Ask for Hearings," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 27, 1972, 24.

so, the conservative women ultimately halted an almost certain 1972 ERA ratification in Oklahoma.[7]

Concerned about the essentially unopposed amendment ratification by eight state legislatures within the first nine days after Congress sent the ERA to the states and apprehensive about possible subsequent hasty amendment approval in unratified states, Patterson phoned Phyllis Schlafly "after we had defeated the ERA here" and asked Schlafly for the "names of people on [*sic*] other [unratified] states to call . . . to warn them of the issue." Receiving

[7] Patterson, "Unpublished personal interview," November 18, 1978; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - John W. McCune," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; "Biography « Patrick J. Buchanan," http://buchanan.org/blog/biography; Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," March 23, 1982; Both the contemporary and the historical literature credit Phyllis Schlafly and her February, 1972 issue of the *Phyllis Schlafly Report* (titled "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?") as the initial galvanizing forces behind the antiratification grassroots movement. While both Schlafly and that *Report* unquestionably played prodigious and integral roles in bringing to life and organizing the anti-ERA movement across the states and in preventing ratification nationally, in the specific Oklahoma defeat of March, 1972 and contrary to a portion of the previous literature, the February *Report* failed to make an appearance, while Schlafly at that time seems to have played a minor and supporting role. Specifically, Ruth Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 29, stated that the February, 1972, *Phyllis Schlafly Report* "had already arrived in the homes of several women . . . in Oklahoma, including Ann Patterson." In the last four lines of the same paragraph, Brown used an ambiguous Patterson quote on the subject (a quote that is not included in the Brown transcripts in my possession). Taken in conjunction, these two statements inadvertently implied that Schlafly's February *Report* motivated Patterson's move to slow the ERA in the Oklahoma House. In addition, historian Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 218, stated: "Schlafly received a phone call from an excited subscriber in Oklahoma, Ann Patterson, who told her that the Oklahoma state legislature had defeated ERA after her report had been circulated to them." No direct evidence accompanied that Critchlow statement. In contrast, at least two instances of direct Patterson quotes (used above within the body of this study) from Brown's transcript of her November 18, 1978 interview with Patterson make clear that Patterson had not yet read the February, 1972 Schlafly *Report* when Patterson and others lobbied the Oklahoma House on Monday, March 27, 1972. Further confirmation comes again from Ruth Murray Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown 'Chronology - Pro-Family Movement'," unpublished (Norman, Oklahoma, undated), Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. In her "Chronology," Brown wrote about Patterson's role in the delay, then defeat, of the March, 1972 ERA ratification by the Oklahoma House, stating: "Ann Patterson hastily asked [the Democratic Representative] to hold it up in the House for a day or so [*sic*] that they could look at it. At the time, she [Patterson] had no infor[mation] and had not decided to oppose it, but wanted to wait and see."

Schlafly's list of names on Friday, March 31, Patterson "spent all weekend phoning them," calling "twenty-seven or twenty-eight states." Patterson stated the result was that "[w]e were able to stop or slow down all of them at the time, although some ratified later."[8]

Furthermore, the women Patterson phoned that weekend included Schlafly's nationwide contacts from her failed 1967 NFRW presidential election, women who were politically experienced and active. According to historian Donald Critchlow, Schlafly had "gathered a core of supporters" from the 1967 NFRW election. Moreover, as political scientist Jane J. Mansbridge described them, these "highly committed conservative subscribers" represented the heart of the Illinois conservative's *Phyllis Schlafly Reports* mailing list, again including Patterson and at least one other early anti-ERA Oklahoma woman. These *Report* subscribers provided the nucleus of the state leadership for the national STOP ERA movement after the second official meeting, which was also the "first national conference," of that umbrella organization held September, 1972, in St. Louis, Missouri. According to Patterson, the women she met at that meeting and later worked with "took leadership in opposing the ERA . . . ."

[8] For the history of ratification see Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment*, 2; For "after we defeated," "spent all weekend phoning them," "twenty-seven . . . states," and "we were able to stop . . . ." quotes see Patterson, "Unpublished personal interview," November 18, 1978; For "names of people. . . ." quote see Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 1977, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Parts also related and quoted in Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 30.

Further, “they were very intelligent, [and] well informed on issues, . . .” In each of the states, “the leadership has had some political experience.”[9]

Within that brief span of eleven days in late March and early April, 1972, Patterson and her Oklahoma colleagues dealt the amendment its first defeat and facilitated the other defeats or delays of ratification in states across the nation. Furthermore, those Oklahomans’ accomplishments, particularly Patterson’s phone calls, helped lay the groundwork for the national STOP ERA movement and the political ascendancy of conservatives within the state and, for twenty of the next twenty-eight years, the nation.

Much of the historical literature on the STOP ERA movement provides solid evidence of the grassroots nature of the conservative association. One example is Critchlow’s *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism* in which the author describes a cohort of antiratificationists who “came to the movement as political novices” and flavored their political participation with displays of femininity and the exchange of recipes. An analysis by political scientist Janet K. Boles in *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment* argued that opponents’

[9] For “took leadership,” “very intelligent,” and “leadership has had political experience” quotes see Patterson, “Unpublished telephone interview,” October, 1977; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 160-161 and 219, quotes 161, 219. Critchlow also stated, 187, “the nearly 3,000 women who had supported her [Schlafly] at the NFRW convention, . . .” Regarding the formation of STOP ERA, Critchlow stated, 219, that the STOP ERA “national campaign against ERA began on July 7, 1972” at a meeting Schlafly had called of “Illinois supporters.” However, he continued “[t]he first national conference of STOP ERA” was the September, 1972 meeting.; Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 174; Ann Patterson, “Unpublished telephone interview,” interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 7, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

political undertakings were “less of an organized group activity than . . . a series of actions by individuals.”[10]

While the Oklahoma experience provides evidence in support of these and many other conclusions from the historical literature, a different reading of primary sources simultaneously suggests the issue is more subtle and complex. A grassroots movement it was. However, it remained thus precisely because the majority of the antiratificationists involved agreed, whether consciously or subconsciously, to valorize Phyllis Schlafly as their mentor and guide. At the same time, the day-to-day workers refused to position themselves in the forefront of the movement, due to personal and cultural norms within their social sphere or from a true belief in the greater importance of their cause. Schlafly encouraged this type of organization, one in which she would be the national spokesperson and one over which she would retain control, while the multitude of STOP ERA workers provided visible testimony of the grassroots character of the movement.

STOP ERA epitomized a perfect symbiotic relationship between Schlafly and the women who formed the largest part of the organization. Each side fulfilled an interdependent role that allowed Schlafly to remain, as one conservative Oklahoman put it, “liv[ing] for politics and nothing else” and that also permitted her supporters to stay in the background. At the March, 1979, Western States Pro-Family Rally, held in Boise, Idaho and at which Schlafly

[10] Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 223; Boles, *The Politics of the Equal Rights Amendment*, 79.

spoke, one female attendee from Utah commented that her state's Eagle Forum members "understand that Phyllis doesn't really recommend for states to organize state-wide organizations [and that Schlafly] prefers to keep it national to avoid prima donnas." Another antifeminist from Washington state, while also attending the Western States Rally, relayed that she was "going to try to organize the state, but Phyllis discourages it."[11]

Another, even more telling, episode illustrating Schlafly's desire to control the movement occurred in 1979. At a well-publicized debate in Norman, Oklahoma, Ann Patterson stepped in (for the absent anti-ERA Oklahoma attorney Lana Tyree) to be Schlafly's second opposite "former president" of NOW Karen DeCrow. Held at the University of Oklahoma's Law Center "before a standing-room only crowd," Schlafly's concern over regulating the anti forces' interaction with the media became apparent. Two days after the debate, Patterson phoned sociologist Ruth Brown, who had attended the event, and asked Brown for "reassurance" that Patterson "had done all right." In addition to having participation in the debate thrust on her at the last moment, another source of Patterson's nervousness stemmed from Schlafly's reluctance to have Patterson join her at the podium. When other Oklahoma antiratificationists

[11] Emilio Wallace (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, May 25, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Cynthia Osgood (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 24, 1979, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Jeanne Kraft (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 24, 1979, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

insisted Patterson appear alongside the Illinois leader, Patterson told Brown that "Phyllis really had no choice then."[12]

At the time of the law school debate, Patterson had founded and directed WRL as well as worked for STOP ERA, Eagle Forum, and other antiratificationist and pro-family groups in Oklahoma for seven years in addition to her previous campaign and political activism experience. During those seven years, she had debated pro-ERA speakers an untold number of times and had made frequent appearances on statewide television and radio programs as well as had interactions with the print media. In brief, by 1979, Patterson was a veteran campaigner. In the same phone conversation with Brown, however, Patterson was quick to note, "It is not that Phyllis hogs the limelight, it's just that she prefers to deal with the media herself, so that she can say the right things." Conversely, Patterson also told Brown that the state leader had "a feeling that Schlafly usurps [Patterson's] position sometimes, with [the] media."[13]

These examples illustrate Schlafly's desire to have control over states' pro-family activists and members of the various organizations, including the amorphous and supervisory group STOP ERA, particularly during public appearances and with the media. Behind the scenes, that control seemed

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[12] Jane Davenport, "Schlafly, DeCrow Lock Horns Debating Effects of ERA: Ex-NOW Head Cites 'Discriminatory' Laws, Foe Stresses States' Rights," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 20, 1979, 9; Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, January 21, 1979, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

[13] Ibid., January 21, 1979.

more relaxed as witnessed by Patterson's observation in May, 1982, that "Phyllis probably helped more in other states. I don't want to minimize her help and counsel, but we were ahead of other states here, so we didn't need her help so much." Two months earlier Patterson had noted, "Phyllis does ask me advice sometimes, about various things. We coordinate a lot." Patterson's nervousness at the Law School debate may have stemmed from anxiety over being put in the spotlight at the last minute and having to speak publicly in front of her leader, Schlafly. The pressure to perform well in front of the poised and confident national head of STOP ERA may have overwhelmed Patterson.[14]

At the same time, the state leader's revealing phone call to Ruth Brown speaks of Patterson's need for assurance from a non-STOP ERA source. Patterson probably felt secure in asking Brown's opinion because Brown was an outsider. Patterson could not turn to her peers within the state, for instance the leaders of Women Who Want to be Women (WWWW) or to others within STOP ERA, because doing so might cause those activists to feel Patterson was denigrating Schlafly in some way or might lessen Patterson's leadership capacity in their eyes. Perhaps, too, Patterson was anxious that Schlafly might feel the state leader would supplant Schlafly in the spotlight. Patterson's position, as stated above, did not officially exist due to the organizational structure of STOP ERA. Although the title "state chair" or "state chairman" was often used among pro-family groups' members, as a top-down association

[14] Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," May 8, 1982; Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," March 7, 1982.

STOP ERA recognized no statewide chapters nor statewide leaders, at least within Oklahoma. Schlafly remained the organization's visible, vocal, and only official leader.[15]

However, the organizational structure of the STOP ERA movement often placed state leaders in an untenable and frustrating position. As highly-placed lieutenants in the antiratification struggle, women like Patterson had to possess the intelligence, bureaucratic capabilities, and instincts of clever administrators. In addition, their political acumen grew over the course of the ERA decade. STOP ERA's expectations of state leaders asked that they undertake supervisory responsibilities and shoulder the leadership burdens inherent to their situations. Simultaneously, STOP ERA called on state leaders to reject publicly that they were leaders. While this stratagem helped to establish and perpetuate the organization's desire to be viewed as a grassroots movement, it also required those women who wielded state authority to keep unrecognized, and deny to themselves, their political expertise and supervisory talent. Moreover, these strictures allowed Schlafly to retain control of the movement.

[15] Patterson, "Unpublished personal interview," November 18, 1978: According to Patterson, "STOP ERA and Eagle Forum are really separate, although I suppose that I am state chairman of STOP ERA in Oklahoma" and "Phyllis has pretty much directed STOP ERA in each state, although the women who headed them up were politically oriented and perfectly capable, but she [Schlafly] has been the clearinghouse for info[rmation]."; *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 219, explains the founding of STOP ERA at Schlafly's September 26, 1972 St. Louis meeting of Eagle Forum members and that, during that meeting, "it was decided to organize under a national coordinating committee called STOP ERA, . . ." Further, the monograph also contends, 220, that "Schlafly appointed state directors [of STOP ERA], but state organizations developed their own campaign tactics and raised their own funds." Within the same paragraph, Critchlow quotes Schlafly as saying "STOP ERA is the 'most loosely organized organization you will ever be associated with.'" It is my contention that Schlafly purposefully kept the organizational structure loose, both to fit her own desires and, perhaps serendipitously but fortunately as it turned out, to fit the ideology of STOP ERA's membership.

Further, Patterson's words reveal the conflict inherent within STOP ERA's organizational structure. For example, the Oklahoma leader showed her resentment and frustration when she told Ruth Brown that "Schlafly usurps [Patterson's] position." Patterson then contradicted herself with the statement that Schlafly did not "hog the limelight." Patterson reclaimed a portion of her authority, however, in telling Brown that Schlafly privately "does ask me advice sometimes." Together with the comments Brown garnered from the Utah and Washington State antiratificationists, Patterson's ambivalent statements paint a portrait of pro-family state leaders who at times struggled with, and perhaps felt disappointment in, their appointed roles. State leaders, however, skillfully executed those roles, perhaps in the belief that the greater cause of halting ratification outweighed personal gratification. In doing so, state leaders mimicked the movement's rank and file by not presenting obstacles to Schlafly's dominant position and by staying within the precepts of their cultural norms – women's proper place.

Thus, on the opposite side of antiratificationists' collaborative relationship, Patterson and other state leaders along with the rank and file women of STOP ERA seemed more than willing to let Schlafly be the principal representative in the anti-amendment movement, while they remained in the background. Whether anti-ERA individuals identified themselves with an organized group, such as STOP ERA, WWWW, or WRL, Oklahomans often emphasized that they belonged to a grassroots movement, as though they

obtained heightened legitimacy through the use of the appellation or as reinforcement of antiratificationists' belief in their apolitical and private roots. Tulsa resident Lorene Maddox, for example, wrote to Governor David Boren in 1977, urging him to oppose the ERA. She ended her letter with what amounted to a warning: "Don't underestimate this grassroots movement." Under Schlafly's guidance, all echelons of STOP ERA's workers carried out the well-directed campaign, not as blind and lifeless sheep, but vigorously and with dedication in order to defend a belief system shaped by the cultural norms within which they were raised and lived. Many of Oklahoma's female antiratificationists needed and wanted Schlafly as their visible leader because Schlafly's willingness to be the national spokesperson meant that the day-to-day workers could remain comfortably within their prescribed beliefs. As one Oklahoma leader put it while referring to workers at an antifeminist state capitol Bread Day, "They all come and bring their bread, and nobody bickers and carries on about who's getting the glory." Any earthly "glory" to be had ultimately would go to Schlafly.[16]

[16] By the mid to latter years of the campaign, capturing the title of "grassroots" became desirable for both pro and anti –ERA forces in Oklahoma. Repeated references by pro-ERA activists in Ruth Brown's interviews make clear that the state's ratificationists were concerned with presenting a large proponent grassroots movement to legislators and the media. In like manner, statements from Brown's interviews with antiratificationists also provides evidence that anti forces believed they represented the true grassroots Oklahoma movement; Lorene Maddox, "Lorene Maddox to David Boren," June 21, 1977, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Joanna Hargrove (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 9, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

Moreover, both the historical literature and primary sources reveal antifeminists' deeply embedded traditional self-image. For example, the exchange of recipes mentioned in Critchlow's *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, the "thank you" and Christmas cards sent to state legislators and other state government officials, and those "Bread Days at the Capitol" all reinforced women's conventional roles. Similar to the Oklahoma experience, historians Mathews and De Hart found for North Carolina's antiratificationists that "[t]he relationship with 'their legislators' was a formal one of deferential respect." In addition, historian Neil J. Young's study of Mormon women reveals much the same thought process as that encountered in Oklahoma. Young found that antiratificationist women of the Latter Day Saints, "[i]n fighting against women's rights in the 1970s, outwardly revealed to each other their internal acceptance of the church's teachings about proper gender roles, male-female relations, and the submission of women." In their efforts against the amendment, Oklahoma women reinforced and fulfilled their beliefs about women's place within society and the family and often did so under the aegis of STOP ERA, an organization that encouraged and facilitated the wish by state female antifeminists to stay within the requirements of that same ideology. Simultaneously, STOP ERA and its national leader accommodated the desire of many Oklahoma antiratificationists that they not be viewed, or view themselves, as political and public actors – a synergistic relationship indeed.[17]

[17] For Oklahoma STOP ERA urging its members to send "thank you" and Christmas cards to state officials and lawmakers see Oklahoma STOP ERA P.E.C. to Dear Friends, "OKLAHOMA

Although ideas of women's special role within society shaped the actions and ideology of Oklahoma's antifeminists, at the same time these women felt very keenly their rights as Americans, including the right to express their beliefs concerning the amendment. Like their nationwide counterparts, state antiratificationists therefore challenged the ERA and its proponents over a wide variety of issues. Often made aware of traditionalist objections through Phyllis Schlafly's various efforts, the print media of other anti-amendment organizations, and local John Birch Society (JBS), Oklahoma Farm Bureau, and fundamentalist church networks, ERA opponents came to the movement through a variety of venues and for an array of reasons. One of the earliest and longest lasting objections to the amendment, and often the most diffuse in Oklahoma, was that antifeminists believed ratification spelled disaster for families and for women's place in society.

Delving deeper into that belief reveals that fear often underlay hostile interpretations both of the ERA and of feminism. Political activist and journalist Barbara Ehrenreich, for example, treated the subject fully in *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. Ehrenreich wrote that the "most compelling motive against the ERA" was economic, referring to traditionalist women's fear of losing the economic support of males. Also mirroring the Oklahoma experience, Ehrenreich found that "feminists spoke to a

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STOP E.R.A. P.E.C. - December 12, 1978," typed, December 12, 1978, 1, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 62; Young, "The ERA Is a Moral Issue," 625.

housewife's anger and frustration," while "antifeminists spoke to a housewife's fear." Other historians agree, including Mathews and De Hart. They found that antiratificationists "were concerned about support, social security, [and] their rights as housewives." Moreover, following closely upon the heels of "a general relaxing of male responsibility" in the 1960s and early 1970s, opponents thought men "now sought the Equal Rights Amendment as a way of further sloughing off social and personal responsibility." As with many women around the nation, Oklahoma's ERA antagonists objected early and continuously to the amendment because of the perceived threat it presented to their intrinsic beliefs about correct gender roles and their place within the world.[18]

As previously noted, the majority of Oklahoma antiratificationists were married and often middle-class. In a state with a high divorce rate and at a time when women who worked outside the home earned considerably less than their male counterparts while having far fewer job and educational opportunities, feminists' claims that women should break free from the constraints and supposed oppression of marriage not only fell on deaf ears but also engendered fears of poverty and desperation in the minds of many women. For women whose culture urged marriage, family, and children and for the many whose religious tenets precluded female independence, the seemingly headlong rush to the sex-neutral language of the amendment foretold a personal crisis, one in which their husbands would no longer be required to

[18] Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Anchor, 1983), 145, 148; Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 161, 171.

support them or their children. By making women the equals of men, the ERA would free men from their familial responsibilities, thus causing married women to lose their "right" to male support.[19]

In the eyes of antiratificationists, feminism championed female self-determination and mandated that women take full responsibility for themselves, including the responsibility of sex and pregnancy, which would again free men from accountability. Oklahoma's antiratificationist women saw in feminism's convictions the possibility of a wholesale male desertion of wives and children. Opponents' fear that ratification would lead to this desertion, and that men would take advantage of the amendment to do so, discloses anti-ERA female activists' fundamental distrust of men. The antiratification movement fed on that fear and distrust as well as heightened and spread both, finding a perfect venue through which to attack the ERA.

Clothed within words that speak of "protection for the family" and for women's "right" to be homemakers, rather than in blatant accusations of men's suspected perfidy, direct evidence of antifeminists' distrust of men seems to be rare. However, Oklahoma feminist Shirley Hilbert-Price in September, 2007, and March, 2009, recalled one such incident. Often debating antiratificationist Ann Patterson during the ERA campaign, Hilbert-Price recounted details of one Norman, Oklahoma, meeting. According to Hilbert-Price, only women

[19] For the state's high divorce rate see, for example, R. Claire Shannonhouse, "Family Life Is Changing, But Here to Stay : Family," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, December 12, 1982, sec. Front page, 1, 12A. At the time of this article's publication, Oklahoma had the third highest rate of divorce in the nation, 12A. The article also noted: "The divorce rate in Oklahoma has increased steadily during the past decade," 1A..

constituted the audience, although a male reporter for a Norman newspaper attended for part of the debate to gather notes and take photographs. Patterson was speaking when the reporter left the venue. Hilbert-Price recalled that Patterson, just after the reporter left, immediately changed the direction of her speech and said, "Ah. Now that that male has left the room, let's get down to business. You know these men would not support their wives if we didn't have a law that makes them support their wives." According to Hilbert-Price, Patterson then continued: "If this Equal Rights Amendment passes, that law will have to change, it will have to go off the books, and these men will not support their wives any more" and "so we've got to have those laws that make men responsible."[20]

Moreover, innumerable anti-ERA leaflets, flyers, media reports, books, and articles played on women's fear of losing their homes and husbands and were powerful motivational and recruitment tools. For example, a tri-fold pamphlet with contact information for STOP ERA in Oklahoma City and for Eagle Forum in Tulsa reinforced the connection between the ERA and men's presumed willingness to use the amendment for personal gain and freedom from family obligations. Under the large-type and bold heading, "What freedoms would be lost if ERA becomes a part of our U.S. Constitution?" the pamphlet warned:

[20] Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price, "Personal interview," interview by Jana Vogt, digital recording, March 21, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*, Spoken word compact disc, 2 vols., Oklahoma Voices (Recorded at the Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library, Oklahoma City, OK, 2007).

> **Freedom to choose to work or not to work outside the home** . . . ERA would abolish all laws that require the husband to support his family and would make the wife equally responsible for support. A woman can be forced to supply half the family support. Failure to provide this support could be used as grounds for divorce.[21]

A further example, from a flyer distributed in Oklahoma and printed with the STOP ERA logo and a contact point in Alton, Illinois, Phyllis Schlafly's hometown, also gave priority of place to the headline, "ERA WILL HURT THE FAMILY," followed by seven bulleted paragraphs. The first paragraph in essence repeated the argument that "ERA will invalidate all state laws which require a husband to support his wife." The third paragraph, however, spoke directly to middle-aged and older females, although its sentimental appeal would have aroused an emotional response in women of any age whose lives or the lives of loved ones precluded earning wages outside their homes: "ERA will deprive senior women, who have spent many years in the home as wife and mother, of their present right to be supported by their husbands, and to be provided with a home." Calculated to strike fear in the minds of all homemakers, these words certainly raised the twin demons of destitution and indigency for women with few resources and fewer job prospects, women who had spent their lives working within the home. In Oklahoma, as well as across

[21] "What is 'E.R.A.'?," undated, John Dunning Political Collection, Box 56, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original.

the nation, large numbers of homemakers responded to these visceral arguments by becoming the working backbone of the antiratification effort.[22]

Antifeminists' distrust of male inclinations aligned perfectly with a belief in the moral superiority of women. In fact, the two credos were linked inexorably, for accepting that men would more than willingly desert their wives and children exposes a concomitant belief that men were less ethical than women. As state leader Ann Patterson declared, the "morals of a nation depend on its women. . . . [while] [w]omen are necessary to keep men moral." Belief in female moral supremacy enjoys a long history within the United States. As historian Kim Nielsen discovered of 1920s' Red Scare antifeminists, their "activism . . . was part of the lineage of eighteenth-century republican motherhood." In like vein, twentieth-century ERA opponents shared this ideology both with their eighteenth-century sisters and their nineteenth-century counterparts. Specifically, historian Catherine Rymph, in part quoting historian D'Ann Campbell, argued that for the Republican Party and its conservative women, the "'special [nineteenth century] link between morality and gender roles'" remained viable throughout the first half of the twentieth century and, by the 1950s, had "revived energetically." Moreover, sociologist Rebecca Klatch described social conservative women of the New Right and social conservatism itself as "rooted in religious belief," deeming the "family to be the sacred unit of society," and "envision[ing] contemporary America in terms of moral decay."

[22] "You Can't Fool Mother Nature - STOP ERA," undated, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original.

Oklahoma antiratificationists of the 1970s displayed their belief in women's intrinsic moral authority and imagined that they, too, held a superior moral position to their husbands, indeed to all men, simply by being women. Through adherence to traditional gender roles and a belief in the inherent differences between women and men, Oklahoma's social conservative women saw themselves as saviors, battling feminists and the ERA for the survival of traditional homes and families.[23]

Although not exclusive to traditionalist religions, during the ERA campaign women and men who believed in females' moral supremacy found an outspoken expression of and devotion to that viewpoint within conservative churches. As noted previously, female LDS adherents constituted a disproportionate percentage of Oklahoma's antiratification activists. In addition, the Mormon Church had officially opposed the ERA in 1975. In September, 1978, the president of the LDS, Spencer Kimball, delivered an address to Mormon communicants through the venue of a nationwide radio broadcast. The focus of Kimball's speech was women, specifically women's place within the church, the importance of their role in the family, and their duties to society. As part of her research into the pro-family, anti-ERA movement, Ruth Brown attended one of the LDS meetings to listen to the broadcast. According to the

[23] Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," May 8, 1982; Kim E Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 52; Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage Through the Rise of the New Right*, 126. According to Rymph, the quote within my Rymph quote is from historian D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Harvard University Press, 1984), 216-217; Klatch, *Women of the New Right*, 4-5, quotes 4.

sociologist, approximately 150 Mormon women gathered to hear the address at the same location Brown chose. Several women preceded Kimball in the broadcast, speaking "well and professionally" on different aspects of women's current status and their obligations to society. Stating that three years had passed "since we had the first women's assembly of Salt Lake City," the female president of the LDS Relief Society noted also that women in 1978 were "struggling with new . . . roles." She further averred that women "have a responsibility for the moral climate of the community in which we live," making clear that an ethical society grew from women's guidance.[24]

In turn, President Kimball praised women in his speech while simultaneously reminding them of religious injunctions: "To be a righteous woman is a glorious thing in any age." Moreover, the Mormon people "have grown strong . . . because our mothers and our women are so strong." Like the previous speaker, Kimball viewed women as the moral guardians of LDS families. He also warned, however, that "the new morality strikes at the heart of the family." While he admonished unmarried women to "be chaste," he also reminded each of his listeners that "the Lord holds [married] mothers in the highest esteem." Thus, the earlier speaker and Kimball both tied women, and their stronger moral compasses, to the success of Mormon families. Further,

[24] For Kimball as president of the LDS see "Religion: Mormonism Enters a New Era," *Time*, August 7, 1978, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,948228-1,00.html; Ruth Murray Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown transcript - LDS church," unpublished (unknown, September 16, 1978), Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For the 1975 LDS public denouncement of the ERA see Young, "The ERA Is a Moral Issue," 626-627.

God had ordained "righteous" females to be society's moral authorities – with mothers in particular responsible for keeping their families and communities on an ethical path. Moreover, LDS beliefs about women's moral supremacy and women's accompanying societal obligations mirrored the tenets of other Oklahoma traditionalist religious bodies, including the Churches of Christ and Southern Baptist denominations. During the ERA campaign, those beliefs spurred large numbers of conservative women to actively engage in the fight to save America from the effects of decaying morality. Many conservative women did so from a God-ordained faith in women's superior morals.[25]

Following the precepts of their churches and the tradition of women's greater sense of ethics and decency, Oklahoma pro-family activists of the 1970s and 1980s used the idea of women's moral authority to further their political aims. Sprinkled liberally throughout the anti-ERA literature of the day, the message was loud and clear: the women of Oklahoma fought for what they believed to be the salvation of the state and the country. The defeat of the amendment would bring victory over a developing profligate, immoral, narcissistic, and indulgent citizenry, the ringleaders of whom were misguided feminists. For instance, in a 1974 letter to Oklahoma political candidates, "State Chairman" Sally Rowan Bell of HOTDOG (Housewives Organized To Defend Our Girls) averred that the organization spoke "for Oklahoma women who are at home raising their families." Further, HOTDOG "wants to preserve our social and legal order," thus the letter asked candidates to ally with the organization by

[25] Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown transcript - LDS church."

"speak[ing] positively FOR WOMANHOOD" and "Do not force this sweeping destructive legislation [the ERA] down our state throat because of a small group of malcontents." During the amendment campaign, the women of HOTDOG and their conventional Oklahoma sisters continued a long tradition of politically active females in America. Conservative Oklahoma women's activism succeeded in part because amendment opponents tapped into traditional assumptions about women's moral authority and their greater involvement with church and family. In so doing, Oklahoma's anti-ERA women influenced a large, voting constituency of males and females alike, with both groups invested in women's inherent differences from men and in keeping those differences recognized legally and adhered to culturally.[26]

As well as presenting a personal threat, antiratificationists believed the ERA would further alter the relationship between the citizenry and the federal government, heightening federal control over states and individuals alike. Based on the second section of the amendment, which stated "The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article," ERA opponents forecast a grim increase in federal authority. In the 1960s, the enlargement of federal intervention in the lives of citizens – for example President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs, the approval and enforcement of civil rights legislation, the establishment of federal funding

[26] Sally Rowan Bell to Dear Candidate, "Dear Candidate," typed, October 20, 1974, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original.

for state schools and, in particular, the 1963 U.S. Supreme Court decision banning prayer and Bible reading in schools – helped set the stage for conservatives' mistrust of what they believed to be signs of growing federal influence.[27]

Then, during the early 1970s, traditionalist Americans watched what they understood as the added erosion of individual liberties and states' rights. For example, federal implementation of school busing for desegregation in 1971, the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion while overturning state laws prohibiting the termination of pregnancies, and other Supreme Court rulings all seemed to increase the power and role of the federal government in citizens' lives. Many conservatives protested that these and other rulings were examples of judicial activism, wherein the justices decided the cases based on personal beliefs rather than on precedent or existing laws, implying that the majority of the court's justices personally embraced liberal attitudes abhorrent to many social conservatives. Additionally, the *Roe v. Wade* ruling cut to the heart of traditionalist religious tenets as well as providing, in orthodox minds, another example of society's moral disintegration. In the judgment of many conservatives of the time, the fight for women's equal rights under the ERA became linked inexorably with women's reproductive rights. And, as historians Mathews and De Hart observed, "In abortion and the ERA women could abandon their familial identity." Thus, the ERA represented both a tightening of

[27] The U.S. Supreme Court case was *School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania, et al. v. Schempp et al.*, 1963, http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/.

federal control and a further loosening of traditionalist standards at a time when a large number of Oklahoma and national conservatives believed the country recently had suffered through an inordinate escalation of both.[28]

For Oklahoma's antiratificationists, the ERA represented an increase of federal power and a meddling in citizens' lives, thereby usurping the authority of the family, state governments, and religious institutions. As Professor of Linguistics George Lakoff showed in *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, conservative Americans believe in a patriarchal family system wherein the father has ultimate authority. The responsibility of these strict, though loving, parents is to raise independent, "self-disciplin[ed]," self-reliant children who respect "legitimate authority." Further, traditionalists also follow this "Strict Father" model with respect to the national government. They see the optimum federal government, particularly as intended by the framers of the U.S. Constitution, as one that allows its citizens to attain those same qualities of character without interference in Americans' business and personal lives or the destructive mollycoddling of welfare and other federal programs. In addition, sociologist Rebecca Klatch's study of the New Right found that conservative women believed the "Founding Fathers established the Constitution both to check mob rule and in recognition of the dangers of unrestrained governmental power, to limit the scope of central government." Oklahoma ERA opponents fit well Lakoff and Klatch's descriptions of conservatives in that the state's antiratificationists found the relationship

[28] Mathews and De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA*, 159.

between the proposed amendment and the widening of federal powers to be both viable and a threat.[29]

During the amendment decade, Oklahomans repeatedly illustrated their antistatist fervor through speeches, letters, flyers, and other means. State opponents, moreover, often connected intuitively the issues of morality, intrusion by government, and destruction of the family. For instance, Mae Phelps – a self-described "strong disciplinarian" – participated actively in the antiratification campaign. Phelps complained that a local day care center "had to be federally inspected and approved," making her disapproval of federal interference apparent. She then combined her opposition to national government intrusion with fears of weakening morality and a declining nation: "How long can America stand with the morals and what is happening? Aren't we going to have to make some changes to survive at all?" Her agitation continued: "you'll have to have a stamp on your hand or your forehead before you can go in and buy your groceries," merging the subjects of government control and the downfall of America with the biblical mark of the Antichrist. In a further example, a STOP ERA flyer distributed in Oklahoma highlighted the sentence, "Don't Let ERA Give the Feds More Power." Prominently displayed under that caption, a large cartoon of a six-armed octopus strangling "John Q. Public" effectively tied the ERA to the growth of federal control. The six arms wrapped around the neck of "John Q. Public" displayed the titles "ERA,"

[29] George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 66; Klatch, *Women of the New Right*, 85.

"Federal Spending Power," "Federal Courts," "OSHA," "HEW," and "Internal Revenue Service." Among other ominous warnings, the flyer cautioned readers that the "ERA doesn't even mention women! It just puts 'sex' and more Federal 'power' in the Constitution."[30]

A final example is a 1976 editorial from a rural Oklahoma town newspaper that warned, "the whole heart of the matter is that ERA would open the way for another round of more federal control over the daily lives of people of this country. It appears to have the possibility of being the biggest federal power grab ever attempted." After linking ratification of the amendment to sharply curtailed individual rights, the editorialist finished with the caveat that the nation would not be able to recover from the harmful effects inherent in the ERA: "The U.S. has about all the Big Brother legislation it can stand and the addition of this one might be the straw that breaks the nation's back." Many Oklahomans opposed the amendment due to fears that ratification would lead to the expansion of federal power and to a stifling national interference in their daily lives. Linking ratification to that expansion and associating both with the

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[30] Mae Phelps (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, September 17, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "Don't Let ERA Give the Feds More Power," undated, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 1, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphases original. For OSHA as a federal agency established in 1970, the Occupational Safety & Health Administration, a part of the U.S. Department of Labor see "OSH Act of 1970," *UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR - Occupational Safety & Health Administration*, http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owasrch.search_form?p_doc_type=OSHACT&p_toc_level=0&p_keyvalue=&p_status=CURRENT; For HEW (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare) as a federal agency established in 1953, then renamed HHS in 1980 (Department of Health & Human Services) with a separate Department of Education created in 1979 see "Historical Highlights - HHS," *U.S. Department of Health & Human Services HHS.gov*, http://www.hhs.gov/about/hhshist.html.

destruction of American social and political life, the state's conservatives felt truly besieged by a constitutional amendment that might undermine their cherished independence and corrupt their moral code.[31]

Oklahoma ERA opponents thus felt obligated to save the state and the nation from the deleterious effects of 1960s and early 1970s' unrestrained radicalism and liberalism, with the amendment and feminism both viewed as extensions of a permissive, immoral society. Additionally, antiratificationists connected the destruction of the social order, as advocated by feminists, to the destruction of the United States. By advancing the dissolution of traditional, gendered roles for men and women, feminists were not only contributing to a reorganization of the existing social structure but also weakening both the American political system and adherence to American principles. During the ERA decade, many conservatives believed that the political liberals of the time, including feminists and others who backed the amendment, undermined the nation's stance against communism and might lead the nation into the arms of socialism. Preserving the United States from this fate became a rallying cry for scores of Oklahomans, impelling them into the antiratification movement.[32]

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[31] "Untitled editorial" (Perry Daily Journal, December 6, 1976), ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original.

[32] Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood*, 52, argues that 1920s' Red Scare antifeminists' "primary interest was the ideological and political task of protecting U.S. civilization," a civilization "built upon and [that] relied on a complex network of public and private patriarchal structures." Some fifty years later, both the ERA and its mid-century feminist proponents, in challenging patriarchy, aligned themselves with the forces that would bring about the country's downfall, at least in conservatives' eyes.

Such sentiments appear in the Oklahoma House of Representatives' ERA interim hearings in late 1972. At those hearings, female and male state antiratificationists raised their voices in concern over the perceived threat of the ERA to the security of the nation. A warning from one antifeminist that "Russia has had equal rights for women and it has failed" was seconded by another female antifeminist's avowal: "I do not want to be 'liberated' to work in factory, field, or battle – as do women in socialist countries the world over." Another opponent submitted a copy of a page allegedly taken from the "Constitution of the Soviet Socialist Republics." This "Article 122" opened with "[w]omen in the U.S.S. R. are accorded all rights on an equal footing with men." For this opponent, the words from the Russian constitution declaring that women of the U.S.S.R. had equal rights with men presented a danger to the U.S., one that needed no further explanation. Another passionate antiratificationist declared "the current trend is propelling us into irrevocable socialism" while a second affirmed just as passionately, "if you want a life like they have in the Soviet, then go there!" For each of these 1972 hearing attendees, the ERA and its guarantee of equal rights for women presented a threat to America's survival. In addition, the warnings against communist subversion in 1972 reflected a link between 1950s and 1960s' anticommunist ideology with the development of ERA opposition in Oklahoma.[33]

[33] State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings on the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution," January 10, 1973, 15, 60, 113(a), 127, 81, Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, emphases original.

Particularly during the early years of the amendment decade, a significant number of Oklahomans migrated from existing anticommunist organizations into the antiratification movement, often hailing from the John Birch Society. Moreover, the work of previous amendment historians also shows a relationship between mid-century anticommunist fervor and the later antifeminist movement, including Donald Critchlow's volume on Phyllis Schlafly. In that work, Critchlow found a deep connection between Schlafly, other anti-ERA activists, and the founding members of the Republican right with their collective Cold War-era belief in a communist threat to the United States. Further, as Rebecca Klatch discovered about social conservative women and their views on communism in particular, Marxist ideology "symbolizes a way of life diametrically opposed to the world of social conservatives, posing the extreme fear of where America is headed as she veers off the path of righteousness and morality."[34]

One Oklahoman concerned about that path was homegrown Tulsa-based evangelist Billy James Hargis, who set his anticommunist ministry firmly against feminism. Delivered with pietistic fervor, Hargis' powerful blending of Christian fundamentalism with anticommunist, antiliberal, and antifeminist rhetoric captured the minds and spirits of conservative Oklahomans. In 1951, Hargis founded the Christian Crusade (originally known

[34] For the connection between the early Oklahoma anti-ERA movement and the John Birch Society as well as other anticommunist groups see Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 44, 94, and chapter 4: 81-101; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 6, 62-88; Klatch, *Women of the New Right*, 55.

as the Christian Echoes National Ministry) "to save America from communism." Tremendously popular from the early 1950s through 1974, Hargis "at his apex" broadcast on "more than 500 radio and 250 television stations." As "one of the first evangelists to preach" on television, Hargis influenced a multitude of Americans, not least of whom were his fellow Oklahomans. By the early 1960s, Hargis broadened his interests to include politics, exhorting his followers to work in political campaigns for conservative candidates. In addition, the evangelist had "cordial ties" with Robert Welch, the founder of the John Birch Society, calling Welch "a great American patriot." Among other issues, Hargis' Christian Crusade spoke against federal intrusion in citizens' lives and, after the Republican 1994 Congressional wins, the organization "strongly supported" GOP policies. Although at first Hargis spoke to "a largely rural audience," by the 1960s "[t]he rise of the counterculture brought him more followers, who found in his national television appearances a fighting voice against liberal forces. . . ." One 2004 obituary described Hargis as believing that "Satan and the Reds had their claws deep in America's government," with the "targets of [Hargis'] daily wrath . . . homosexuals and women's libbers. . . ." The evangelist spread a message with which many conservatives in Oklahoma and elsewhere identified, that of the "imminent" destruction of the United States through the machinations of communists and liberals.[35]

[35] Glenn H. Utter and John W. Storey, *The Religious Right : A Reference Handbook*, Contemporary World Issues (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1995), 5, Bibliographic record display http://libraries.ou.edu/access.aspx?url=http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&

Sentiments mirroring Hargis' were commonplace in early ERA opponent literature and letters, such as those from the 1972 Interim hearings. A September, 1978, example, however, shows that state antiratificationists still held fears of communist subversion during the latter years of the ERA campaign. A newsletter distributed by the "Oklahoma STOP E.R.A. P.E.C. [Political Education Committee]" urged its readers to write Louisiana Congressman Gillis W. Long as the Chair of the "Subcommittee on the Rules and Organization of the House," asking Long to fight "to restore the House Internal Security Committee." According to the newsletter, "beginning in early 1973, all of America's formal defenses against internal Communist subversion were stripped away." The article then listed four separate committees and boards of the Justice Department, the Attorney General's Office, and the House that had been "abolished without so much as a vote. . . . Since then the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. have been under attack and can no longer function as they once did." Testimony to the effectiveness of these letter-writing campaigns and of the STOP ERA organization, the House resolution in question had previously "been tied up in committee for a long, long time," but a "constant barrage of letters over the past several months" caused one chair to refer the resolution to Long's subcommittee. The authors added that "a sizeable flood of letters to Mr.

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v=1&bookid=1278 An electronic book accessible through the World Wide Web. Contradicting themselves, Utter and Storey also state, 119, that Hargis founded Christian Crusade in 1948; For "apex," numbers of radio and TV stations, "rural audience," and "rise of the counterculture" quotes see Adam Bernstein, "Evangelist Billy James Hargis Dies; Spread Anti-Communist Message (washingtonpost.com)," *The Washington Post*, November 30, 2004; For "Satan and the Reds" see "Billy James Hargis," *Economist* 373, no. 8406 (December 18, 2004): 135, doi:Obituary.

Long might produce some results." Toward the end of the newsletter, the authors quoted from the Bible and asked their readers to "remember to pray [as] God gives us the formula for the healing of our nation, and we must not ignore it." The ERA opponent newsletter thus combined a fear that the nation was open to communist treason with Christian references and a gentle reminder to pray. Clearly for Hargis and STOP ERA activists alike, the threat of communist and feminist subversion to the American way of life was both real and personal. With God's help, antiratificationists believed they must undertake the rescue of their nation.[36]

Unlike ERA proponents, antiratificationist organizations within Oklahoma worked together in a noticeably seamless and harmonious manner. As an umbrella organization, the state STOP ERA included WRL, Eagle Forum, WWWW, Farm Bureau women, and other antiratification organizations, the membership of which often overlapped. Like amendment proponents, ideology and common goals bonded antiratificationists to one another. In contrast to proponent organizations, however, antifeminist groups seemingly worked well together, without the internal disharmony and strife that at times plagued ratificationists. An October, 1981, STOP ERA PEC newsletter, for instance, testifies to ERA opponents' camaraderie. Signed by four Oklahoma pro-family leaders who represented two of the largest state organizations, WRL and

[36] Oklahoma STOP ERA P.E.C. to Dear Friends, "Oklahoma STOP E.R.A. P.E.C. - September 8, 1978," typed, September 8, 1978, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 13, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1-3, quotes 1, 2, 3, emphasis original.

WWWW, the letter went out under the name STOP ERA. In addition, another newsletter from the same group referred to being sent "To Eagle Forum Members around the state," illustrating the inclusion of that organization into the fold.[37]

Furthermore, interviews with opponents also testify to the smooth inner machinery of their groups and across organizations, while proponents often spoke of inefficient communication as well as problems among state and national leaders. Antiratificationists reiterated in interviews with Ruth Brown that when they needed people to leaflet districts during state elections, opponent groups were able to deliver large numbers of activists, often with little notice. In contrast, according to one state STOP ERA leader, proponents were "killing the ERA by their behavior [and] their tactics." Moreover, "they [ERA proponents] can't always get their people out. Unless you have churches, or like you used to have PTA as a means of getting the word out, it's harder to do."[38]

In fact, at one Schlafly appearance in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which included a debate with Karen DeCrow at the University of Tulsa followed by a televised "live call-in talk show," antiratificationists felt honor bound to make certain they

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[37] Oklahoma STOP ERA P.E.C. to Dear Friends, "Oklahoma STOP E.R.A. P.E.C. - October 28, 1981," typed, October 28, 1981, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 9, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1-3; Oklahoma STOP ERA P.E.C. to Dear Friends, "Oklahoma STOP E.R.A. P.E.C. - September 8, 1978." quote 3, emphasis original.

[38] Hargrove (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," March 9, 1982.

and proponents were equally represented. According to Ann Patterson, "Phyllis [Schlafly]" had phoned Patterson to "tell her that she [Schlalfy] had promised Karen that the audience would be evenly divided." Patterson then phoned "OK ERA to let them know so that there would be some from both sides there." At the event, however, a greater number of antiratificationists appeared, so Patterson "just told the girls that some of them would have to take off their [STOP ERA] buttons and so they did, so that it would look like an even audience." The evidence suggests, therefore, that Oklahoma antiratificationists enjoyed both greater ease of mobilization and cooperated more readily in support of their goals than did proponents. Both of these attributes contributed to social conservatives' success during the amendment campaign as well as in the years that followed.[39]

While relations between the two factions at times were cordial, Oklahoma ERA opponents still occasionally circumvented their counterparts' efforts. A prime example was the state IWY conference held in Stillwater, Oklahoma in June, 1977. In a surprise move for feminists, high numbers of pro-family activists attended the state conference "[t]hanks in part to the skill and energy of" two antiratificationist leaders, "Anne Bowker of Tulsa and Diane [*sic*] Edmondson of Broken Arrow." At the time of the conference's scheduling

[39] Bob Williams, "Anti-ERA Fight 'Won,' Schlafly Says in Tulsa," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 27, 1979, 60; Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," March 7, 1982; Although anecdotal evidence of friction and misunderstandings between ERA proponents and opponents certainly exists, the Tulsa debate and both feminists and antifeminists' interview comments show that women from both sides often admired and, to use their word, "liked" one another.

in early May, Bowker and Edmondson petitioned the "national [IWY] office in Washington" to amend the rules by changing the registration deadline on the weekend of the Stillwater conference from noon Friday to the next day. In order to be eligible to vote "at Saturday's plenary session," an attendee had to be registered before the official deadline. The antiratificationist leaders appealed to the national office on the grounds that the earlier deadline "would discriminate against working women and housewives who could attend only on Saturday." National IWY officials agreed and moved the registration deadline forward one day.[40]

On that Saturday morning, busloads of antiratificationists "from all over the state" descended on the Stillwater conference, overwhelming the organizers with "well over 1000" pro-family activists. With their superior numbers, the antifeminists voted down the national IWY's core recommended resolutions, including "easily defeating" a resolution endorsing the ERA. In its stead, the conference passed a resolution opposing the "so-called Equal Rights Amendment because it is negative and unnecessary." In addition, conference attendees elected a complete pro-family, antifeminist delegation to the upcoming November, 1977 Houston national conference. The result of the Stillwater conference prompted nationally-syndicated conservative columnist James J. Kirkpatrick to assert gleefully: "In a fair fight at the Oklahoma

[40] For "thanks in part," "Bowker and Edmondson," "national office," "Saturday's session," and "would discriminate" quotes as well as the state IWY conference election of a complete anti-ERA delegation see James J. Kirkpatrick, "Homemakers Get Those Buses Rolling Over Oklahoma Libbers," *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 7, 1977, 9.

Conference of Women, the women libbers were out-maneuvered, out-thought, and out-hustled."[41]

IWY preliminary planning by Oklahoma anti-ERA activists went further and was more complete, however, than was reported in the media at the time. According to antiratificationist Glenda Mattoon, her involvement in the ERA opponent campaign before the IWY conferences consisted of talking about the amendment with friends in the Republican Women's Club. The Norman resident had not yet become an activist in the pro-family movement and, therefore, the "very pro[-ERA]" state IWY committee would not associate her name with an opponent stance. From Mattoon's discussions with GOP friends, they "knew my anti-ERA views and quickly introduced" her to Patterson, Bowker, Edmondson, and other pro-family leaders.[42]

Prior to the Stillwater conference, Mattoon applied to the state IWY coordinating committee for a position on the proposed slate of delegates. In January, 2009, she recalled that "any woman in Oklahoma" could apply. The IWY state committee reviewed the applications and "selected a slate" from

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[41] For busloads "from all over the state" with "well over 1000" quotes see Jane Menninga, "No Unity at Women's Meeting," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, June 26, 1977, sec. Women's News, 4, 10, quotes 4; For "easily defeating" and "negative and unnecessary" quotes see Patrick McCoy News-Press Staff Writer, "IWY Meeting Gets Rowdy," *Stillwater News-Press*, June 19, 1977, Sunday edition, 3; For a complete list of Oklahoma IWY delegates to the Houston meeting see "Document 139: 'Delegates to the National Women's Conference'," *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000*, 1977, http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/dp59/doc139.htm Oklahoma IWY delegates included Ann Patterson, Dianne Edmondson, Beverly Findley, Grace Haigler, Mary Helm, Glenda Mattoon, and Lennie-Marie Tolliver, among other pro-family leaders.

[42] Glenda Mattoon, "Personal interview (first)," interview by Jana Vogt, digital recording, July 9, 2008, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

among the applicants. According to Mattoon, "[i]t was expected that this slate would be accepted unanimously [at the Stillwater conference] along with all the pre-packaged resolutions as had already happened in numerous other states." In filling out her application, Mattoon "was completely honest," noting on the form that she was active in politics, had "an MA from OU, . . [had] just received my pilot's license" and was "interested in women's issues." Before the conference, the state IWY committee nominated her for Oklahoma's slate of delegates. Mattoon stated that antiratificationists at that time "thought . . . that I might be the only Anti-ERA person elected from Oklahoma if I kept a low profile [in Stillwater]." With the results of that meeting, however, Mattoon was one of a twenty-two member contingent of antifeminist Oklahoma delegates to the national conference.[43]

Another state antifeminist activist played a key role in the IWY conferences, including the Oklahoma meeting and those in other states. According to Ruth Brown, in 1976 Phyllis Schlafly "declared war" on the IWY Commission "and all its works." Brown quoted a June Eagle Forum newsletter from that year, in which the national antiratification leader proclaimed: "[W]e must take over these [IWY] conferences, and make sure they project a pro-family, pro-homemaker, pro-morality, pro-life image." Schlafly further exhorted her troops: "If you do your job right, you can make the libbers sorry they ever decided to have state conferences!" Oklahomans responded to

[43] Glenda Mattoon to Jana Vogt, "Stillwater IWY Conference," typed, January 26, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

Schlafly's call, in particular Dianne Edmondson of Broken Arrow. To carry out the antiratificationist "war" against feminists and the IWY conferences, Schlafly appointed Rosemary Thomson of Illinois as the national chair of the newly organized "International Women's Year Citizen's Review Committee." Further, Thomson "then began to recruit similar committees in the states." Edmondson became the "State Chairman" of the Oklahoma IWY Citizen's Review Committee.[44]

Edmondson then undertook to follow Schlafly's directive to do the job "right." In addition to the leadership role she played in the Oklahoma IWY conference "take over" by pro-family members, the state anti-ERA activist recorded an audio tape concerning feminists and the IWY. In that tape, she urged conservative women to attend their respective state conferences to fight the "evil that is inherent within the so-called women's liberation" movement. According to Ruth Brown, Thomson "distributed several thousand copies [of Edmondson's tape] . . . throughout the nation." In spurring pro-family women to attend state conferences across the country, Edmondson's tapes "were instrumental" in the election of antifeminists to "all or part of at least fourteen state delegations" to the national IWY conference. The Washington State IWY conference was one of the meetings affected by the Oklahoma tape. The Washington conference was held at Ellensburg, Friday through Sunday on July

[44] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 105-108, for "declared war" quote 105, for "take over [IWY] conferences" and "if you do your job right" quotes 106, emphasis Schlafly, for Citizen's Review Committee" quote 107; For Edmondson as a Broken Arrow resident and as chair of the state IWY Citizen's Review Committee see Billie Richardson, Family Living Editor, "Women's Groups Clash Over ERA Here," *Stillwater News-Press*, June 19, 1977, Sunday edition, 1.

8-10, 1977. As conservative women had done the previous month in Oklahoma, Washington antiratificationists surprised their state's IWY feminist organization with the arrival of "more than 2000" antiratificationists, and did so with one day's warning to the state IWY committee. The pro-family attendees doubled the total number of Ellensburg participants.[45]

According to a 1977 Washington IWY Coordinating Committee report titled "The Women of Ellensburg," a tape recorded by an "Oklahoma member of Eagle Forum. . . . identified as Diane [*sic*] Edmondson of Broken Arrow" became a "catalyst" behind a large number of traditionalist women attending the conference. The authors of the report stated that the Edmondson tape accused the organizers of the IWY conferences of "plan[ning] to abolish the family . . . prohibit[ing] discrimination against gays . . . and encourage[ing] federal control over every aspect of our lives." The report also asserted that Washington conservative organizations sent the Oklahoma tape around the state, with as "many as 100 people" at a time attending meetings to hear the recording.

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[45] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 107; For "more than 2000" quote see Jackie Humphries, Kittitas County correspondent, "Women's conference was invalid, they say - 'Goal not met'," *Yakima Herald-Republic*, July 11, 1977, 1; For the dates of the Washington state IWY conference see Jean Withers et al., *The Women of Ellensburg: Report of the Washington State International Women's Year Conference 1977* (State of Washington, October 1977), cover page, 1-77, Washington WOMEN'S HISTORY Consortium 1910-2010 Suffrage Centennial; WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY Digital Collections, http://consortium.washingtonhistory.org/cdm4/multi_results.php?CISOOP1=all&CISOBOX1=Oklahoma&CISOFIELD1=CISOSEARCHALL&CISOOP2=exact&CISOBOX2=IWY&CISOFIELD2=CISOSEARCHALL&CISOOP3=any&CISOBOX3=International%20Women%27s%20Year&CISOFIELD3=CISOSEARCHALL&CISOOP4=none&CISOBOX4=&CISOFIELD4=CISOSEARCHALL&CISOROOT=all&t=a; http://digitum.washingtonhistory.org/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/ellens_wshs&CISOSHOW=305&CISOPTR=465.

Further, a state Baptist radio station repeatedly played Edmondson's tape for its listeners.[46]

However, the use of the Oklahoma tape for the Ellensburg conference was not guaranteed. Washington state pro-life leader Delores Gilmore had received the Edmondson recording "about eleven days" before the Ellensburg conference. Busy with other pro-family activities, Gilmore was uncertain as to whether she wanted to get involved in the state IWY meeting and waited several days to make her decision. Eventually she "prayed to God," asking for guidance in the form of a phone call "from someone who knew more about what was going to happen at Ellensburg." Within forty-five minutes, a female friend of Gilmore's phoned. The friend was a conservative scheduled to speak at Ellensburg and who asked the pro-life leader to attend the conference. With that phone call, Gilmore decided to organize traditionalists to be present at the conference. She called a meeting of antiratificationist friends for the Sunday "before the Friday" opening of the IWY meeting. Through the hard work of the "twelve ladies" who met that Sunday in Gilmore's back yard, Christian conservatives spread the word along with the tape, which was "heard throughout the state." The efforts of Edmondson, Gilmore, and other pro-family

[46] Ibid., for "catalyst," "Oklahoma member," and for "planning . . . prohibiting . . . encouraging" quotes 12, for "100" quote and the Baptist radio station see 13.

activists bore fruit – five days after that Sunday meeting, conservatives inundated Ellensburg on the first day of the IWY Washington conference.[47]

With the unpredicted arrival of over 2000 pro-family attendees, the conference proved to be disruptive and frustrating for all concerned. The Ellensburg report authors noted that the Edmondson tape in particular "had a strong divisive tone." Ultimately, the national IWY core resolutions received "mostly no action" at the Washington conference due to the arrival of antifeminists. As for the resolution supporting ERA, conference participants failed to pass it. However, the twenty-four Washington state delegates sent to the national IWY conference supported ratification, while the four Washington IWY alternates were antiratificationists. Moreover, the Ellensburg report authors concluded that, in addition to an established conservative communication network linking churches and other traditionalist organizations as well as a "statewide mailing by the Mormon Church," the "wide exposure" in Washington of the Oklahoma tape led to the unanticipated and large turnout of Christian conservatives at the state IWY conference.[48]

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[47] For all Gilmore information, including her quotes see Dolores Mae Gilmore, "WHC Oral History Project -- Dolores Mae Gilmore Interview," interview by Mildred Andrews, transcript, May 9, , Washington WOMEN'S HISTORY Consortium 1910-2010 Suffrage Centennial; WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY Digital Collections, http://www.washingtonwomenshistory.org/themes/womensrights/oHistProj/gilmore.aspx; For "heard throughout the state" quote see Withers et al., *The Women of Ellensburg: Report of the Washington State International Women's Year Conference 1977*, 35.

[48] Ibid., for "divisive tone" 38, for delegates and alternates 29-30, "statewide mailing" 33, "wide exposure" 32; For "mostly no action" quote see United States. National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, *The Spirit of Houston: The First National Women's Conference: An Official Report to the President, the Congress and the People of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on the Observance of International Women's

Through her dedication to the pro-family movement cause and using her ingenuity, Oklahoman Dianne Edmondson played a decisive role in motivating Christian conservatives throughout the nation to defend their views at state IWY conferences. The result was the election of a significant number of anti-amendment, pro-family delegates to the national IWY. As well, ERA opponents' pre-Stillwater planning and actions, including those of Edmondson as leader of the Oklahoma pro-family IWY Citizen's Review Committee, illustrate the resourcefulness of state antiratification leaders. With thorough preparation, those leaders succeeded at Stillwater in placing a "sleeper" in the midst of an event conceived and sponsored by feminists. Not unfairly, ERA opponent leaders also used proponents' own rules of equity and inclusiveness in moving the registration deadline forward, enabling antiratificationists to carry out a psychological and media-touted rout of ratificationists at the Oklahoma conference. One pro-family leader recalled that, before the conference, opponents believed feminists "had [the meeting] stacked" because Stillwater had "a lot of pro women." Motivated by apprehension that the state IWY conference would be controlled by ERA proponents, antifeminists worked hard "to get our people out and we were surprised when we had so many more than they did!" Confounding themselves and ratificationists alike, the Oklahoma pro-family movement thus demonstrated its striking ability to summon large

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Year : for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1978), 115; For the ERA resolution's failure to pass and the divisiveness of the Washington conference see Loretta Saarinen, "Women divided on issues," *Campus Crier*, July 14, 1977, 3.

numbers of dedicated activists in support of their cause, both within the state and without.[49]

Moreover, that ability underscores a telling difference between amendment proponents and opponents within Oklahoma. As a group, opponents' commitment to the antiratification cause apparently outdistanced the commitment of proponents to ratification. Activists on each side of the issue answered Ruth Brown's ERA "campaign questionnaire," including questions asking respondents to prioritize the significance of the amendment to their lives. Those answers revealed a pronounced disparity between ratificationists and antiratificationists' view of ERA and of the importance its success or defeat held for each group. Brown discovered that while "73 percent" of opponents rated the ERA campaign "high or highest priority," only "29 percent" of proponents "gave it a similarly highest priority." These revealing statistics demonstrate that the possibility of ratification struck directly at the heart of a significant number of conservatives' lives, providing a powerful incentive to oppose actively and publicly the amendment.[50]

For the Christian conservatives who constituted the largest portion of Oklahoma's anti-ERA movement, the amendment contravened fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible, interpretations by which Christian conservatives

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[49] Interestingly, Ann Patterson told Ruth Brown that she, Patterson, "was afraid that [Edmondson] would make [an Oklahoma IWY] delegation more narrow than I [Patterson] thought it should be." For the preceding quote see Patterson, "Unpublished personal interview," November 18, 1978; For "stacked," "a lot of pro women," and "get our people out" quotes see Hargrove (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," March 9, 1982, emphasis Hargrove.

[50] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 74.

lived and viewed the world. The amendment, therefore, challenged fundamentalists' core beliefs. Many of Oklahoma's conservatives understood their duty as Christians mandated vocal and forceful opposition to the ERA. In so doing, they were carrying out God's work as well as defending their country and their families from the devastation that would be wrought by a constitutional amendment that would lead to the destruction of both. Most important, the state's Christian conservatives sought to return the state and the country to God. They discerned a twentieth-century secularization of American society that, in their eyes, presented evidence the nation was distancing itself from the supreme authority. Moreover, they believed preventing ratification would help halt this liberal drift and assist the country's return to its original path – a moral nation ruled and guided by God.

First and foremost, God lay at the center of fundamentalists' lives, a God who was known personally, but whose direction and strictures Christians obtained through the "inerrant" word of the Bible. Those literal Biblical interpretations led a large number of Oklahoma's antiratificationists to believe that the amendment represented the exact opposite of God's plan for humanity and, most important, was against God's law. In innumerable sources from the ERA decade, the pro-family movement's Christian fundamentalists left their mark. One important example is that fundamentalists decried the "secular humanism" they believed ran rampant throughout the state and the nation. A 1978 Oklahoma STOP ERA PEC newsletter, for instance, defined the term:

"What is Humanism? It is a religious movement where God is absent, prayer is scorned, and heaven is a joke." According to George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, "'[s]ecular humanism' came to be the shorthand framework for [Christian fundamentalists'] understanding" of American societal and political changes taking place in the decades since the end of World War II, particularly the liberalizing tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s. The liberal trends opposed by fundamentalists represented a wide range of recent developments, including sex education and the banning of prayer in schools, an increase of violence and sexual content in films and on television, sanctioning of homosexual lifestyles, loosened standards on dress styles, language, and pornography, an increase in young people living together without marriage, the ERA, and more. [51]

Further, many of the state's antiratificationists warned that the country's rapidly increasing secularism would bring about the downfall of the nation. In June, 1980, the "COMMITTEE FOR A CLEAN OKLAHOMA CITY," for example, avowed that "God has blessed our state and nation." The group then cautioned, "This [blessing] can only continue if we deserve to be blessed. The liberalism in our country is fast destroying our way of life." The organization listed a number of the ills of "liberalism" it felt needed to be reversed, beginning with the admonition: "We <u>DO NOT</u> need the ERA. This is Anti-God &

[51] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5, for a discussion of secular humanism see Marsden, 244-245, for "shorthand framework" quote 245; Oklahoma STOP ERA P.E.C. to Dear Friends, "Oklahoma STOP E.R.A. P.E.C. - September 8, 1978," 1-3, quote 3.

Anti-Family." In addition, references to "humanism" and to its destruction of the nation's morals and other detrimental effects are rife in Ruth Brown's interviews with antiratificationists. Moreover, many of those interviewed spoke of humanism as a new "religion," one recognized as such by the U.S. Supreme Court, and one that would supplant God in Americans' lives. In the words of a Bethany, Oklahoma, pro-family advocate: "Humanism means anti-God."[52]

Until the ERA decade, however, many fundamentalist Christians held direct church involvement in politics unacceptable. This practice precluded ministers from speaking publicly on a number of subjects, in particular denying church leaders the ability to address political issues from the pulpit. Concern over lax morals during the 1960s and 1970s, however, in conjunction with a belief that the federal government was attempting to eliminate traditional religion from Americans' lives while substituting a legalized, pluralistic secularism, spurred numerous traditionalists to shed the convention of no direct political engagement. According to historian George Marsden, the "issues of

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[52] Dee Potts, Chairman, Committee For A Clean Oklahoma City and Bart Hawkins, Co-Chairman to Rep. Atkins, "Dear Rep. Atkins," typed, June 21, 1980, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 9, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original; When fundamentalists stated that the U.S. Supreme Court recognized secular humanism as a religion, they most likely referred to footnote eleven in Leo Pfeffer and Thomas B. Finan, *Torcaso v. Watkins*, 1961, http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/, which stated: "Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others." I garnered the name of the Supreme Court case as well as the footnote eleven reference from an anti-humanism, anti-NOW newsletter from the Committee for Responsible Education (C.F.R.E), "C.F.R.E. Bulletin Sex Ed for Schools?," 1977, 1-6, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; For "Humanism means" quote see Patricia Kelley (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 18, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

family and sexuality proved the key that unlocked evangelical potential for overt political involvement." For large numbers of female traditionalist adherents, and in due course not a few of their ministers, the ERA's direct connection to just those issues pulled fundamentalists out of their reticence and into the public arena, demanding that they reverse their previous practice and become politically aware and active.[53]

One of the earliest ministers to become publicly involved in the ERA fight appears to be Church of Christ divine Wayne Smethers of Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Distributed by Oklahoma antiratificationists, a Smethers' essay railed against ratification. Titled "WOULD JESUS VOTE FOR THE ERA?" the minister's eleven pages tendered a comprehensive fundamentalist view of the amendment and of the effects ratification would have on Christians and the nation. An attached cover page asked readers to master Smethers' exegesis so that readers could then "speak with authority" when they followed the further charge to "[t]alk about the ERA." The unknown authors of the cover page also directed readers to "[p]ray regularly and constantly for the defeat of this irrational and profane measure" as well as to enlist in one of the organizations that were "dedicating their efforts to . . . defeat . . . this and other anti-American

[53] For an explanation of fundamentalism as a "movement that mostly steered clear of direct political involvement" see George M. Marsden, "Part Five: Fundamentalism Yesterday and Today (2005)," in *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 229-257, especially 232, this fn quote 232, essay quote 242.

legislation." The four recommended groups for readers to join were "Pro-America, Farm Bureau Women, Eagle Forum, and W.W.W.W."[54]

Although Smethers was an outspoken opponent of the amendment, at least a few Oklahomans disapproved of his doing so. One antiratificationist from Bartlesville, for example, told Ruth Brown, "Wayne Smethers spoke out against ERA" but that the minister "shouldn't do that from the pulpit." Cognizant that he was breaking with tradition, early in his exposition Smethers provided a section entitled "Why Our Topic Is Appropriate" and enumerated the reasons "[t]he Christian should be concerned" with a political issue that would "affect his own spirituality or the influence of God's will in general." This section thus provided Smethers' justification for breaching his church's established practice. Additionally, the segment also imparted absolution for and encouragement to Church of Christ adherents and other followers of fundamentalist Christian denominations who wanted to become active politically and who desired to disseminate traditionalist information on the "ERA'S WAR AGAINST RELIGION." In the third section of his four-part conclusion, Smethers made explicit that he aimed his presentation at Christian women primarily, who should take part in, if not lead, the fight against the amendment. According to the cleric, "if a man opposes the ERA" – even if such opposition came from "the

[54] For Smethers as the minister of the Bartlesville, Oklahoma Church of Christ see, for example, Beth Olson (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, January 13, 1983, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Wayne Smethers, "'Would Jesus Vote For The ERA?'," undated , cover page, 1-11, quotes cover page, title of essay quote 1, emphasis Smethers, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

most noble motives" – that man would be labeled "a male chauvinist." Thus, "IT IS STRONGLY BELIEVED THAT WOMEN WHO STAND TO LOSE SO MUCH ARE ALSO THE IDEAL ONES TO OPPOSE THE ERA." Smethers concluded his exhortation with the words, "[t]hose who believe in the right of God to rule the lives of men must stand up, and they must stand up to come to grips with the enemy." The minister's answer to his question "Would Jesus Vote for the ERA?" was a resounding no.[55]

Much of Smethers' presentation consisted of Biblically-based arguments against the amendment that both glorified obedient women and repeatedly reminded them of their submissive status. Nonetheless, Smethers encouraged those same Christian women to step outside their roles as "keepers at home" and to engage in a public debate. By the latter years of the ERA campaign, fundamentalist ministers began sanctioning political participation for their flocks. In the early 1980s, a number of pro-family interviewees spoke of the recent change in their churches, including Tulsan Martha Simms who stated: "Fundamentalist churches are now getting involved [in politics], whereas they weren't before." She believed that "concerned, godly preachers and evangelists have decided it's time to encourage their people" to become politically active and to vote. Simms' minister, for instance, publicly asked his

[55] For the antiratificationist who disapproved of Smethers public discourse on the ERA see Joseph Talbot (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 24, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Smethers, "'Would Jesus Vote For The ERA?'," quotes 1, 10, 11, emphases Smethers.

congregants to “get involved on moral issues. . . .” During the later years of the antiratification campaign, dispensation from Christian evangelical preachers provided encouragement for state women to publicly engage “morality” issues such as the ERA.[56]

That dispensation, however, was superfluous for large numbers of fundamentalist Oklahoma women. In fact, orthodox Christian women had preceded their ministers’ entry into the political arena, many doing so despite “encounter[ing] opposition to their political involvement from their pastors, fellow church members, and their husbands.” Neither that opposition nor Biblical interpretations limiting females to the home persuaded Oklahoma evangelical women to turn away from the antiratification fight. State fundamentalist women instead passionately believed their Christian duty lay in a stalwart and strident opposition to the amendment, rather than in remaining silent.[57]

Moreover, the leading Oklahoma vehicle for fundamentalist Christian women’s participation in the anti-ERA campaign was WWWW, rechristened in 1977 as Pro-Family Forum by its remaining founder, Lottie Beth Hobbs. Originally organized in Texas by Church of Christ adherents Hobbs and “former Oklahoman” Becky Tilotta, WWWW grew rapidly. Having previously been co-communicants of the same Oklahoma Church of Christ, state resident

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[56] Ibid., quote 4, Smethers quoted the Bible for “keepers at home.”; Martha Simms (pseud.), “Unpublished personal interview,” interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

[57] For “encounter[ing] opposition to their political involvement” quote see Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 73.

Beverly Findley phoned Tilotta a short time after the formation of the Texas WWWW and the two arranged to quickly hold an anti-ERA seminar at Oklahoma Christian College (OCC), with Tilotta as speaker. Using informal church networks, Findley and Tilotta circulated notice of their late 1974 meeting with the result that approximately 500 people attended, some of whom defended the amendment in response to Tilotta's presentation. The morning after the OCC seminar, "about 20" women met and founded the Oklahoma chapter of WWWW, electing Findley as the group's leader. By late 1974, Oklahoma Christian fundamentalist women thus had organized to oppose the ERA in spite of resistance to their public advocacy.[58]

Furthermore, those Christian evangelical women had participated in the antiratification struggle for a number of years before the vast majority of fundamentalist ministers entered the fray. References to ratified and unratified states within Smethers' undated essay, for example, reveal that the minister

[58] For the history of WWWW and Brown's argument that fundamentalist Christian women initiated the antiratification movement without the direct activism of their ministers, husbands, and other males (indeed, that those males objected to women's public political activism) and that antiratification Christian women were the foundation of the Christian and Republican Right see Ibid., 35-39, 63-67, and *passim*, for "former Oklahoman" see 36. Further, Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown 'Chronology - Pro-Family Movement'." reported the year of WWWW's founding as 1978. Because Brown referred to 1977 throughout her book, for example, the 1977 "Houston Pro-Family Forum," 111, I've used 1977 as the date of the name change, particularly because Ann Patterson, in a July, 1977 newspaper article referencing the Oklahoma IWY conference, refers to the antiratification movement as "pro-life, pro-family and anti-ERA." For the Patterson evidence, see Ed Montgomery, "Women Claim New Political Unit Forms," *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 14, 1977, 23. In addition, Brown, 38, stated that Beverly Findley remained the WWWW Oklahoma coordinator for "five years." According to Brown's pro-family chronology, Findley retired from that position in 1979. Therefore, simple math places the date of the founding of the Oklahoma WWWW as 1974; For "about 20" quote as well as specific details concerning the organization of the Oklahoma chapter of WWWW see Joanna Hargrove (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, June 1979, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

had to have written it sometime between early February, 1975 and mid-January, 1977. At that early date, Smethers' commentary appears to be the exception rather than the rule for public political involvement by fundamentalist pastors. Further, anecdotal evidence from Ruth Brown's antifeminist interviews supports that the greater part of the state's fundamentalist ministers began using the pulpit for political purposes only during the final years of the ERA decade, including Martha Simms' evidence noted previously. Most telling, Brown's *"For a 'Christian America'"* also made clear that Oklahoma evangelical women preceded their church leaders into overt political activism, including such statements as "fundamentalist pastors. . . . [f]inally . . . organized against" the nation's "moral decline. . . . in the 1980s." In fact, one of the central theses of the sociologist's work is that Oklahoma Christian fundamentalist women initiated and then led the evangelical faction of the state antiratification fight. In Oklahoma, the majority of Christian fundamentalist ministers thus followed their female adherents' lead into the political world of the ERA, not the other way around.[59]

Whether early or late to the fight, the Oklahoma women and men who stood up for their traditional beliefs publicly said no to the amendment. Interviewed in 1981, antiratificationist Sarah Babcock from Woodward, Oklahoma, stated she believed "God planned" for men to be the "head of the

[59] From his references to the numbers of states that had ratified, had not ratified, and had voted to rescind the ERA, Smethers' undated essay had to have been written sometime between Feb 3, 1975 (the date of North Dakota ratification, the 34th state to ratify) and Jan 18, 1977 (the date of Indiana ratification, the 35th and final state to ratify); For "finally organized" quote see Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 21.

household." Babcock continued that others might organize their households differently, "but that doesn't make it right with the Bible and they're going to run into trouble." Babcock also warned, "we really can't change" God's laws. Oklahoma City businessman and JBS "chapter leader" George Rollins told Brown that he thought a "Biblically ordained role of authority" prescribed his duties in life, duties that followed a hierarchy of "God first, then family, then country, then vocation, in that order." He also believed the "ERA removes the authoritative role" of men "within the family and puts [that authority] in the state." Further, in the family "you need . . . a dominant authority figure and that's the responsibility of the father, [which] is a Biblically given position." Nazarene church member Sue Tucker agreed with Rollins. While talking with Brown about the early twentieth-century women's suffrage movement and of women gaining the vote, Tucker said she "might probably have preferred to leave it to the man to make those choices." Brown pressed Tucker with the question: "Was getting the vote [for women] not a good idea?" The antiratificationist replied she thought "the man should make the decisions and I feel like God's go[i]ng to hold them responsible anyway, regardless." For Tucker, faith in God and in literal interpretations of the Bible sanctioned a life of unquestioned male authority as well as female abdication of responsibility. Furthermore, her two contemporaries mirrored Tucker's abiding belief in the infallible word of the Bible and of its absolutes.[60]

[60] Sarah Babcock (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, November 2, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman,

As stated previously, Oklahoma's Southern Baptists contributed a large percentage of activists to the pro-family, anti-ERA campaign. Beginning in the early 1980s, that denomination found itself embroiled in a struggle between "conservatives" (i.e., fundamentalists) and "moderates" for dominion over the national Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Oklahoma minister Bailey E. Smith exemplified and was a public root of much of the dissension. Initially appointed pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Oklahoma, in 1973, Smith fostered his church's growth from "about 6,600" to "15,500" by 1979. This rapid expansion helped bring the Oklahoma minister to the attention of the national denomination. In 1980 and again in 1981, the SBC elected Smith president and "spokesman for the 13.6 million Southern Baptists" nationally. His particularly controversial 1981 election fueled the battle between moderates and the "hard-line fundamentalism" Smith represented. The main point of contention was the growing conservatism of SBC members as well as Smith, whose beliefs epitomized the traditionalist faction. Other objections to Smith's reelection surfaced at the Convention, including those from moderates who cited a professor of religion from Wake Forest University who called Smith a "self-righteous bigot" after the Oklahoma pastor stated at a 1980 "Christian 'new right' political gathering" that "God Almighty does not hear the prayers of a Jew." Nevertheless, Smith won election to a second term, helping to put in

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Oklahoma; George Rollins (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 19, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Sue Tucker (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, November 4, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

motion the fundamentalist "takeover of the huge Southern Baptist convention in the 1980s and 1990s."[61]

In 1981, the SBC passed resolutions opposing, among other issues, "anti-Semitism, secular humanism, tuition tax credits, pornography, . . ." and, with a "minor flurry [of debate]," a resolution "condemning the Equal Rights Amendment. . . ." Moreover, one year earlier a Southern Baptist from Tulsa, Edward Norfleet, wrote to Smith regarding Norfleet's opposition to Smith's various conservative stances, including the minister's resistance to ratification of the amendment. Norfleet reminded the preacher: "The media states that you have said that we [Southern Baptists] are against the ERA." The Tulsan then asked Smith if he "really think[s] that most Baptists are against the ERA?" After making very clear that he supported ratification, Norfleet summed up his disagreement with Smith by stating his belief that the "resolutions passed" at the 1980 SBC "do not reflect the thinking of the members of the Southern Baptist Churches." In his reply, Smith averred that he "never said that 'we' are against the ERA. I only said that I was, even though that does represent millions of Southern Baptists." The SBC president continued that he and his family felt that "to be for ERA is to be against women" and he personally held

[61] Jeanne Pugh, St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer, "Bailey Smith: Will he unify or further divide Southern Baptists? : Baptists," *St. Petersburg Times*, June 20, 1981, 6-78, quotes 6, 7. According to this article, Wake Forest is a "Baptist-supported" college; For "takeover of the huge" SBC quote see Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 244.

"women in a much higher regard than does the ERA" because "[a] woman is God's highest act of creation. . . ." [62]

A few weeks later, Smith responded to another Southern Baptist, this time a woman from Oklahoma City who congratulated Smith on his "fortitude to speak out on moral issues as well as preach God's word." During that presidential election year, however, Mrs. Albert Kemp was "greatly distressed" that then-Oklahoma Governor George Nigh had read a "message" from President Carter on one of Smith's television programs. According to Kemp, Mrs. Carter's supportive appearance at the 1977 IWY Houston convention and the fact that, while in Houston, the First Lady "shared the same platform with confirmed lesbians" caused the Oklahoma woman to "beg" Smith to "please point out [President Carter's] descrepancies [*sic*]" to those with whom Smith came in "contact." Although Kemp knew "you [Smith] cannot use your pulpit as a platform for politics," she was upset that "Mr. Carter is trying to get the Southern Baptist's support, while at the same time woo the Homosexuals. . . ." For Mrs. Kemp, Carter's greatest offense, however, seemed to be that he was unfit to be president because a "man that can't rule his family has no business in the White House." Smith's succinct reply was: "Amen! Amen! Amen! I

[62] For resolutions passed at the 1981 SBC and for the "anti-Semitism," "minor flurry," and "condemning" quotes see Jeanne Pugh, St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer, "Resolutions act as gauge of the denomination's mood," *St. Petersburg Times*, June 20, 1981, 7; Edward K. Norfleet, M.D., Sc.D., F.R.C.P. to Rev. Bailey Smith, Pastor, First Southern Baptist Church, "Dear Rev. Smith," typed, June 16, 1980, Bailey Smith Papers, AR 671, Box 1, Folder 18, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee; Bailey E. Smith, President Southern Baptist Convention to Edward K. Norfleet, "Dear Mr. Norfleet," typed, June 30, 1980, Bailey Smith Papers, AR 671, Box 1, Folder 18, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

agree with everything you have said. ERA is the Extremely Ridiculous Activiey [*sic*]."[63]

Smith's response to Norfleet as well as Mrs. Kemp's letter to Smith and the minister's reply to her illustrate fundamentalists' solid adherence to a Biblically-ordained male authority as well as their concomitant belief that women should be, and be publicly seen as, submissive to God and men alike. Moreover, Christian conservatives correlated their doctrinal conviction in a familial patriarchal system with the wider arena of American politics and government, believing that men who failed to "control" the actions of female family members thus lacked the strength and leadership abilities needed to guide the country. For fundamentalists, women perceived to be strong and independent disclosed inversely that the men who were associated with those women were weak. Further, threats to the traditional ideal of a hierarchical family structure posed by the ERA and other expressions of liberal ideology translated into danger to the health and welfare of the nation. Additionally, Smith's reply to Norfleet reveals the minister's adherence to traditional roles for women, a Biblically-inspired "special place" and status that isolated and barred women from achieving equal standing with men.

As with Bailey Smith and Mrs. Kemp's belief in "women's proper place," numerous other Oklahoma fundamentalists exhibited that precept throughout

[63] Mrs. Albert Kemp to Dr. Bailey Smith, "Dear Brother in Christ," handwritten, July 2, 1980, Bailey Smith Papers, AR 671, Box 1, Folder 18, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee; Bailey E. Smith, President Southern Baptist Convention to Mrs. Albert Kemp, "Dear Mrs. Kemp," typed, July 8, 1980, Bailey Smith Papers, AR 671, Box 1, Folder 18, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

the ERA decade. In 1976, the state coordinator of WWWW, for example, told the OU student newspaper that the Bible spoke clearly on the role of women. As Beverly Findley defined that role, the "woman [was the] 'keeper of the house'" who cared for the children and "remain[ed] loving and subservient to her husband." The WWWW leader also stated that if the ERA should be ratified, she "would have serious doubts" about following the state and federal statutes that might arise from passage. As she saw it, a conflict would exist between "obeying man's law or God's law" and "for me and the other women who feel as I do. . . . [o]beying God's laws are my whole life."[64]

Additionally, the first paragraph of an antiratification flyer titled "Christianity vs. Liberalism" described women's role: "God created you and gave you a beautiful and exalted place to fill. No women in history have ever enjoyed such privileges, luxuries, and freedom as American women." Filled with arguments listing the ERA's negative affects on women, particularly on homemakers, the authors urged readers to join both WWWW and Eagle Forum, "a national organization of men and women who believe in God, Home, and Country (in that order) and are determined to defend the values that have made America the greatest nation in the world." Among other admonitions, the flyer finished by telling its audience, "LET YOUR VOICE BE STRONG, CLEAR AND CHRISTLIKE," an unambiguous admonition that women should let their voices ring out from their biblically "exalted," and thus morally righteous place within

[64] Robyn McHeffey, "ERA 'violates God's teachings' - Women's group fights amendment," *The Oklahoma Daily*, September 1, 1976, 19.

American society. These and other sources from the ERA decade provide evidence that Oklahoma Christian evangelicals believed categorically that a woman's Biblically-directed purpose in life was to remain in the home. Nonetheless, the perceived threat from the amendment to traditionalists' lifestyles, families, and the state and nation overrode fundamentalist dictums with the result that great numbers of state fundamentalist women marched into the ratification fight.[65]

The ERA threat to the family particularly frightened Oklahoma's Christian evangelical women. In their minds, the continued health and welfare of their families demanded protection from the nation's growing immorality. They saw faithfulness to wholesome, family-oriented Christian values decreasing daily, to be replaced with secular society's lurid enticements and loose mores. Through its destruction of the family, ratification of the ERA would escalate the spread of secularization, eventually resulting in a godless state and nation. According to an antiratification brochure distributed by the Oklahoma City STOP ERA PEC, the John Birch Society correctly opposed the amendment, in that JBS "strongly supports traditional American values, including the preservation of the family unit – which E.R.A. would undermine." Further, amendment opponent from Purcell, Oklahoma, Wanda Dawson, believed the ERA was "against God's will for the family." She explained that women had "no reason . . . to work" outside the home. If financial or other problems arose, Dawson had alternate routes for

[65] "Christianity vs. Liberalism," undated, John Dunning Political Collection, Box 56, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, parentheses and emphasis original.

families to take. If a woman was married, for example, the couple could "be more frugal." If she was widowed or divorced, a woman could "go back and live with her parents." Or, "if a real emergency arose," couples or single mothers should "call on" and expect aid from other family members. For Dawson, every "mother should be [in the home] concentrating on the teaching of God's word" to her children. Moreover, people should be "talking all the time about righteousness in order to combat these evil influences" of the amendment and the secular world.[66]

As did Wanda Dawson, many conservative Christians viewed the fight against the "anti-family Equal Rights Amendment" as a battle between good and evil, with the survival of their families hanging on the outcome. In rationalizing her public fight against the ERA, one state pro-family Christian traditionalist quoted Biblical injunctions as justification for stepping outside the fundamentalist view of women's place. She stated that the Bible instructed women and men to "expose" the "works of darkness" and to combat "wickedness" by "put[ting] on the whole armor of God and go out [to] fight." She next said, "My only reason for" taking a public stance against the ERA "is that I want my children to know God. I don't want anybody taking God out of their lives." For this woman and other Christian antiratificationists, the essence of

[66] STOP E.R.A., Political Education Committee, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, "The E.R.A.: Equal Rights Amendment (For Men and Women) - Myths vs. Facts," undated, John Dunning Political Collection, Box 56, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Wanda Dawson (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

their fight for traditional ideologies, and the central meaning of her personal anti-amendment activism, came down to one defining statement – the conservative battle against liberalism and the ERA was "warfare between God and Satan."[67]

For other Oklahoma Christian women, ratification of the amendment also fell at the head of the list of secular threats to the family and children. One state antiratificationist arranged those threats in the order of the danger each represented, highest to lowest: "Feminists and the ERA, textbooks in school, . . sex education, [and] people using boats and RVs instead of go[i]ng to church." Many antifeminists felt that the ERA would require women to work outside the home, thereby leading to the breakdown of the family. In 1981, for example, a young, rural Oklahoma woman opposed the ERA for a number of reasons, including that she was worried about losing her "femininity . . . and I wouldn't want to have that taken away from women by competing with men out in the world." Most important, working women led to the "breakdown of the home." As she saw it, the "[f]amily as an institution is coming apart," with children being "left on their own . . . and they're learning from TV" instead of from their parents. Another Christian fundamentalist, Mrs. Stephen Walker, also believed women should stay at home with their children. She thought that a "father, as a rule,"

[67] For "anti-family" quote see "Eagle Forum - leading the pro-family movement since 1972 - Join Eagle Forum," unknown, John Dunning Political Collection, Box 56, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; For "expose," "darkness," "wickedness," "armor of God," "only reason," "my children," and "warfare" quotes see Deborah Farnum (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, November 10, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

could not provide "as well as a mother" for children's needs. Like many pro-family activists, Walker opposed child daycare outside the home. She held an especial animus against government-provided centers, a project often advocated by feminists. For Walker, however, "if child care was available" the result would be to "push more women out to work to neglect their children."[68]

Of particular urgency to Christian evangelicals and other traditionalists was the issue of homosexuality. Often cloaked within expressions of "protecting" their children from lesbian and gay influences or, even more perilous, from the depraved degeneracy of homophiles, fundamentalists and other antiratificationists' words instead revealed their personal homophobia. As noted previously, by 1977 ERA opponents had conclusively linked the issue of homosexuality to the amendment. Throughout the decade, both antiratificationist literature and ERA opponents' individual statements kept alive, in conservatives' minds, the frightening specter of a nation legally recognizing the rights of homophiles, a recognition achieved through ratification of the ERA. The Washington County, Oklahoma chapter of Eagle Forum, for example, distributed an oversized flyer printed in bolded and large font, the first sentence of which read: "WHY ARE HOMOSEXUALS SUPPORTING THE EQUAL

[68] Rosa Pritchard (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, July 8, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For "femininity," "breakdown," "family as an institution," and "left on their own" quotes see Claire Grant (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 27, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Mrs. Stephen Walker (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, July 8, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

RIGHTS AMENDMENT (ERA)?" The answer was "TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS." According to the flyer, "many leading legal authorities" believe that ratification "will legalize Homosexual 'Marriages' and grant them [gay men and lesbian women] the Special Rights and Benefits given by law to husbands and wives." The flyer then overtly linked children to lesbians and gays by asking, "Will the Homosexuals also be given the rights to adopt children and to teach in the schools?"[69]

Further, an Oklahoma City anti-ERA activist, Betty Stone, in 1978 mailed to Lois Crooks a packet of antiratificationist materials in an attempt to recruit Crooks to the opponent cause. An eight page booklet in the packet included a smaller version of the Washington County flyer, this time distributed by the Oklahoma City chapter of STOP ERA PEC. In a handwritten note to Crooks, Stone repeated the flyer's warning that "[h]omosexuals are working very hard" to obtain passage of the ERA "to achieve their goals. . . ." Included within the packet was a preprinted list of that year's candidates in state political races. STOP ERA PEC again had prepared this list. Stone urged Crooks to "[p]lease consider voting for the persons with the star by their names" because those candidates "have worked against the ERA." She also told Crooks: "Lois, you are such a great worker the Stop E.R.A. needs you." In 1975, moreover, an *Oklahoma City Times* article quoted Mrs. Shannon Smith as announcing the

[69] "Why Are Homosexuals Supporting The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)?" (Washington County Eagle Forum, undated), ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 13, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphases original.

formation of “Woman’s Forum,” an umbrella organization that would represent the anti-ERA organizations “Parents for God, Home and Country,” “Sanity on Sex (SOS),” and “other groups interested ‘in the preservation of the American family and home.’” The article reported “Mrs. Pat (Ann) Patterson” would chair the new umbrella group. Smith stated Woman’s Forum was created to “educate Oklahomans” about the “evils” of NOW, including the national pro-ERA group’s advocacy of accepting “homosexuality as a lifestyle rather than a sexual deviation.”[70]

Additionally, innumerable Oklahoma Christian fundamentalists agreed that homosexuality was immoral, particularly in God’s eyes. Moreover, traditionalists often stated they would prefer that gays and lesbians not be in contact with children. In 1980, for example, one Christian evangelical avowed, “Homosexuality is a sin, according to the Bible.” Further, this woman “wouldn’t want one of them teaching my child” or “adopting a child.” Another antiratificationist believed homosexuality was “a sickness and it can be unlearned and learned,” voicing attitudes that many conservatives held. For fundamentalist Wanda Dawson, homosexuality was “even worse a sin than adultery and fornication, [while] the ERA would help their [gays and lesbians’] cause and would help them get permission to marry.” She also “would not want

[70] Betty Stone to Mr. & Mrs. Ray Crooks (Lois) Crooks, “1978 Letter and packet of antiratification materials,” handwritten and typed, November 1978, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Carol Langston, “Anti-women's lib coalition formed : Forum,” *Oklahoma City Times*, August 23, 1975, 1, 2, all quotes 1, except “homosexuality as a lifestyle” see 2.

them to have any positions dealing with children, or positions of influence or power." Blind to her prejudice, Dawson next magnanimously conceded that, "within these restrictions," lesbians and gays "should be allowed to get a job."[71]

During the ERA decade, the subject of homosexuality elicited statements born of fear and ignorance from a significant number of evangelical Christians and other reactionary conservatives. Linked to ratification of the amendment, the issue of the rights of gays and lesbians swelled the ranks of ERA opponent organizations, leading those organizations to enlarge their use of inflammatory language and fear-mongering tactics, strategies grounded in homophobic imagery. As one Oklahoma antifeminist leader told Ruth Brown, in order to "get people to listen" to arguments against the ERA, the Christian antiratificationist began her speeches "with the emotional issues." Brown then asked the pro-family movement executive to which "emotional issues she was referring . . . ." The leader's reply: "Homosexuality."[72]

By the latter years of the ERA decade, the amendment debate had politicized the leaders of state pro-family organizations. For instance, activist Bunny Chambers stated in 2009 her "participation in opposing the ERA probably changed my life." First becoming active in politics during the amendment campaign, Chambers noted she worked in those years to elect

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[71] Edith Phillips (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 9, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Velma Logan (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, July 18, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Dawson (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," 1980.

[72] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 87.

lawmakers “regardless of their party affiliation as long as they opposed the ERA.” Ultimately, she recruited candidates as well as consulted on and managed political campaigns. Furthermore, Pro-Family Forum state coordinator Beverly Findley retired from that position in 1979. According to Ruth Brown’s pro-family movement chronology, another woman replaced Findley until Chambers became the movement’s state coordinator in 1980. In addition to her earlier work for the anti-amendment group, Chambers’ antiratificationist campaign involvement beginning in 1980 thus included “leading the pro-family, anti-ERA movement” in Oklahoma “until the defeat [of ratification] in 1982.” After the amendment decade, she remained active in state politics, eventually seeking office in 1987 within the Oklahoma Republican Party. Chambers rose through the party’s ranks until she achieved the post of Republican National Committee (RNC) National Committeewoman, retaining that position until her retirement in 2008. In her many races for various Oklahoma Republican Party offices over the years, Chambers noted: “I was never defeated.” Among her numerous achievements, in 2010 Chambers remained state president of Eagle Forum of Oklahoma.[73]

[73] Bunny Chambers, “Interview questions - Bunny Chambers,” July 24, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For the Findley to Chambers succession as the leaders of the Oklahoma WWWW see Brown, “Ruth Murray Brown 'Chronology - Pro-Family Movement'.”; For Chambers as “outgoing” RNC National Committeewoman see Oklahoma Republican Party, “News - Research Briefings - 'Oklahoma Delegation Asks RNC to Confirm the Vote'," *Republican Party of Oklahoma*, September 8, 2008, http://www.okgop.com/NewsBack.aspx?guid=96fd419f-52ff-4215-b5ab-6f74cecaa851; “Oklahoma Eagle Forum - About Us,” *Eagle Forum of Oklahoma*, http://www.okeagleforum.org/AboutUs/tabid/56/Default.aspx.

The founder of the Tulsa, Oklahoma Eagle Forum chapter in the 1970s, Dianne Edmondson served as chair of the state IWY Citizen's Review Committee and as "vice chairman" of the state delegation to the national IWY conference, with Ann Patterson chairing that contingent. During the amendment decade, Edmondson and Patterson also co-chaired the Oklahoma STOP ERA PEC. Moreover, Edmondson obtained Republican Party positions in the years after the defeat of ratification. From 1988 through today, she has held numerous offices for her county Republican Party and Republican Clubs. In addition, Edmondson served as a National GOP Convention delegate in 2000. Further, she has either "managed or volunteered in dozens" of campaigns, including such duties as walking the districts, working on phone banks, and fund-raising in support of Republican candidates from county through presidential elections.[74]

Although Glenda Mattoon was a member of the Republican Party before 1977, the Norman, Oklahoma, antiratificationist's involvement in the ERA campaign came about due to her election as a state delegate to the 1977 national IWY conference. In January, 2009, she recounted that serving as a member of that IWY delegation "really launched me into Oklahoma politics –

[74] Dianne Edmondson, "Resume - Dianne Edmondson," October 5, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For Edmondson as chair of the Oklahoma IWY Citizen's Review Committee see Richardson, Family Living Editor, "Women's Groups Clash Over ERA Here," 1; For Patterson as chair and Edmondson as vice-chair of the state IWY delegation to the national IWY conference see Montgomery, "Women Claim New Political Unit Forms," 23; For Patterson and Edmondson as co-chairs of Oklahoma STOP ERA PEC see page 1 of "Eagle Forum (of Oklahoma) newsletter," March 1978, 1-3, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 13, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

both in issues and in the Republican Party." In 1977, members of the state delegation elected Mattoon secretary of the Oklahoma IWY deputation to Houston. After the national IWY conference, the antiratification leader began "speaking in every forum available to me – civic clubs, Republican Women's groups, [and in] radio and TV appearances." At the defeat of ERA, she "shifted her focus" to Republican Party work, eventually serving as an Oklahoma delegate to the 1980 GOP national convention where she "helped engineer the anti-ERA plank of the national platform." After 1980, Mattoon became the "state vice-chairman" for the Republican Party, and then retired from politics soon after.[75]

In addition, the amendment decade also politicized rank and file members of the pro-family, antiratificationist movement and caused a significant number of those members to switch allegiance from the Democratic to the Republican Party, in particular during the latter years of the ERA campaign. Although Democrats and traditionalist religion "had coexisted comfortably in the South ever since Reconstruction," Ruth Brown maintained that the antiratification campaign as well as additional "new political movements of the 1970s and 1980s forced a reassessment of Democratic dominance." Further, Brown's interviews with ERA opponents show that a number of her participants

[75] For all information and quotes except those noted in the following citations see Mattoon to Vogt, "Stillwater IWY Conference."; For Mattoon's election as secretary of the 1977 state IWY delegation to the Houston national conference see Montgomery, "Women Claim New Political Unit Forms," 23; For "shifted focus," 1980 Republican national convention, and helping to pass the anti-ERA platform at the 1980 Republican national convention see Mattoon, "Personal interview (first)," July 9, 2008.

changed their party affiliation from Democrat to Republican during the amendment decade. Additional numbers of those respondents voted Republican, particularly in 1980 for Ronald Reagan and for Oklahoman Don Nickles in his U.S. Senate election, even as those interviewees remained registered Democrats. Notably, the sociologist's interviews date from 1980 through 1982. In those interviews, many of Brown's antiratificationist participants spoke of their voting preference change to the Republican Party as having recently occurred.[76]

Moreover, political scientists Ronald Keith Gaddie and Scott E. Buchanan noted that "Republican registration surged" in Oklahoma during the 1980s. Further, a table provided by Gaddie and Buchanan in "Oklahoma: GOP Realignment in the Buckle of the Bible Belt" records the "Growth of the Republican Party in Oklahoma, 1964-1996." Although exact percentage figures are not provided for individual years, a large spike in Republican Party registration appears for the two years beginning in 1980 and ending with 1982. This spike represents an Oklahoma upward swing in Republican registration of approximately 3 to 5 percent. Moreover, political scientists Gaddie and Buchanan in 1998 and Gary Copeland, Rebecca Cruise, and Gaddie in 2007 made clear that rising rates of state Republican Party registration, and the increasing GOP voting preferences of Oklahoma Democrats and Republicans alike, from the 1980s through 2005 were "in large part a product of the state's

[76] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 22, *passim*, for "coexisted comfortably" and "new political movements" quotes 22.

firmly ensconced religious right." The political science data combined with Brown's anecdotal indications and her further assertions – viewed in conjunction with the extensive extant evidence testifying to the power, effectiveness, and vitality of the pro-family movement – point to state female antiratificationists as the foundation of and driving force behind the eventual Oklahoma political realignment from Democrat blue to Republican red.[77]

The Oklahoma women who fought against ratification of the ERA in the 1970s and early 1980s did so from a wholehearted commitment to traditional values and to God. Working diligently and faithfully toward their goal, antiratificationists believed they could not lose. In symbiosis with Phyllis Schlafly, they developed a resourceful, vigorous organization that efficiently mobilized large numbers of women against the ERA, an organization that supported the desire of many of its activists to view themselves as remaining within their prescribed cultural roles. Nevertheless, the amendment campaign both mobilized and politicized great numbers of those women in defense of what they saw as an assault on their families, their lifestyles, and their traditional beliefs as well as an attack on the country's founding principles.

[77]Ronald Keith Gaddie and Scott E. Buchanan, "Oklahoma: GOP Realignment in the Buckle of the Bible Belt," in *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*, ed. Charles S. Bullock, III and Mark J. Rozell, 1998th ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 205-226, quote 207, table 208; Charles S. Copeland, Rebecca J. Cruise, and Ronald Keith Gaddie, "Oklahoma: Evangelicals and the Secular Realignment," in *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*, ed. Charles S., III Bullock and Mark J. Rozell, 3rd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 237-261, quote 255.

Moreover, the personal skills of Oklahoma's ERA opponent women matched the development of their antiratification, pro-family movement as they garnered a political and cultural influence scarcely envisioned at the beginning of the decade. By the end of the ERA years, those political actors helped found a new and decidedly conservative movement in U.S. politics, one that would come to define the debate for years in the future. In so doing, they perhaps surprised others, but not themselves. In July, 1977, *The Daily Oklahoman* published an article titled "Women Claim New Political Unit Forms." The article reported that the "leader of the state delegation" to the upcoming national IWY conference stated that a "lasting political force emerged" from the recently held "Oklahoma IWY Women's Conference." The chair of the state delegation believed, "If it continues, this force will be the strongest political force in the state and nation." The Oklahoma leader who spoke those prophetic words in 1977 was Ann Patterson, the same woman who had begun the state antiratification movement in 1972.[78]

[78] Montgomery, "Women Claim New Political Unit Forms," 23.

Chapter Four

Walking the Tightrope : The Political Conundrum of the ERA

For ten years the ERA campaign haunted Oklahoma politicians, forcing governors, state legislators, and congressional representatives to choose whether they would support or oppose ratification, thereby subjecting those politicians to the scrutiny of a volatile and increasingly outspoken electorate. Caught in the middle of the debate, politicians tried to walk the tightrope of public opinion. In so doing, many of them endeavored to achieve the difficult proposition of appearing to be "all things to all people." During the amendment decade, Oklahomans chose three Democratic governors, a Democratically-controlled state legislature, and a preponderance of Democrats to the U.S. House of Representatives. Oklahoma's election of U.S. Senators in the same time period, however, favored Republicans, foreshadowing a larger shift in state voting patterns that occurred over the next twenty to thirty years, a shift that the ERA debate helped to kindle and nourish. Further, the livelihoods of Oklahoma politicians and public figures depended on pleasing the people of the state, a task that became more difficult as the ratification campaign ignited citizens' passions and actions. The ERA debate tested the political savvy and survival instincts of Oklahoma politicians, in the process honing their

skills of doublespeak and compromise, skills that constituents failed to understand or appreciate.[1]

While each of the three governors during the ERA decade publicly supported ratification, the state executives often suffered a full measure of citizens' opinions and ire concerning the amendment. The first governor during the amendment years, Tulsa Democrat and proponent of religious faith David Hall, served from January, 1971 through early January, 1975. Described by the nationally-syndicated radio and television "'bawl and jump' evangelist," Billy James Hargis, as "a church man of conviction and action" and a teetotaler who "does not allow intoxicating beverages in the state mansion," Hall publicly supported the ERA throughout his tenure. In October, 1972, for instance, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported Hall would "push for legislative approval for the equal rights amendment to the Constitution." In a later October article, the same paper quoted the governor as saying ERA "will be an advantage to all people" and that ratification "will increase both the responsibilities and opportunities of women." He simultaneously dismissed opponents' fears that "women will be drafted, that

[1] Charles S. Copeland, Rebecca J. Cruise, and Ronald Keith Gaddie, "Oklahoma: Evangelicals and the Secular Realignment," in *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*, ed. Charles S., III Bullock and Mark J. Rozell, 3rd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 247-248; "Members of Congress from Oklahoma," *Carl Albert Center Congressional Archives, University of Oklahoma*, http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/archives/exhibit/OKmcs/OKmcs.htm The Carl Albert Center's list of U.S. Senators serving during the ten year ERA period includes two Democrats, Fred Harris (1964-1973) and David Boren (1979-1994). Republican Senators were Henry Bellmon (1969-1981), Dewey Bartlett (1973-1979), and Don Nickles (1981-2005).

now separate facilities will be combined, or the responsibilities of gentlemen will be lessened." Hall's support for ratification, however, often failed to live up to feminists' expectations. As the amendment campaign wore on and new governors took office, divisions between constituents and their elected officials, particularly ratificationists and the governors, intensified.[2]

Like other state officials throughout the campaign, Governor Hall received letters and phone calls both from within and outside Oklahoma and from individuals and organizations urging the governor to use his influence to support or oppose the amendment. For example, a May, 1973, Western Union mailgram to Hall from OU professor Jaqueline St John pointed out that then-Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and Democrat from Oklahoma, Carl Albert, had "recently appointed" a woman as a House page,

[2] Oklahoma Department of Libraries, "Biographical Note David Hall," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/bios/hall.pdf; For Hall's professions of faith, see for example replies from the governor in response to constituents' letters in which they told him of offering prayers for him, including replies such as "I have always had a deep and abiding faith in the far-reaching powers of God" and "My family has daily prayers and devotionals. . . ." in David Hall to Arlene Hagen, "Dear Ms. Hagen," typed, undated , David Hall, RG 8-S-2-2, Box 12, Folder 13, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; "[M]y wife, my children, and I read the Bible every morning at the breakfast table and hold a prayer service afterwards. We feel that everything comes from God and without Him we are nothing" in David Hall to Evelyn Huffman, "Dear Ms. Huffman," typed, July 11, 1974, David Hall, RG 8-S-2-2, Box 12, Folder 13, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and "Prayer has always played an important part in the lives of my family and me - - they are offered daily, . . ." in David Hall to Mary Whitney, "Dear Mrs. Whitney," typed, May 17, 1974, David Hall, RG 8-S-2-2, Box 12, Folder 13, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, all in "Folder 13: General Outgoing Correspondence, 1972-1974 - Religious," David Hall, RG 8-S-2-2, Box 12, Folder 13, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Oklahoma Department of Libraries, "David Hall Biography."; Harold H. Martin, "Doomsday Merchant On The Far, Far Right.," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 28, 1962, 19; Billy James Hargis, "Introduction of Governor," 1971, David Hall, RG 8-S-1-1, Box 5, Folder 20 Billy James Hargis - 1971, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; "Governor to Push for Amendment," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 3, 1972, 13; "Hall Speaks Out On Equal Rights," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 17, 1972, 9.

an “action much admired by feminists nationwide.” Even this early in the ERA struggle, the tone of St John’s words illustrated feminists’ concern that the governor’s efforts on behalf of the amendment fell short of proponents’ expectations. She remonstrated with Hall that Oklahoma had failed to ratify the amendment, while also proposing that state legislators should “visit the Pioneer Women Museum” in Ponca City “if they truly believe women to be frail beings in need of protection.” The “untold hardships” Oklahoma’s frontier women endured as well as the “personal histories of [legislators’] own mothers and grandmothers” would, St John felt, provide ample evidence of women’s competence and strength. The telegram then exhorted Hall “to exert all your influence” for ratification. St John’s 1973 missive anticipated the coming ERA clamor awaiting Hall and other Oklahoma politicians who found themselves caught between two opposing and vociferous forces.[3]

Mired in the increasingly controversial ERA, by 1976 state politicians who supported ratification faced heightened pressure from citizens on both sides of the issue. Many Oklahoma politicians responded with attempts to placate each side, but often failed to satisfy either. At the same time, their lukewarm responses, particularly in support of the amendment, showed that

[3] Jaqueline St John to David Hall, “Governor David Hall,” Mailgram, May 22, 1973, David Hall, RG 8-S-1-1, Box 41, Folder 8, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Carl Albert Center at the University of Oklahoma, “The Life of Carl Albert : Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives,” *Carl Albert Online Exhibit*, http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/archives/exhibit/albert/albert.htm According to the Carl Albert Center, Albert served as Speaker from 1971 through January 3, 1977, on which day he retired after thirty years of service in Congress.

politicians were finding it ever more difficult to stay the ERA course. As the ERA debate intensified, a contentious instance arose. Elected governor in November, 1974, former professor of political science at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Oklahoma and then-state representative David Boren served as the state's chief executive until January 3, 1979. In 1976, Governor Boren faced public questions from antifeminists over the possible use of state resources in support of the ERA. Simultaneously, a poorly worded statement from the chair of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women (GCSW), a group heavily involved in promoting ratification, led to negative publicity in newspaper articles and editorials. That negative publicity then occasioned ERA proponent press releases aimed at restoring the general public's confidence in the amendment and, more specifically, at denigrating or refuting other ratificationists. Importantly, this incident caused the ratification effort to suffer from a well-publicized display of dissension among state proponent leaders and organizations. It also precipitated breaches of trust among the inner circles of ratificationists, highlighting the mounting divisions among Oklahoma proponents and the political quicksand that was the ERA.[4]

[4] "Boren, David Lyle - Biographical Information," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000639; Oklahoma Department of Libraries, "Biographical Note David Boren," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/bios/boren.pdf; For David Boren as a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University at the time of his election as governor see "A Brief History of OBU (Oklahoma Baptist University)," *Oklahoma Baptist University*, http://www.okbu.edu/library/archives_history.html.

The people concerned included the governor, one of his administrative assistants, the chairs of both GCSW and OKWPC, and a former state legislator who opposed ratification. This former state legislator, Republican Jan Turner, wrote to Governor Boren asking for an explanation of the use of his official stationary for "a letter promoting the Equal Rights Amendment" sent out by GCSW and signed by both the chair of that commission, Jan Dreiling, and by one of Boren's administrative assistants, Barbara Webb. Oklahoma newspapers reported on the situation, including a *Daily Oklahoman* article dated August 5, 1976, which stated that the governor, in a reply to Turner, "has apologized" for the misuse of his letterhead, with Boren and Webb both asserting that the error was a simple "mistake." The newspaper also quoted the governor's reply to Turner as emphasizing that the original pro-ERA letter "was sent without my authority and I have taken steps to see that such action will not occur in the future." At the same time, the article reported that "Mrs. Turner also sent the governor a copy of a letter from Mrs. Dreiling that appeared in *The Oklahoma New Woman*," again stating that Boren in his reply to Turner wrote, "while I think a lot of Jan [Dreiling] personally, . . I cannot subscribe to the views listed in the last paragraph. . . ." *The Daily Oklahoman* further observed that Dreiling was the current "Democratic candidate for the state Senate" for District 29 and was running against an incumbent Republican. According to the article, Dreiling's apparent final paragraph noted that a "survey indicates approval of ERA would be advanced by electing young

Democrats, more blacks, more attorneys, and fewer ranchers and businessmen to the [state] legislature." Most important from ratificationists' perspective, the *Daily Oklahoman* article also stated that "Boren has said he supports the ERA but has not made state ratification an important part of his program." That last statement in particular heightened feminists' suspicions of the governor's commitment to ERA, leading to a public display of discord within the proponent camp.[5]

By tradition, Oklahoma depended in large part on agriculture and cattle ranching; moreover, it had a relatively small black population and a segregationist history. Dreiling's statement in *The Oklahoma New Woman*, arguing that ratification would require the election to the state legislature of smaller numbers of ranchers and business people, offended much of the state's rural and business populations as well as citizens of a conservative ideological bent. At the time of Dreiling's article, implementation of 1960s court-ordered reapportionment had taken effect, which ended rural Oklahoma's statehouse stranglehold. By 1976, Oklahoma voters had begun electing younger, better educated, urban professionals as their state lawmakers. However, those urbanites typically were Republicans, primarily elected from "metropolitan or urban areas." Thus, rural Oklahomans may

[5] Junetta Davis, "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 9, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Davis stated in this 1982 interview that "Donna Meyer was head [of OKWPC]" during the two years before Becky Patten became OKWPC chair in 1978.; "Boren Sorry For Mistake - Letter in Error," *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 5, 1976.

have reacted even more strongly to Dreiling's words, having experienced within the previous ten years a diminishing rural influence at the statehouse.[6]

Further, Dreiling's assertion that passage of the ERA needed the election of "young Democrats" along with greater numbers of African Americans antagonized a portion of the white, traditionalist population. In particular, those words nettled that percentage of ERA opponents who associated the younger generation with radicalism and who linked blacks with federally mandated school busing, both of which evoked in conservative minds fears of feminist and liberal goals as well as worries about the possible shrinking of individual and state rights and the broadening of federal power. Numerous examples of both these connections exist in antiratificationist materials, including the sampling provided in chapter three concerning ERA opponents' fears of the enlargement of federal power. Moreover, the August edition of *The Oklahoma Union Farmer*, the "official publication of the Oklahoma Farmers Union," prominently headlined "ERA Leader Urges Defeat of Farmers, and Businessmen In Oklahoma Legislature" and related the basic outline of *The Daily Oklahoman* story, inserting one additional, important detail. *The Union Farmer* quoted Dreiling as saying "she urges that 'fewer (farmers) ranchers and businessmen' should be elected to the legislature." By adding the word "(farmers)," the

[6] Samuel A. Kirkpatrick, *The Legislative Process in Oklahoma: Policy Making, People, & Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 7-8, 18-33, quotes 25 and 32, respectively.

paper made certain its readers understood that Dreiling and the ERA represented threats to their livelihoods and way of life. On the same page, the paper also printed a smaller article with the governor's refutation of Dreiling's statements, relating that "Boren does not concur" with Dreiling's "recommendation" regarding the state legislature. Within an "Editor's Note," situated between the two articles, the *Union Farmer* made abundantly clear that it and the Farmers Union did not support ratification, calling the proposed amendment "the deceptively labeled 'Equal Rights Amendment.'" In addition, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, as well as the John Birch Society and the Republican Party, were prime recruitment organizations for state antiratificationists.[7]

Unfortunately for ERA proponents, this misfortune coincided with and marred the official organization of OK-ERA, which "was formally announced" on August 13 and which proclaimed as its honorary co-chairs Republican U.S. Senator Henry Bellmon and Governor Boren. Also unhappily for ratificationists and their political allies, the bad press surrounding the situation flourished. On August 6, a *Tulsa Daily World* editorial admonished the governor for refusing to take a solid position on ERA, stating that the governor "hasn't made it fully clear whether he is trying to help the Equal Rights Amendment or not." The editorial pointed out that it "seems" that Boren "is removing his office stationary from the pro-ERA campaign," while

[7] "ERA Leader Urges Defeat of Farmers, and Businessmen In Oklahoma Legislature," *The Oklahoma Farmer Union*, August 1976, 1; Ruth Murray Brown, *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Prometheus Books, 2002), 35.

simultaneously "leaving Jan Dreiling and Barbara Webb free to push for the Amendment so long as they do not involve him officially." The editorial maintained "if [Boren] is trying to keep out of this fracas, members of his staff should avoid embarrassing him by taking stands on it [the ERA]." Further, the author noted that the governor's promise to make certain his stationary was no longer used in support of the ERA "appears to fall a bit short of a true hands-off position."[8]

The editorial uncovered the heart of one problem facing Boren, as well as the two other state governors during the ERA campaign. As public officials, the governors each took an overt position supporting the amendment. However, as public officials, the governors had to manage the delicate issues of staying within the bounds of their office and with making certain they did not use public funds to promote a partisan issue, in this case, ratification of the amendment. Boren's position as co-chair of OK-ERA, especially in becoming known at this particular moment in time, undoubtedly put more pressure on the governor and on his staff to ensure that their official actions were transparent and aboveboard. To make matters worse, the original news articles fomented public tensions among ERA proponent organizations and led to an open display of anger directed at the governor by one feminist group.

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[8] For an official announcement of OK-ERA's organization see Dorothy Stanislaus and Edna Mae Phelps to David Boren, "Dear Governor Boren," typed, August 15, 1976, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; "Boren Boosting ERA?," *Tulsa Daily World*, August 6, 1976, 8-A.

An OKWPC press release dated August 13 excoriated Governor Boren over the statement that had been "issued from the governor's office and printed Aug. 5 in the newspapers" in which, according to OKWPC, the governor confirmed "E.R.A. is not an important part of his program." After emphasizing how "alarmed and angry" the group was, the press release continued that Boren "has joined the group of political liers [*sic*] who will do or say anything to be elected." The release advised GCSW members to "resign" from the commission and, instead, to spend their "time, energy, and money . . . traveling the state telling the truth about liers [*sic*] who hold political office." Additional advice included asking the governor for a "retraction" as well as seriously considering the "insidious dynamics of tokenism in which you [GCSW members] are caught." In a quick response, the GCSW also issued a press release on August 13, addressing several of the issues raised in the papers and by the OKWPC press release. The Commission release first asked Governor Boren "for an immediate clarification" on the priority level of ratification for his 1977 legislative agenda. "In a related matter," GCSW chair Jan Dreiling "responded on behalf of the entire Commission" to "Donna Meyer, lobbyist for" OKWPC and to Meyer's press release with its "suggest[ion]" that GCSW members walk out on their commission appointments. Dreiling's response stated categorically that "no Commission members intended to resign. . .". Dreiling also addressed the report in the "*Oklahoma Union Farmer*" by stating, "Of course I believe that farmers, ranchers, and businessmen should serve in

the Oklahoma legislature" and that "any statement to the contrary has been taken out of context."[9]

Within a brief time span of nine days, therefore, an error leading to the inappropriate use of state funds by the governor, his staff, or commission members led to indignation and suspicion on the part of antiratificationists and at least a portion of Oklahoma's rural and business populations. In addition, a statement attributed to Governor Boren fomented tension between supposed allies, the governor and feminists, and between feminists themselves. Moreover, a public display of temper on the part of one feminist organization further hurt ratification efforts. Certainly, OKWPC's charge that GCSW members were simply tools of the governor caused dissension between two prominent Oklahoma ratificationist groups. Further, Meyer's epithets aimed specifically at the governor raised his frustration, particularly in that those epithets came from erstwhile allies who supported the ERA. Like previous misunderstandings, miscommunications, and instances of duplicity among ratification supporters, this 1976 open breach of faith among amendment proponents tainted ratification efforts in the state and helped foster distrust between politicians and proponent

[9] Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, "Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus - Press Release, 1976," August 13, 1976, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, "Governor's Commission on the Status of Women - Press Release," August 13, 1976, 1-2, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

groups, leaving a legacy of suspicion and ill will that hindered future ERA efforts.

Governor George Nigh's term of office proved no exception. First elected governor in November, 1978, then reelected in 1982, the Democrat served until early January, 1987. Nigh's first term fell within the years of the ERA campaign and, like Governors Hall and Boren, Nigh repeatedly asserted his support for ratification. In February, 1977, a few months before Nigh's election, NOW began its national economic boycott of unratified states. The boycott continued throughout the remaining ERA years, with large numbers of national and state organizations pledging support. The NOW boycott as well as economic boycotts undertaken by other women's organizations affected Oklahoma. In July, 1977, for example, Governor Boren's office received a copy of a letter addressed to Trudy Schwartz, president of the Oklahoma chapter of the Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Clubs from the National Federation of BPW (NFBPW). In that letter, the national president stated to Schwartz that the NFBPW was "unable to consider Oklahoma as a site for our 1982 convention," as the national group had voted in 1975 not to hold conventions in unratified states.[10]

[10] Oklahoma Department of Libraries, "Biographical Note George Nigh," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/bios/nigh.pdf; For examples of national groups that joined NOW's economic boycott see, for example, Douglas E. Kneeland, "Boycott by Equal Rights Backers Puts Squeeze on Convention Cities : A Boycott by the Backers of Equal Rights Is Spreading Concern Among the Country's Convention Cities," *New York Times (1857-Current file)*, November 13, 1977,

ERAmerica also committed to a boycott of unratified states. In October, 1977, ERAmerica co-chairs Liz Carpenter, then a "Democratic national committeewoman," and former "assistant chairwoman of the Republican National Committee," Ellie Petersen, spoke at an Oklahoma pro-ERA banquet held "to kick off" the state ratification effort for 1979. At the banquet, Carpenter and Peterson warned "Oklahoma is throwing away millions of dollars in convention trade each year" by having failed to ratify the amendment. Further, the National Governors' Association, during Nigh's first term as the state's chief executive and in honor of Oklahoma's seventy-fifth anniversary of statehood, chose the Sooner state as the site of their 1982 annual conference. At the instigation and urging of the president of OKWPC, Wanda Jo Peltier, the NWPC began a nationwide drive in 1981 to persuade state governors to refuse to participate in the Oklahoma conference. Moreover, the boycott actions of Oklahoma Caucus members led to a clash between OKWPC and the governor, further weakening the bonds between state amendment allies.[11]

Special to *The New York Times* edition and Janet K. Boles, "Building Support for the ERA: A Case of 'Too Much, Too Late'," *PS* 15, no. 4 (Autumn 1982): 572-577. Boles, 574, states that by March, 1980, "over 350 organizations" had joined NOW's economic boycott; Jane Culbreth to Trudy Schwarz, "Dear Trudy," typed, May 13, 1977, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

[11]Paul Wenske, "ERA Stand Costing Oklahoma, Speakers Say," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, October 16, 1977, 19; "ERA Group Plans 'Rhinestone' Jubilee," *The Daily Oklahoman*, June 12, 1981, 96; Ed Montgomery, "Women Protest State Meeting of Governors," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 3, 1981, 63.

In July, 1981, representatives from OKWPC attended the four-day, tenth anniversary NWPC conference held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. At that meeting, both the state and the Oklahoma City chapters of OKWPC received recognition and awards "for the greatest membership growth in the nation." In Albuquerque, Oklahoma WPC members wore T-shirts with prominent logos consisting of an outline of the state and the words, "We don't meet in unratified states; our governors shouldn't either." According to ERA proponent leader and OKWPC member Pat Rigler, because the Oklahoma chapters were receiving awards on the Saturday night of the Albuquerque meeting, the media "focused on" the group and their T-shirts, including national news cameras.[12]

Two months after the NWPC convention, a group of OKWPC leaders obtained an appointment with the governor in order to ascertain "what his effort was going to be" that year to support ratification in the state. The group included at least several members who had been seen on national television wearing the Oklahoma T-shirts. As recounted by those OKWPC members, aides escorted them into the governor's office and the women "were seated" at one end of the room, while Nigh worked at the other, "never look[ing] up" as the ratificationists came in. They "sat there . . . a long time"

[12] "ERA Group Plans 'Rhinestone' Jubilee," 96; Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, "Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus - Press Release, 1981," July 1981, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 30, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; Shirley (Hilbert) Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*, Spoken word compact disc, 2 vols., Oklahoma Voices (Recorded at the Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library, Oklahoma City, OK, 2007).

with no response from the governor. Eventually, the chief executive joined the women and asked them "what they wanted." According to OKWPC members, when they asked about his plans for ratification efforts, Nigh showed that he was "very angry" with both the women and their actions in Albuquerque. Among other comments to the group, the governor said: "Do you know how you embarrassed me? I was the chair of the national governors' conference here in Oklahoma," a meeting, Nigh reminded them, attended by then-President Ronald Reagan, and "you all went to Albuquerque and you had those T-shirts on just really berating us."[13]

The humiliated governor resented the women for generating negative publicity for the state and for him as governor. From the OKWPC members' perspective, however, Nigh "was not embarrassed by the fact that he didn't want equal rights for women in the state, that didn't embarrass him." The disparity of those two positions represented a wide gulf between ERA allies within the state. The ratificationists' unbending ideology, while signifying in their minds a righteous stand for justice, denoted for the governor a group of allies who had succeeded only in embarrassing him and the state, thereby hurting their common cause. By the latter years of the campaign, Oklahoma pro-ERA activists came to be disillusioned by many of the politicians with whom they worked, viewing those allies' efforts as weakened by compromise. In contrast, state politicians often regarded their efforts on

[13] Ibid.

behalf of ratification as fraught with political peril, efforts demanding both artful negotiation and careful concession.[14]

Furthermore, for state feminists the appeal of an ethos of radicalism in support of their cause at times overrode their political acumen. In 2007, former state amendment proponent Junetta Davis recalled, "Well, Gloria Steinem came to Oklahoma once and she said 'Do something radical every day' and we pretty much did." Thus, Oklahoma ratificationists combined public ERA lobbying efforts with clandestine acts designed to help alleviate feminists' frustration with the lengthy and often dispiriting amendment fight, efforts they hoped might shock, awaken and, perhaps, shame state politicians and citizens into more explicit ratification support. In executing those acts, state feminists also targeted certain diehard antifeminist politicians. State Representative John Monks, in particular, drew feminists' attention, chiefly because Monks seemed unlikely to reverse his traditional views of women nor alter his successful stands against ratification of the amendment in the Oklahoma House.[15]

The Democrat from Muskogee served as a representative from 1969 through 1988, then again from 1991 through 1994. In February, 1973, nationally-syndicated *Time Magazine* reported that Monks "helped defeat" the ERA in the Oklahoma House that year by "preaching" from the Bible:

[14] For "not embarrassed" quote see Ibid.

[15] For Davis quote see Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement.*

"The good book says a woman should serve her husband." Six years later, *The Sunday Oklahoman* described the representative as "[o]ne of the principal opponents of ERA since it first appeared in the Oklahoma legislature." According to the paper, Monks "clearly enjoys his role as Oklahoma's last line of defense against the Equal Rights Amendment." Like other Oklahoma antiratificationists, the Democrat tied the ERA to widening federal intervention in citizens' lives, communism, the weakening of the military, and objections based on biological essentialist arguments. Further, *The Daily Oklahoman* in 1979 credited Monks with three separate legislative defeats of ERA ratification "on the House floor" in the amendment's seven year state history up to that date. While state feminists targeted a variety of politicians over the decade, Oklahoma ratificationists made John Monks one of their prime interests and quarry.[16]

Although state proponents of the amendment worked toward Monks' defeat during at least one of his reelection bids, those efforts failed. However, state ratificationists also targeted the representative with more lighthearted actions, although Monks' reaction revealed a differing view of those measures. In 2007, former OKWPC leaders recalled one of their number sending the representative bogus press releases signed by "Radical

[16] "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - John Monks," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; "Trouble for ERA," *Time*, February 19, 1973, 2; John Greiner, "Legislative Leaders Pondering ERA Strategy," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, February 4, 1979, 5; Covey Bean, "Foe Aglow In ERA Woe : Foe Claims It's All Over," *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 21, 1979, sec. Front page, 1.

American Feminists (RAF)." The title of one release illustrates the nature of the feminists' baiting: "Environmental Update For Immediate Release – Radical American Feminists Encourage Monks' Support of Nocturnal Emissions Bill." The release cited Monks' "pro-life stand" as not having "gone far enough." The RAF then urged the representative to author a bill that would regulate and punish "nocturnal emissions violators" and that would, therefore, "save millions of lives." In response to this and other RAF provocations, Monks in early 1981 "obtained an Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation [(OSBI)] probe of the RAF by going through the governor's office." The representative told *The Daily Oklahoman* that "he thought a federal law may have been broken" by the RAF "using the mail for coercion, intimidation, and slander."[17]

In January, 1981, RAF also targeted Governor Nigh. The governor received from the group "a stuffed toy rat" with a "yellow stripe down the back." RAF publicly claimed credit for sending the rat to the governor, stating they were "disgusted with Nigh's failure to appoint women to high state government posts" and with his failure to obtain state ratification of the ERA. The group also promised "to track Nigh around the state and 'to set traps for him wherever he goes.'" Two months later, an *Oklahoma City*

[17] Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton, "Personal interview," interview by Jana Vogt, digital recording, November 20, 2008, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*; Radical American Feminists (RAF), "Radical American Feminists Encourage Monks' Support of Nocturnal Emissions Bill," undated, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Ed Montgomery, "Feminist Leader Criticizes Monks' Legislative Record," *The Daily Oklahoman*, March 6, 1981, 52.

Times article reported an aide to Governor Nigh "confirmed the OSBI had been asked to look into the [John Monks'] matter." In response, the state heads of three pro-ERA groups protested that Monks' bringing the OSBI into the affair was, according to OKWPC state chair Wanda Jo Peltier, a "misuse of a state agency for personal reasons." The chair of OK-ERA, Marilyn Statts, added that Monks' actions were "a blatant attempt to stifle freedom of speech." In addition, the executive director of the state ACLU, Shirley Barry, noted that if a state official "can bring to bear the forces of government at his or her capricious whim," citizens' constitutionally guaranteed right of "political expression . . . will be put in jeopardy."[18]

As the ERA campaign became increasingly contested and as it dragged on over the years, state feminists' patience became tested to the limit, often resulting in acts calculated to obtain publicity, to ease frustrations, and to show state politicians that feminists were deadly serious in their belief that many Oklahoma politicians underestimated women's abilities and their commitment to ratification. Furthermore, the activities of ratificationists directed at pro-ERA politicians demonstrated the certainty of many state feminists that those officials were failing to provide strong support for ratification. With those actions, state proponents often emulated national radical feminists, perhaps in the belief that satirical acts would help propel Oklahoma into a more liberal social and political age. Despite their

[18] "Feminists Take Credit For 'Rat'," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 15, 1981, 36; "Monks' quiz request upsets right's groups," *The Oklahoma City Times*, March 5, 1981, 7.

growing political expertise, however, state feminists erred in not realizing that guerilla acts ultimately hurt their cause. Many, if not all of the state's antiratificationists, for example, certainly would have abhorred the types of protests used by RAF, if only because those acts ran counter to antifeminists' beliefs about women's proper role and behaviors within society. With these highly-publicized acts, state ratificationists often misjudged or ignored Oklahoma's cultural climate and alienated the state politicians on whom ratification relied.

Conversely, ratificationists' resentment and distrust of state politicians seems justified. During the years 1973 through 1982, for example, the three governors delivered a total of ten State of the State annual addresses. In those addresses, the state's chief executives mentioned their support for ratification only three times – Governor Hall in 1974, Governor Boren in 1975, and Governor Nigh in 1979. In 1974, Hall's annual address noted his support for ERA in one sentence to legislators: "You also are urged to reconsider the Equal Rights Amendment and are asked to create and fund a statutory agency on opportunity for women." This one line comprised the final paragraph of a brief, four paragraph section titled "Corrections Problems Faced." As the title suggests, the section dealt, in the main, with needed funding for an improved "criminal corrections system," particularly "in the aftermath of a grim prison riot." Perhaps the placement of his ERA support within a section dedicated to increased funding for corrections and

law enforcement officials reveals Hall's joining of the two issues in his mind. As noted in chapter two, one area of concern for members of Hall's Commission on the Rights of Women (GCRW), the forerunner to GCSW, was the care and education of Oklahoma's incarcerated women. However, the governor's 1974 brief, one-line inclusion of ERA support within a paragraph outlining the needs of Oklahoma's penal institutions and law enforcement agencies also may reveal the governor's reluctance to provide substantive and public support for an increasingly divisive issue that was engendering a growing political quagmire, one experienced by Hall's successors.[19]

The 1975 and 1979 addresses represent the initial State of the State speeches for Governors Boren and Nigh, respectively. Consequently, inclusions of ERA backing in those two addresses may have fulfilled the governors' obligations to ratification and represented commitments to ERA for the full length of their terms of office, thus requiring no further mention of support in subsequent State of the State speeches. In feminists' reasoning, however, the fact that ERA became a recurring legislative issue necessitated a yearly repetition of support in the annual addresses.

[19] I was unable to obtain David Boren's 1977 State of the State address, therefore, unable to obtain verification as to whether the governor mentioned the ERA in that address; David Hall, "State of the State Governor David Hall," January 8, 1974, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, online, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/addresses/hall1974.pdf. Most likely Governor Hall referred to the July 27, 1973, riot at the Oklahoma State Prison in McAlester, Oklahoma, in which three inmates died, approximately twenty-one prison officials were held hostage, and "more than twenty million dollars in damage" to the prison occurred. Although the hostages were released on July 28, inmates "control[led] . . . the prison until August 4." Quoted in Les Brooks, "McAlester Prison Riot," http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/MC002.html.

Moreover, Governor Boren's statement supporting ratification in his 1975 address, following immediately on the heels of the governor's firm call to "Let us stop [the] injustice" of Oklahoma's gendered inheritance tax bill, consisted of a rather tepid three-sentence paragraph amidst the speech's penultimate statements: "There is another issue before you which affects the women of our state. I support all equality for all citizens under the law. For that reason I favor ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment." In like vein, Governor Nigh's 1979 fifth-page mention of the ERA within his ten-page speech fell within a paragraph that began by addressing "the lack of job opportunities" for "minorities and women, the urban, the young, the older people." Thus, all Oklahomans should enjoy "[b]enefits of full employment and equal rights." The governor next stated: "I personally support equal rights and opportunities for all – and strongly recommend your support of these rights – one way to publicly express our concern is the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment."[20]

Nigh's diffident support for ratification appeared, therefore, almost as an afterthought within a paragraph addressing workplace inequities. The governor's roundabout backing of the amendment would not have been lost on ratificationists or other political observers at the time. Both Boren and Nigh's inauspicious and brief mentions of the ERA as well as their weak

[20] David Boren, "State of the State Governor David Boren," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, January 14, 1975, 6, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/addresses/boren1975.pdf; George Nigh, "State of the State," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, January 9, 1979, 5, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/addresses/nigh1979.pdf.

endorsement of ratification – particularly as their amendment support appeared in just two of their combined seven State of the State addresses – certainly provide evidence of the political muddle the amendment presented to state politicians as well as validation of feminists' doubts about the vigor of the chief executives' commitments to ERA.

In addition, a January, 1982, *Daily Oklahoman* editorial captured the dilemma governors and other state politicians found themselves caught within, making abundantly clear the ways in which politicians equivocated on the ERA issue. Although not the editorialist's intention, the article further verified feminists' dissatisfaction and anger with state politicians. Titled "ERA Zealots Hard to Please," the author stated that ratificationists "apparently were a bit miffed" that Governor Nigh failed to include an "all-out exhortation for [ERA] passage" in his January, 1982, State of the State address. Giving credence both to the wrath of feminists and their reservations about their state political allies, the editorial confirmed: "Instead of declaring that the Legislature should ratify the ERA amendment, as his preprinted text said, the governor included only an implied endorsement with a rhetorical question: 'And isn't it time we addressed the rights of women?'" Continuing, the editorial noted that the governor "is on record repeatedly" as endorsing ratification and that "one might think ERA zealots would be satisfied" with Nigh's record and with his oblique support of

ERA in the annual address. "But this, after all, is a heated political issue," the article asserted, "and our governor is nothing if not a politician."[21]

The editorialist then concluded that Nigh, "no doubt with an eye toward a reelection campaign," likely was aware of a hypothetical politician who, in a folksy story, successfully sidestepped a difficult political question. As a Democrat, Nigh certainly participated in, or at the least was aware of, his party's legislative leaders' strategy concerning ERA and that those leaders intended to introduce the measure early in the legislative session. Failing to mention ERA in his 1982 State of the State address, on the opening day of that session, sent a message to Oklahoma citizens, and most important to lawmakers specifically, that the governor was no advocate of the amendment.[22]

Feminists, of course, challenged the governors' omissions of ERA backing in their addresses. For example, Oklahoma City's Nancy Scarborough, a member of the GCRW, wrote to Governor Hall about his failure to acknowledge the ERA in his 1973 address. Scarborough's letter noted she had "pointed out" to other ERA proponents that "you are the only leader in this state that has taken such a strong [pro-ERA] position" while, at the same time, she reminded Hall that she "was one of the women who visited your office to ask why you didn't mention the ERA in your [1973]

[21] "ERA Zealots Hard to Please," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 8, 1982, 8.

[22] Ibid.

state of the state message." Scarborough said the purpose of that office visit was "not to embarrass" the governor, "but only to let you know how I felt." Her next sentence exposed the crux of the issue for Scarborough and for many feminists: "While I know I have a loyalty to you, being on the Commission, I know you understand the loyalty of doing what one thinks is right."[23]

With this last statement, Scarborough gently and eloquently revealed the dilemma of attempting to support politicians to whom feminists felt they owed allegiance, but who often failed to reciprocate. Moreover, State of the State addresses afford governors an opportunity to outline their future plans and, more important, to announce publicly those issues the state executive champions. A particular issue's inclusion within these addresses emphasizes a governor's patronage of and belief in that issue. In essence, the governors' failure to include the ERA in seven of their ten addresses delivered a public message that they did not believe the cause rated their support. Perhaps, too, the governors failed to endorse the ERA in their annual addresses as attempts to distance themselves from the issue. Furthermore, while the audiences for these speeches include the full citizenry of Oklahoma, state legislators constitute the more specific audience as well as the actual one. At a time when state legislators would decide the fate of the amendment in Oklahoma, the governors, recognized allies of the

[23] Nancy Scarborough to David Hall, "Dear Governor Hall," handwritten, January 7, 1973, David Hall, RG 8-S-23-3, Box 4, Folder 16, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original.

ERA, evaded the subject within their State of the State speeches and, in so doing, set a public example of irresolute support that legislators and other state politicians would follow.

The steady frustration of ratificationists with such irresolute support drew public scrutiny, such as a 1980 editorial that advised, “Those militant darlings for the ERA are making people mad again and stirring up opposition to their cause when they should be out to win friends and influence people.” Feminists, however, were not the only constituents to goad state politicians. Antiratificationists also did not hesitate to complain to their state and national representatives about the ERA, particularly if antifeminists felt politicians showed favoritism to ratificationists. For example, a barrage of letters and phone calls throughout the decade displayed ERA opponents’ anger with the GCSW, particularly their perception that feminists and the governors used the commission unfairly to promote the amendment. Antifeminists further resented that commission members came from the ranks of ERA proponents exclusively. In a 1975 letter addressed to Governor Boren, for example, Mrs. E. J. Barnett told the governor she was “very opposed to your creation – the Commission on the Status of Women.” Barnett claimed that both she and the governor knew that the commission was “simply a vehicle to push ERA.” Since the governor used “everyone’s money” (i.e., tax dollars) to establish and fund “this very useless commission,” Barnett had two options for the governor: either all interests should be represented,

"especially the [addition of the] anti-ERA group," or the commission should "be abolished."[24]

Other issues engendered letters and phone calls from antiratificationists, including protests that taxpayer money funded pro-ERA celebrity visits to Oklahoma, such as those made by actors Alan Alda and Valerie Harper. One such letter decried the use of the governor's mansion to "entertain the Pro-ERA forces." The author asked, "Was the same offer of hospitality extended to the Anti-ERA people?" In reply, Governor Nigh's office assured the writer that "the ERA Countdown Campaign paid for all expenses," adding that had ERA opponents made similar requests, "with or without a celebraty [*sic*], that request would have been honored." Although the majority of replies from the three governors' offices responded individually to each letter and phone call received, during the final push for ratification Nigh's office chose to reply with generic form letters because, as they assured one ERA opponent who thought the governor was attempting to "hide" some purpose by sending a form-letter response, the governor had "received thousands of letters on the [ERA] subject." Throughout the decade, the amendment generated outpourings of ardent anti-ERA letters and phone calls to beleaguered state politicians, witness to a vigorous

[24] "ERA militants are about to ensure its defeat again" (Oklahoma Press Clipping Bureau, December 10, 1981), George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 3, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Mrs. E. J. Barnett to David Boren, "Dear Mr. Boren," handwritten, March 21, 1975, David Boren, RG 8 T 5 1, Box 10, Folder 7, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

antiratification movement in the state and to that movement's commitment to influencing those politicians.[25]

While proponents' letters to politicians typically represented individuals and state or national organizations, the majority of opponents' letters came from individuals, infrequently mentioning a connection to antiratification organizations, such as STOP ERA or WWWW. Nor did opponents seem to provoke the type of negative publicity feminists incurred with their more radical actions. Antiratificationists kept to their grassroots image with these practices. However, the high number of anti-ERA letters from different authors from a diverse range of Oklahoma towns, but written with the same specific complaints and using similar wording, hints at an efficient system of disseminating information and motivating troops within the antiratificationist camp. Ruth Murray Brown's papers, for instance, contain a transcribed example of an ERA opponent letter sent to one state legislator in 1975. That transcribed example appeared in the legislator's mail at least nine times, causing Brown to remark "all [nine letters] have the same or identical wording." Further, representations of these types of letters

[25] Glenda Mattoon to George Nigh, "Dear Governor Nigh," typed, January 5, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Dian Copelin to Glenda Mattoon, "Dear Mrs. Mattoon," typed, January 26, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Dian Copelin to Coleta Sturgeon, "Dear Coleta," typed, February 1, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Coleta Sturgeon to George Nigh, "I understand the need for memos, but don't use one to hide behind.," handwritten, January 25, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

from antiratificationists also exist within the governors' archives at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.[26]

Similar letters occur in the papers of Oklahoma's congressional members. In 1977, for instance, Congressman Mickey Edwards, Republican representative from Oklahoma's Fifth District, received two letters, the first on November 10, the second on November 11, from antiratificationists with two different return addresses in Oklahoma City. Both of the authors, Polly Nye and Jane Bryan, wrote virtually the same letter to Edwards, including the capitalization of specific words. Each letter's first paragraph, for instance, stated "a Coalition of female members of Congress and White House supporters are preparing to seek an extension of the Seven Year deadline set in 1972 for the States to ratify E.R.A." Each letter writer stated her opposition to extending the ERA deadline, beginning those statements of opposition with "We, as Christians" and continuing the sentence with identical wording. Furthermore, each author then stated her opposition to "the Displaced Homemakers Bill (HR-28)," and to "(HR-2998) Civil Rights for Homosexuals," again with the use of identical punctuation and capitalization as well as wording. Both letters ended with pleas for Edwards to "help us bring back Our Christian Nation."[27]

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[26] Ruth Murray Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown transcript - Legislators' mail," unpublished (Norman, Oklahoma, 1975), Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

[27] "Members of Congress from Oklahoma."; Polly Nye to Mickey Edwards, "Honorable Mickey Edwards," handwritten, November 8, 1977, Mickey Edwards Collection, Box 114,

During late 1977, Congressman Tom Steed, a Democrat representing Oklahoma's Fourth District, received virtually identical letters from antiratificationists. The letters came from authors who lived in at least seven Oklahoma towns – Washita, Binger, Apache, Elgin, Newalla, Lawton, and Anadarko, with one letter writer's hometown unidentified. The two letters from Washita and Binger were almost word for word the same, including the assertion that "this [ERA and IWY] movement is a tool . . . used to destroy the foundation our country is built upon." In another example from these two letters, both authors stated, using original brackets, "I do not feel it is right for a few women [compared to the rest of us] to make rules for all of us to live by." The remainder of each letter mirrored the other in minute detail, including the authors' inclusion of "WWWW Women who want to be women" underneath their signatures, indicating that each of them most likely belonged to WWWW, an organization constituted primarily of Christian evangelicals. The inclusion of that organization's name most likely indicates that the form letter used originated with WWWW. The remaining six examples of anti-ERA letters to Steed also were essentially identical, although several of the authors personalized the missives to a greater or

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Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; June Bryen to Mickey Edwards, "Honorable Mickey Edwards," handwritten, Mickey Edwards Collection, Box 114, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; At the time of my research, the Mickey Edwards Collection had not yet been inventoried nor was it in use for general research. Thus, the materials I use from that collection do not, at this time, appear to match the Carl Albert Center's current box and folder numbers. In addition, the only designation at the time I collected these materials was a box number. Congressman Edwards graciously gave his written permission allowing me to use his materials. Also, the single criteria used to choose these examples was that they were written during the IWY debate. They also derive from a non-scientific sampling of letters as these examples do not represent a complete perusal of IWY correspondence to those representatives.

lesser degree. However, the preponderance of identical wording and the topics used in each of the six, as well as matching paragraph formation, confirm that these letters, like the previous examples, came from a prepared form. Each of these examples demonstrates the well-organized and methodical nature of the state's antiratification movement. Moreover, each of the letters provides evidence of that movement's excellent ability to direct their participants' antiratification efforts, particularly when viewed in conjunction with other extant sources.[28]

[28] Juanita Walton to Tom Steed, "Dear Mr. Tom Steed," handwritten, November 7, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Mrs. W. R. Mackey to Tom Steed, "Congressman Tom Steed," handwritten, November 8, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Martha J. Duncan and Iwo (illegible) Duncan to Tom Steed, "Dear Mister," handwritten, November 22, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Larene Clabam (illegible) to Tom Steed, "Dear Mr. Steed," handwritten, November 29, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Norma J. Fuller to Tom Steed, "Dear Mr. Steed," typed, December 2, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Mrs. Richard O. Walker to Tom Steed, "Dear Mr. Steed," handwritten, December 2, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Ed Grooms to Tom Steed, "Honorable Tom Steed," typed, December 4, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Donna S. Morris to Tom Steed, "Dear Mr. Tom Steed," typed, December 5, 1977, Tom Steed Collection, Legislative Series, Box 87, Folder 16, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; In a further example from five of the letters to Steed, the first sentence of the final paragraph in three of the letters was "Neither the International Women's Year Committee nor the State IWY conventions speak for me." On two of the five letters, however, the wording differed slightly. In the first of those two letters, the two authors (the Duncans) who signed that letter wrote, with original punctuation noted here, "no: organization or committee speaks for __" and, in the second letter, Larene Clabam wrote "Neither the international Women's year committee nor the state IWY convention speaks for. [*sic*]." These two quotes illustrate that the authors copied from a prepared script with, in the first example, the writers failing to fill-in-the-blank while, instead, they wrote a small version of the blank itself. The second letter's author simply ended her sentence with a period after the word "for," failing to provide an entity with which to complete the sentence.

While ratificationists and antiratificationists alike distributed instructive materials to their respective participants, guiding their supporters in letter writing and other lobbying techniques, ERA opponents seem to have perfected the art both earlier and more effectively than did proponents. As noted in chapter two, proponents disseminated those materials more often during the latter years of the movement. Specifically in 1982, the final year of the campaign, the availability of national funding in Oklahoma helped broaden the scope and accessibility of pro-ratification resources. That same type of information, however, seemingly flowed more easily throughout ERA opponents' networks. Perhaps due to the cooperative nature and overlapping membership of those networks and because opponents worked through one overarching distribution group, STOP ERA, organized state antiratification lobbying efforts often were less easily discerned at the time but proved to be eminently viable and persuasive.

For example, the heading "Letters to Write" appeared on two "Eagle Forum Worksheets," dated November 1, 1977, and March 7, 1978. At the top of both notices were paragraphs urging readers to write their state and congressional representatives, and explaining the topics readers should include. In November, 1977, the "#1 TOP PRIORITY" was the ERA extension bill. The worksheet directed its readers to "Call or Write [Congressional members] Bellmon, Bartlett, Jones, & Risenhoover "TODAY" as well as "your state senators and representatives TODAY" and to ask

those legislators also to contact Oklahoma's congressional delegation "to protest" an ERA extension.[29]

More telling, an antiratification instruction guide, comprised of four legal-sized pages and titled "LETTER WRITING," provided thorough instructions on both letter writing and how, when, and where to contact Oklahoma's state and congressional representatives. From the representatives listed and other clues, this undated packet could have been sent out no earlier than 1975 and no later than 1978. After first exhorting its readers that "YOUR PEN IS A POWERFUL WEAPON" and "you can become part of a mighty force, without ever leaving your home, to restore decency and morality to our great nation," the first lengthy page, written in small typeface, explained in detail to its readers how they could become that "mighty force." The remainder of the first page showed readers how to address properly state and congressional legislators, with numerous suggestions on how to write – "Handwritten letters are preferable" – and to whom to write, listing first state representatives and senators, "plus the governor," with appropriate Oklahoma state capitol addresses, then "Elected Representatives in Washington," then letters to editors: "This is the most widely-read sections [*sic*] of most papers, and . . . becomes a powerful avenue" for disseminating "our views before the public." The directives

[29] "Eagle Forum Worksheet for Nov. 1, 1977," November 1, 1977, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphases original; "Eagle Forum Worksheet March 7, 1978," March 7, 1978, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

continued, next urging readers to send “Letters to personal friends,” “heads of organizations,” “businessmen,” and to “the news media.” Replete with meticulous instructions, each section on the page gave specifics on how to write personalized and germane letters tailored for the politician, organization, or private individual receiving each letter.[30]

The final three pages appear to be customized for the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area. Copious amounts of detailed information on how to contact state, local, and national legislators as well as other Oklahoma executives guided antiratificationists in all manner of communications with their elected officials, including the reminder that “Your State legislators may be contacted at their home on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday each week.” The second page included the caveat: “Remember, no one may say they represent or speak for Eagle Forum unless they have special permission from the President or the board of directors.”[31]

Representing only one example from many of its type within extant anti-ERA sources from the decade, this detailed, well-organized, and informative packet of antiratification materials belies claims regarding the “ad hoc” nature of the amendment opposition movement and testifies to efficient cooperation among antifeminists. Distributing a comprehensive, generic “how to” letter, instructing readers on the best ways of getting their

[30] “Letter Writing,” 1975, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphases original.

[31] Ibid.

message across, and customizing information for a specific area within the state illustrate the efficiency and viability of the antiratification movement at the state and, presumably, national levels. Moreover, this packet and the great numbers of largely similar, at times identical anti-ERA letters, phone calls, and other messages received by politicians during the decade testify to the antiratification movement's dynamism and systematic organization.[32]

By the mid to latter years of the drive, state opponents began using the network they originally built to combat ratification as an efficient electioneering machine. As early as 1976, for instance, a state chapter of one of the conservative women's groups formed specifically in opposition to the amendment participated actively in a reelection campaign for a like-minded candidate. A newspaper article in August of that year, headlined "Trent Backed by ERA Foes," stated that the "Del City Association of W's (Women Who Want to be Women)" endorsed incumbent state representative Ray Trent. Moreover, the article conveyed that the

[32] A number of examples of the anti-ERA, pro-family movement's voting, proselytizing, and other comprehensive guides exist in various archives, including the following three examples from the Oklahoma Historical Society: Women For Responsible Legislation, "Present Status of ERA" (Women For Responsible Legislation, January 1978), 1-2, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 8, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Oklahomans For Life, Inc., "Anti-Abortion Pro-Life Inc. & Oklahomans For Life - Voters Fact Sheet" (Oklahomans For Life, Inc., November 7, 1978), 1-2, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Kathy Teague, "Public Relations For Eagles!" (Eagle Forum, undated), 1-6, ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 13, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

conservative women backed Trent above all for his stance against ratification of the amendment.[33]

By 1980, Oklahoma conservatives were deeply involved in campaigning for or against political aspirants, often basing their efforts on a candidate's position on the amendment and other traditionalist issues. For example, one ratificationist involved in the 1980 elections recalled her surprise at the defeat of a pro-ERA incumbent in a south Oklahoma City district. The activist stated the incumbent was "in his native area . . . and was supported by the South side leaders so it was unfathomable that he could be defeated by an unknown." She also remembered that "some of the things" the opposition did "were just outrageous," such as painting the incumbent's "record [to make] him appear to be anti-law and order." The activist stated that the loss "had such political ramifications. The feeling then was that no one was secure and everyone began to be more afraid to touch ERA."[34]

Additionally, a substantial number of Ruth Murray Brown's antifeminist interviewees told Brown that they were involved in various political campaigns. In November, 1978, for instance, Brown noted that one of Oklahoma's most prominent WWWW leaders "has been busy managing

[33] "Trent Backed by ERA Foes," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, August 22, 1976, sec. A, 10.

[34] Jane Moncliff (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, April 10, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

Mary Helm's campaign." Winning in 1974, conservative Republican Helm was the "first woman elected to the Oklahoma Senate since 1929" as well as a member of the John Birch Society and an active opponent of the ERA. Helm served one term, losing the reelection campaign that Brown referenced. In addition, state opponent leader Ann Patterson spoke with Brown about the 1980 Oklahoma House primary race between Democrats L. H. Bengtson, the anti-ERA incumbent, and amendment proponent Rebecca Hamilton. The ERA opponent leader told Brown "[w]e tried to help him," but Bengtson "defeated himself" by failing to campaign diligently and by not "keeping in touch with his district." In contrast, Hamilton "was out campaigning full-time and she's very good looking, too."[35]

However, the anti-ERA campaign inspired not only leaders of the movement but the rank and file to become politically active, including fundamentalist Christians. For example, one Southern Baptist from Tulsa told Brown that Christian evangelicals should become involved in politics, stating: "If America is to be saved, it has to be saved by saved people." This interviewee also related that she was working "very hard" for

[35] For the prominent WWWW leader's 1978 management of Mary Helm's campaign see Ruth Murray Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown transcript - meeting of Pro-Family Forum," unpublished (Norman, Oklahoma, November 20, 1978), Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For Helm's JBS membership see Ed Montgomery, "Woman Senator Ready to Work Hard," *The Daily Oklahoman*, December 26, 1974, 78; For Helm's career in the state senate see Oklahoma State University Library, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project," *Women of the Oklahoma Legislature*, http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/legislators.htm#Hlink; Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, December 8, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

Republican Dick Freeman and had campaigned "for Don Nickles, too." In 1980 and again in 1982, Freeman ran and lost against Democratic Congressman James Jones. Two other 1980 antiratification traditionalists, Claudia Thomas from "north of Ochelata" in Washington County and east Tulsa resident Martha Simms also campaigned for Freeman during the 1980 elections; Thomas did so in her capacity as Freeman's "district chairman." Regarding politics, Simms told Brown: "Christian people have a responsibility to vote." Through Simms' involvement in "door-to-door" campaigning for Freeman, her sister-in-law and the sister-in-law's twenty-one year old daughter both became active in the candidate's 1980 campaign. Their political participation was a pleasant surprise for Simms as her sister-in-law had "never been involved in anything like that before."[36]

Additional examples further testify to the regional diversity of Oklahoma antiratificationists as well as to their new participation in politics, a participation inspired by the ERA debate. For instance, a Stillwater LDS adherent and member of Citizens for Responsible Legislation (CRL), Sally Morgan, told Brown that she campaigned for Republican Don Nickles in

[36] For the "saved" America and other quotes see Teresa Billings (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 10, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. The "saved" quote also appears in Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 81; For Freeman's campaigns against Congressman Jones see, for example, Walter Jenny, Jr., "Jones' state legacy longlasting » Opinion » The Edmond Sun," *edmondsun.com*, August 12, 2006, http://www.edmondsun.com/opinion/x519214493/Jones-state-legacy-longlasting?keyword=secondarystory; Claudia Thomas (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 24, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Martha Simms (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

1980. Before becoming a member of CRL (a Stillwater antiratification group modeled on WRL), Morgan "had not been active in politics." Furthermore, a young mother from south of Jenks, Oklahoma, told Brown in November, 1980 that before the young woman attended the 1977 IWY conference in Stillwater, she "did not even vote." Having switched her party preference "after IWY," this Church of Christ member campaigned for Dick Freeman and another Republican, Nelson Little, during the 1980 elections; she also voted for Ronald Reagan that year. Little won Oklahoma House District 69 in 1980, serving through 1986. Moreover, Ann Patterson related to Brown in November, 1980 that members of the usually active western Oklahoma Elk City antiratification group "had stopped [their ERA opposition activities] to work in [the] campaigns."[37]

In addition, a northwest Oklahoma City antiratificationist and self-described "pro-lifer," Mary Cane, told Brown in 1981 that she had not participated in politics before the ERA and abortion issues arose. A member of the Lutheran denomination, Cane also stated she "couldn't help Reagan in 1980 because I didn't have five extra minutes" as Cane was busy working

[37] Sally Morgan (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, November 22, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For quotes by the Jenks' woman see Carrie Carson (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, November 14, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For Little's party affiliation and his term as a state representative see "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Nelson Little," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, November 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

as campaign manager for Republican incumbent Representative Bill Graves. Illustrating the often long-lasting effect of antiratificationists' political involvement during the ERA decade, the conservative Graves won reelection in 1980, serving in the Oklahoma House from his initial election in November, 1978 through 1986. In November, 1988, he was again elected to represent the same district, serving through 2004. Graves currently is an Oklahoma County district court judge, having been elected initially to that office in November, 2006.[38]

Moreover, one particular recruiting tool proved highly effective in garnering Christian fundamentalists and other traditionalists to the antiratification cause. A Mustang, Oklahoma antiratificationist recounted to Brown in 1980 that she became involved "in politics about eight years ago," when she joined "the organization after [she] found the pink sheet" on her front door "because this was the way to make the information public." The "organization" to which the antifeminist referred most likely was the conservative Christian group WWWW (later Pro-Family Forum). As WWWW, the antiratificationist organization composed and distributed widely

[38] Mary Cane (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 18, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For Graves' service as a state representative see "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Bill D. Graves," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; For Graves' service as an Oklahoma County district court judge see AP Wire Services, "Judge blasts proposed judicial code changes - He says they promote a 'homosexual agenda.'," *Tulsa World*, June 5, 2008, online archives edition, http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?subjectID=14&articleID=20080605_12_A16_hFIRST194851 and "Judges of Oklahoma County - Bill Graves," *Oklahoma County Courthouse*, http://www.oklahomacounty.org/departments/lawlibrary/index_files/Page1201.htm.

what became known as the “Pink Sheet,” an early and very successful anti-ERA broadside often distributed through churches and printed on pink paper. For example, WRL of the “First Baptist Church, Duncan” distributed copies of the sheet as tri-fold pamphlets prepared for mailing, with one archived copy marked with the Duncan WRL church group having been mailed to another Baptist church in Tulsa. Directed at women, particularly housewives, the pink sheet became “[o]ne of the most valuable recruiting tools” of the antiratification movement as it lambasted the amendment, predicting dire ramifications for women if the ERA passed.[39]

Further, Brown’s 1980 Mustang, Oklahoma interviewee noted that she currently was “county chairman for Don Nickles,” an “obscure young state legislator” and Republican who, in the November elections, won Oklahoma’s 1980 open U.S. Senate seat after it became available with Henry Bellmon’s retirement. Moreover, Brown noted “almost everyone I interviewed during that autumn [of 1980] was working full time for Nickles.” At the age of thirty-one, this “obscure” state senator “trounced the establishment Republican candidate in the primary” and won election to the

[39] Amanda Smith (pseud.), “Unpublished personal interview,” interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 14, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Smith’s memory appears faulty as far as dates go. Her 1980 quote implying that she joined WWWW “eight years ago” had to have been in error. Both the national and Oklahoma WWWW groups were formed in late 1974. See chapter three, this study, for the date of WWWW’s formation; For the history of the successful Pink Sheet including that its author, Lottie Beth Hobbs, stated she first wrote it “[i]n 1974 or 1975” see Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 39-43, 66, for “[o]ne of the most valuable” and Hobb’s “[i]n 1974 or 1975” quotes 39; For an extant example of the Pink Sheet see Lottie Beth Hobbs, “Ladies! Have You Heard?,” ERA Collection, Box 35, Folder 3, Oklahoma Historical Society, The Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Senate in the 1980 general election. One of the successful 1980 Republicans to give the GOP "control of the Senate for the first time in twenty-six years," Nickles won reelection in the succeeding three races, ultimately remaining a U.S. Senator for twenty-four years. While in the Senate, Nickles served as chair of the Republican Policy, National Republican Senatorial, and the powerful Senate Budget Committees. He also became Senate Majority Whip, a position he held from 1996 to 2003 and which made Nickles the "second-ranking Republican in the Senate."[40]

While serving as a first-term state senator, Nickles' decision to run for the Bellmon seat "evoked considerable hilarity" as he was running against two "better-known and better-financed rivals." However, Nickles' ability to judge the political climate in Oklahoma proved both perceptive and rewarding. The day after his 1980 congressional win, *The New York Times* noted that "Mr. Nickles aligned himself with the extreme right" during his single term as a state senator, an "extreme right" motivated by such issues as school busing, "national defense, the proposed equal rights amendment, the Panama Canal, . . prayer in school, and abortion." A few months later,

[40] Smith (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," October 14, 1980; For "obscure young state legislator" and "almost everyone I interviewed" quotes see Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 152; For "trounced" and "control of the senate" quotes see Paul Houston, *Times* Staff Writer, "GOP Wins Senate Control by Defeating Top Liberals : Congress: GOP Defeats Top Liberal Democrats," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, November 5, 1980, 28; "U.S. Senate: Senators Home > State Information > Oklahoma," *United States Senate*, http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/senators/one_item_and_teasers/oklahoma.htm; "The Don Nickles Fellowship Program," *Oklahoma State University*, http://www.cied.okstate.edu/downloads/OfficialNicklesBrochure.pdf; Carl Hulse, "No. 2 Republican In Senate Calls For Vote On Lott," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2002, sec. U.S., A1.

the same paper called Nickles "a classic New Right creation," reporting that the new U.S. Senator during the recent campaign had "attended the conservatives' 'candidate school' run by . . . Paul Weyrich's Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress." In that campaign, candidate Nickles made clear that "profamily issues" were his own. Moreover, *The Tulsa World* noted that Nickles told his audiences during the 1980 primary run: "I'm against the D.O.E., H.E.W., H.U.D., E.P.A., and O.S.H.A." Twenty-two years later, Nickles remained a traditionalist, with a "tendency for intractability" in the Senate as well as being "vehemently opposed to all types of abortion and solidly . . . anti-government intrusion." Writing for the *Wall Street Journal* in 1986, conservative Paul Weyrich explained Nickles' second successful bid for the U.S. senate. During the reelection campaign, Nickles again "skillfully involved the religious right." Weyrich then quoted Nickles' fellow Oklahoman, evangelist Oral Roberts, as stating: "I'm a Democrat, but Nickles represents more of what Oklahoma is about than does [his opponent] who is a liberal." Throughout his term in the U.S. Senate, the conservative senator from Oklahoma steadfastly upheld the traditionalist beliefs of those antiratificationists who helped raise him from obscurity in 1980.[41]

[41] For "considerable hilarity," "rivals," and Nickles' aligning himself with the "extreme right" quotes see Steven V. Roberts, "Six of the Many New Faces That Will Be Seen in the Next Session of Congress," *New York Times (1923-Current file)*, November 6, 1980, A29; For the listing of "extreme right" issues see Steven V. Roberts, Special to *The New York Times*, "Evangelicals Press Political Activities : Fundamentalists in Sun Belt Ally With Conservative Groups -- Expected to Aid Reagan Shifting Sentiment of Voters Economy Is Thriving National Defense an Issue Endorsement of Reagan," *New York Times (1923-Current file)*,

Crediting insight gained through her extensive interviews with antiratificationists, Ruth Brown attributed the large number of victorious conservative candidates in 1980 to "a general mobilization of Christian conservatives" rather than to the efforts of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. Brown further averred that Oklahoma "candidates associated with Moral Majority . . . lost, . . while Don Nickles, a Catholic enthusiastically supported by the activists of Eagle Forum and Pro-Family Forum, won." As one Oklahoma pro-family activist and Church of Christ member stated in 1980: "Nickles hasn't seemed afraid to say: yes, I'm a moral man. . . . I would work for him regardless of party." Opposition to ratification of the ERA politicized large numbers of Oklahoma traditionalists, particularly socially conservative women. These women used the knowledge and experience gained from the antiratification campaign to connect with other traditionalist citizens as well as with state politicians, applying that knowledge and their political skills in support of conservative office-seekers and often supplying the winning edge for their candidates. Beginning with the ERA movement, the state's traditionalist women participated actively in political affairs,

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September 29, 1980, 67; Peter Ross Range, "Thunder From The Right : Helms : Helms : Helms," *New York Times (1923-Current file)*, February 8, 1981, SM6 (25), 64, 74, 81, for "classic New Right," "attended . . . Weyrich," and "profamily issues" quotes see 74, for *Tulsa World* quotes see 81. Further, the following are all federal departments or agencies: "D.O.E." refers to the Department of Energy, "H.E.W." stands for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "H.U.D." for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, "E.P.A" for the Environmental Protection Agency, and "OSHA" for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration; For "tendency for" and "vehemently opposed" quotes see Jessica Reaves, "Replacing Lott," *Time*, December 17, 2002, http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,400621,00.html; For "skillfully involved" and the Oral Robert's quote see Paul M. Weyrich, "Ignoring the Right Cost GOP the Senate," *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 1986, Eastern edition, 1.

ultimately becoming a fundamental element of the larger national conservative movement of the 1980s and beyond.[42]

Neither proponents nor opponents of ratification were shy about bringing pressure to bear on Oklahoma politicians in attempts to change those officials' stances on ratification. In addition to the examples given earlier of state ratificationists' pressure on and censure of politicians, ERA opposition activists also lobbied state officials directly. Unlike feminists, however, antiratificationists seldom issued public statements against individual officials. Rather, state anti-ERA activists typically sent individual and private communications to those politicians. By using this tactic, ERA opponents both illustrated their command of the "grassroots" and stayed within the bounds of their prescribed beliefs. Examples include a January, 1982 letter from a Bartlesville antiratificationist husband and wife telling Governor Nigh they had "just received the most shocking news from the state capitol." According to the authors of the letter, "some of the senators who voted no on ERA are being bribed and threatened and it is coming from the governor's office." The irate authors then warned Nigh: "If this is true, then you are a 'carbon copy' of Jimmie Carter and you know what happened to him. Is it worth it?" Via the "Governor's Straight Line," a Tulsa opponent also "protest[ed] Governor Nigh's lobbying for the E.R.A. and attempts to buy senators' votes." This opponent phoned the governor's hotline the

[42] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 152, 159; Elizabeth Roberts (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 3, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

same day that the husband and wife wrote their protest letter. In a different example, an April, 1982, call from a Muskogee resident to the governor's hotline protested "the chains that ERA supporters are placing on the Pioneer Woman statue" and demanded that Governor Nigh "do everything possible to stop this at once."[43]

Additionally, a 1979 *Oklahoman* article reported that, according to state legislators, "ERA generates more mail and telephone calls to lawmakers than any other issue." In 1975, for example, a Chandler, Oklahoma antiratificationist avowed to a state legislator that the U.S. "was founded on Bible principles" and "strong homes," while the "ERA may be just one more tool to aid in the destruction of the home." The author then stated, "I know you have branded this kind of thinking emotionalism, . . [b]ut . . . I'm convinced it's time to become emotional." In 1977, another ERA opponent from Bristow, Oklahoma asked the same state legislator, "if you really want to help women & do what is best, let women be women [*sic*] don't try to change the laws that God [h]as set up." While not unusual for politicians to face constituents' attempts at persuasion or coercion, the intense lobbying associated with the amendment and delivered by ratification proponents and

[43] Dr. and Mrs. M. E. Vaclaw, "Dr. and Mrs. M. E. Vaclaw to George Nigh," January 15, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, emphasis original; For Tulsa opponent's phone message see Dian Copelin to Gwen Freeman, "Dear Gwen," typed, February 1, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Mrs. Edgmon to George Nigh, "Governor's Office," Telephone message, April 14, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

opponents alike must have frayed the nerves of even seasoned political veterans. Antiratificationists' greater use of personalized, private lobbying, however, imprinted on both their and their recipients' minds an aura of greater legitimacy and the image of a genuine grassroots movement.[44]

With the intense pressure applied by both sides of the ERA campaign, particularly as the decade advanced, Oklahoma politicians found themselves increasingly caught between their consciences, their political careers, and the desires of constituents. Ratificationists thus praised a number of state politicians for maintaining their proponent stances while under fire from ERA opponents, including Republican U.S. Senator Henry Bellmon. Oklahoma voters twice elected Bellmon governor, with the World War II former Marine and Silver Star winner becoming the state's first Republican chief executive in 1964. Bellmon successfully ran for the U.S. Senate in 1968, serving two terms that lasted from 1969 through early 1980, years that encompassed the larger part of the ratification decade. While in the U.S. Senate, Bellmon "was proud to be one of the original co-sponsors of the ERA amendment." In 1980, OKWPC presented Bellmon with the organization's "Integrity in Political Life" award for reasons illustrated by an anecdote from ratificationist Mattie Morgan. A few years earlier, Morgan had taken umbrage with then-state "Democratic Party Chief [and] state legislator" Bob Funston "who said recently he'd had a 'bellyful of ERA.'" In a

[44] Greiner, "Legislative Leaders Pondering ERA Strategy," 5; Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown transcript - Legislators' mail."

letter to Funston, Morgan declared angrily to the party leader, "if Senator Henry Bellmon could look directly at Republican women carrying 'Stop ERA' signs and strongly support ERA (as he did during last November's Women's Day at the Capitol), she felt" that Funston "could do no less."[45]

Proponent activists lauded additional state politicians for their enduring and staunch support of the amendment during the ERA decade. Those politicians included then-state senator and later governor Frank Keating, "the only Republican in the [Oklahoma] senate who supported the ERA," as well as Democrats Marvin York, Gene Stipe, Bernice Shedrick, and Bernest Cain, along with other Oklahoma senators. Illustrating the lasting affect of pro-ERA activists' political support, Bernest Cain's career spanned the years from the end of the ERA decade to the early twenty-first century. In his first state senate race in 1978, Cain defeated amendment opponent Republican Mary Helm for the Oklahoma City District 46 seat. The "former Common Cause leader" won the district that year with the help of "campaign contributions from pro-Equal Rights Amendment groups." Cain held the seat for twenty-eight years, until recently implemented

[45] Oklahoma Department of Libraries, "Biographical note Henry Bellmon (First Term)," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/bios/bellmon1.pdf; For Bellmon statement that he "was proud" to be an original ERA co-sponsor see State Legislative Council, "1972 Interim Hearings on the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution," January 10, 1973, 143, Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library, Oklahoma Department of Libraries; Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, "Agenda, Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus State Convention, 1980" (presented at the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus State Convention, 1980, Ramada Inn North, 2801 NW 39th, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, December 5, 1980); For Morgan anecdote see Junetta Davis, "Breaking the Bonds," *Oklahoma Monthly*, 1975, 10.

Oklahoma term limits required his resignation in 2006. Another Democrat, Andrew Rice, won Cain's former district. Furthermore, legislators in the Oklahoma House commended by feminists for sustained ERA stances included Democrats Hannah Atkins, Cal Hobson ("one of the most progressive members of the legislature" who lost his senate seat in 2006 due to term limits), Charles Morgan, Jim Townsend, and Republican Helen Arnold, among others.[46]

Like Senator Bellmon, ERA opponent Congressman Mickey Edwards did not hesitate to communicate his beliefs about ratification to constituents, whether proponent or opponent. Extant replies from Edwards to state ratificationists and antiratificationists reveal the congressman's unflinching dedication to honesty on his antiratification stance, with no waffling on the

[46] For names of politicians admired by feminists and for quote praising Keating see Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*; Keating served in the Oklahoma House from 1972 to 1974 and in the state Senate from 1974 to 1981. He served two terms as governor, from 1994 through 2002. For this and further Keating information see Oklahoma Department of Libraries, "Biographical Note Frank Keating," *Oklahoma Department of Libraries Online*, http://www.odl.state.ok.us/oar/governors/bios/keating.pdf; For "campaign contributions" quote see Ira Perry, "Helm, But She's Not Out of the Game - Final Appeals to State Election Board, Senate Will Decide Fate," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 16, 1979, 33; John Greiner Capitol Bureau, "Five hope to fill Oklahoma City Senate seat," *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 7, 2006, sec. Local & State, 12; "Oklahoma State Senate - Senators - Senator Andrew Rice - District 46," *The Oklahoma State Senate*, http://www.oksenate.gov/Senators/biographies/rice_bio.html; For the date of both Cain and Hobson's termination of legislative service see "Terms ending," *The Oklahoman*, May 29, 2005, sec. Front page, 8; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership, Democrats, 1971-1983," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership, Republicans, 1971-1983," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; For quote describing Cal Hobson as "progressive" see David R. Morgan, Robert E. England, and George G. Humphreys, *Oklahoma Politics & Policies: Governing the Sooner State*, Politics and Governments of the American States Fourth (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in association with the Center for the Study of Federalism, 1991), 83.

issue. In replies to ratificationists, Edwards made his anti-ERA position clear but seemed ready to find common ground. The congressman's separate replies to two proponents, for example, included: "I look forward to being in agreement with you in the future" and "Just because we don't agree doesn't mean that I can't honestly admire the instincts that led you to the position you've taken." Although his words may not have satisfied the recipients, Edwards' responses illustrate his commitment to frankness. Many other opposition politicians remained faithful to their viewpoints, including Jan Turner, who in 1973 earned the epithet "Aunt Jan" from Wanda Jo Peltier, then-president of the Shawnee, Oklahoma NOW chapter, because Turner had "helped to block state ratification" during that year's legislative session.[47]

Despite intense pressure from ratificationists – including from the most well-known state citizen of the day, Speaker Carl Albert – many state lawmakers in 1982 remained firmly opposed to ratification. During his thirty year political career, Albert "served in Congress longer and held more power than any other Oklahoman." First elected to Congress from Oklahoma's Third District in 1946, the World War II veteran served until January 3, 1977. His career included rising through the ranks of the national Democratic Party

[47] Mickey Edwards to Joni L. Loring, "Dear Joni," typed, January 28, 1982, Mickey Edwards Collection, Judiciary ERA 1982, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Mickey Edwards to Sue Ellen Read, "Dear Sue," typed, February 18, 1983, Mickey Edwards Collection, 1983 Correspondence Judiciary - ERA, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; "Rep. Turner Says 'Aunt Jan' Label Just Fine With Her," *The Daily Oklahoman*, May 31, 1973, 36.

to become, in 1955, U.S. House majority whip, then Majority Leader in 1962. In 1972, Albert attained the position of Speaker of the House, the highest post in that chamber. During his six years as Speaker, the Oklahoma congressman and Rhodes Scholar helped guide the country through "Vietnam, busing, the economy, the energy crisis, and Watergate," although his service as House majority leader called forth his most fond memories. In November, 1977, Albert stated those were his most successful years because they encompassed "all the civil rights and poverty legislation" of President Lyndon Johnson's first term and which the Oklahoma congressman helped to pass. However, most Americans remember Albert as the man who twice came within a hair's-breath of advancing to the presidency during the Watergate crisis.[48]

Nevertheless, even a man of Albert's stature failed to persuade Oklahoma legislators to change their postures on the ERA. On January 13, 1982, the former Speaker privately phoned at least one Democratic Oklahoma House member. According to Albert's handwritten notation, the

[48] For "served longer and held more power" quote see Carl Albert Center at the University of Oklahoma, "The Life of Carl Albert : Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives."; For date of Albert's retirement and Rhodes scholar cite see "Albert, Carl Bert - Biographical Information," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=a000073; For "years as majority leader," fond memories, "most successful," and "civil rights and poverty legislation" quotes see Jim Henderson, The Dallas Times Herald, "Retirement From Top Not Easy : Carl Albert: an Institution Goes Home," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, November 13, 1977, F5; For Albert twice coming very close to advancing to the presidency see, for example, Ted Gup, *Washington Post* Staff Writer, "Speaker Albert Was Prepared To Be President : No. 1 House Democrat Was Ready and Willing to Succeed Nixon," *The Washington Post (1974-Current file)*, November 28, 1982, A1, A7 and Harold Jackson, "Carl Albert - Shrewd manager of Watergate investigation," *The Guardian (1959-2003)*, February 7, 2000, 18.

result was: "I called him this A.M. @ 9:30. He won't vote for it." The Speaker also contacted members of the Oklahoma Senate in 1982. Before the ERA failed for a final time in the state senate, a January 19 letter from a Washington, DC attorney and friend remarked on and praised Albert's efforts. While the attorney was "delighted" that Albert had joined Walter Mondale and Alan Alda in lobbying the Oklahoma Senate to pass ERA, his letter also noted that, after reading reports in *The Washington Post*, the lawyer believed the "Oklahoma Senate is probably going to turn out to be a not too-enlightened group." On January 28, after ERA ratification moves in both Oklahoma legislative houses failed, Albert replied to his friend that the endeavor had "appeared hopeless from the beginning," adding that most polls indicated widespread state support for the ERA. Albert's final sentence on the subject suggests both disappointment and pragmatic acceptance: "I soon learned that the effort was going to be useless." Thus, even Carl Albert, a fellow Oklahoman and the influential former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, failed to convince state legislators to change their opposition to the amendment.[49]

One contentious irritant, albeit engendering political repercussions, arose during the latter years of the ERA decade. A significant number of

[49] Carl Albert, "Handwritten notes between the Speaker and his office staff," January 11, 1982, Carl Albert Collection, McAlester Office series, Box 7, Folder 18, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Marcus Cohn to Carl Albert, "Dear Carl," typed, January 19, 1982, Carl Albert Collection, McAlester Office series, Box 7, Folder 18, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center; Carl Albert to Marcus Cohn, "Dear Marcus," typed, January 28, 1982, Carl Albert Collection, McAlester Office series, Box 7, Folder 18, Carl Albert Center Congressional Research & Studies Center.

Oklahomans resented deeply the lobbying efforts of "outsiders" in the state, finding visits by national politicians and celebrities particularly irksome. During the Carter administration, for example, Oklahoma's elected leaders quickly became aware that a large number of outspoken state citizens disagreed with the President and Rosalynn Carter's endorsement of ERA, especially after the 1977 Houston IWY Conference. ERA opponents often believed Carter failed to live up to their original expectations. One woman from Bristow, for example, stated "Carter said he was a born-again Christian, but he's done some things that aren't very Christian," including spending "$1.5 million trying to get the ERA passed." An anti-ERA activist from the Stigler area, Elizabeth Roberts, confirmed she had "voted for Carter last time on the moral issue, but I've changed my mind now." An Edmond opponent related, "I know what President Carter says with his mouth, but I do not think he's morally sound." Antiratificationist Patricia Jones from Sharon, south of Woodward, believed that she "had to be active [politically] to make up for the damage I had done by voting for him [Carter]." In addition, a 1982 *Dallas Morning News* editorial cartoon mocked the national attention Oklahoma received during the final year of ERA. Labeled "Hollywood" in the cartoon, a man led a feminized representation of the Sooner state toward a couch designated "ERA." With his arm around "OKLA," the caption read "Sweetie, I'm gonna make you a star…..Have a seat right over here…."[50]

[50] Anna Meacham (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray

Particularly during the final ERA push, letters to Governor Nigh's office provide further evidence of state antiratificationists' indignation over celebrity endorsements. Receiving such letters prompted the governor to heed the political consequences of supporting ratification. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Otto Ratzlaff of Orienta, Oklahoma, wrote to Governor Nigh about their anger with the state ratification efforts of "Marlo Thomas, Donahue, [and] Alan Alda." The Ratzlaffs reminded the governor that "[o]ur elected State Officials are representing Oklahomas [*sic*] not out of State liberals." The couple ended their lengthy letter with a warning to state "leaders," including state legislators, that they "will never get our vote again if they vote for E.R.A."[51]

Concerned for their political careers, besieged state Democratic politicians in particular attempted to distance themselves from those "outsiders," especially from national Democrats who supported ratification. While the NOW Countdown Campaign brought celebrities to the state and Governor Nigh could not prevent those luminaries from stumping for ratification, he was able to dissuade President Carter from visiting.

Brown, transcript, October 9, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Roberts (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview."; Frances Able (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Patricia Jones (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, September 12, 1980, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Illegible, "Editorial cartoon," *The Dallas Morning News*, 1982, sec. editorial.

[51] Mr. and Mrs. Otto Ratzlaff, "Honorable Governor Nigh," handwritten, January 5, 1982, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

According to a 1979 *Daily Oklahoman* article, Carter invited Nigh, state House Speaker Dan Draper, and state Senate president pro tempore Gene Howard to a late January ERA strategy meeting with the president in Washington. At that meeting, President and Mrs. Carter "offered to lend a hand" in support of ratification by speaking with Oklahoma legislators. However, the "governor said he saw no need for the Carters to make any personal effort" on behalf of ERA in the state.[52]

By the latter years of the amendment campaign, the governor and other state leaders were well aware of Oklahomans' temper regarding "outsiders." State leaders were particularly cognizant that conservative antiratificationists were the most piqued and outspoken on the issue. The Democratic governor was on record as supporting the amendment. However, his refusal of an offer of ERA campaign aid from a sitting president illustrates the ideological distance between state and national Democrats as well as the widening gap between the political philosophies of state citizens and the national Democratic Party. Nigh's 1979 actions with Carter demonstrate that state politicians were sensitive to the extensive, and growing, political clout of conservatives within Oklahoma. Shrewd state politicians realized that amendment endorsement by out-of-state politicians and others would serve only to hurt ratification chances within Oklahoma. In order to both advance ERA's odds within the state and, perhaps most important, to counteract perceptions that Democratic state politicians aligned

[52] Greiner, "Legislative Leaders Pondering ERA Strategy," 5.

themselves with national Democrats, Nigh and others at times distanced themselves from the people they viewed as political liabilities, including from an incumbent president.

Over the decade, as state and national ratification opposition escalated and grew progressively more visible, many of Oklahoma's elected officials found it beneficial to play the game of *realpolitik*, particularly when dealing directly with the public. In letters responding to constituents, for example, various state officials throughout the years of the ERA campaign seemed to wiggle from one ratification posture to another, depending on the individual constituent's stance. In reply to ratificationists' correspondence, numerous 1973 executive office letters for Governor Hall included assurances of Hall's support for the amendment. The replies stated, "This amendment gives all of us an opportunity to insure against second-class citizenship, second-quality opportunity and second-hand justice." Additional responses to ERA proponents also included the lines:

> As you probably know, the amendment was defeated in the Oklahoma House, which makes it a dead issue as far as the 1973 Legislature is concerned. With the continued effort and concern of citizens such as yourself [*sic*], hopefully we will be able to obtain passage of a similar bill in the 1974 session of the Oklahoma legislature.

In contrast, replies that same year from the governor's office to antiratificationists' correspondence failed to include the lines citing "second-class citizenship . . . and second-hand justice." Also missing was

the sentence referencing the hope of "obtain[ing] passage of a similar bill in the 1974 session." In their stead, answers to antiratificationists most often included the following sentence: "As you probably know, the Equal Rights Amendment is currently a 'dead issue' insofar as the Oklahoma Legislature is concerned as the bill died in the House recently."[53]

In later years, Governor Nigh also followed this pattern of "politics by omission." For instance, the generic memo the governor's office used to respond to the high volume of ERA correspondence during the final year of the campaign came in two formats, one tailored for ratificationists, the other for antiratificationists. Both versions were written in first person singular, with both signed "George Nigh." Using identical wording in the first two paragraphs, each of the two versions thanked the writer or caller for their remarks relating to the ERA and explained that the volume of correspondence necessitated a reply by form letter. Responses to antiratificationists, however, lacked the third paragraph that appeared in the letter ERA proponents received, a paragraph in which the governor stated his support for ratification as well as the line, "I urge you to make your position known to your state senator and representative." In the best tradition of astute public figures, Governors Hall and Nigh understood

[53] "Folder 8: General Outgoing Correspondence, 1972-1974 ERA - For," David Hall, RG 8-S-2-2, Box 6, Folder 8, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This folder contains thirty-seven pro-ERA letters or memos of phone calls to the "Governor's Straight Line" to nine replies from the governor's office; "Folder 9: General Outgoing Correspondence, 1972-1974 ERA - Against," David Hall, RG 8-S-2-2, Box 6, Folder 9, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This folder contains forty anti-ERA letters or memos of calls to the "Governor's Straight Line" with seven replies from the governor's office.

political reality and attempted to conform to the desires of their correspondents, thereby straddling the ERA fence.[54]

While a number of Oklahoma politicians struggled to sit on both sides of the ERA problem or stuck by their initial positions on the issue, more than a few chose neither of those options. One of the earliest Oklahoma politicians to switch his ratification stance was James Inhofe, the Republican state senator who, in March, 1972, argued doggedly on the senate floor that his resolution introducing the amendment into the Oklahoma legislature should be the measure that was voted on. Inhofe lost that bid, although he then quickly requested his name be added to the list of co-sponsors on the Democratic-sponsored resolution that was voted on and that passed. The state senator from Tulsa, however, also promptly changed his mind on ERA. Less than two months later, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported that equal rights legislation for women "isn't as appealing for Sen. James Inhofe as it was earlier." The newspaper also quoted Inhofe as stating, "The more I study it [the amendment], the more I wonder why women want it." The paper described Inhofe's reasons for changing his mind, which included "the end

[54] George Nigh to Antiratificationist, "Dear Friend," typed, undated, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 12, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. A further example is antiratificationist Coleta Sturgeon's response to Nigh used previously in this chapter. Sturgeon wrote her response to Nigh on the governor's original memo. This original memo, also undated, contained only the first two paragraphs and not the third paragraph that was included in his responses to ERA proponents, in George Nigh to Coleta Sturgeon, "Dear Friend," typed, undated, George Nigh, 8 U 12 1, Box 4, Folder 2, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Allen Wright Memorial Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; George Nigh to Ratificationist, "Dear Friend," typed, undated, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 12, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

of alimony, child custody and military draft exemptions" for women. The Tulsa senator's rationale mirrored antiratificationists' discourse at the time, a discourse that was then enjoying prominent news coverage. Bookending Inhofe's 1972 change of heart, Democratic state senator from Muskogee John Luton switched his vote in 1982 during the balloting on the senate floor. Luton "initially" voted for the amendment but "switched to nay when it became clear that the resolution was not going to pass." Whether Inhofe and Luton's switch came about as a result of study of the amendment or because antiratificationists influenced their decisions, the two politicians most likely employed their political acumen to reverse direction on the ERA both to satisfy conservative Oklahomans and to preserve their political careers.[55]

Inhofe, for one, certainly succeeded. He began his career in the Oklahoma House (1967-1969), then advanced to the state senate (1969-1977). While in the Oklahoma senate, Inhofe lost a gubernatorial bid in 1974 and a U.S. House of Representatives run in 1976. In 1978, however, he became mayor of Tulsa, retaining that post through 1984. Later running successfully for congressional office from Oklahoma's First District, Inhofe served as one of the state's U.S. Representatives from January 3, 1987 until

[55] "Inhofe Doubts Equal Rights Move's Value," *The Daily Oklahoman*, June 8, 1972, 57; For Luton's switch, his party affiliation, and senate district Luton represented (Muskogee) see Randy Splaingard, "Equal Rights Amendment Backers Keep Chins Up Despite Narrow Defeat," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 14, 1982, 53; For "initially" and "switched" quotes see M. L. Till, "History of the Effort to Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment in the 38th Legislature of Oklahoma," 1982, 2, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

November 15, 1994, progressing to the U.S. Senate when he won the special election held on David Boren's retirement. Currently, Inhofe is Oklahoma's senior senator, having won reelection in 1996, 2002, and 2008. According to his website, Inhofe has garnered a number of awards, including being named as the "'Most Outstanding Conservative U.S. Senator' by Human Events Newspaper and the American Conservative Union." Also according to the senator's website, "no one consistently represents common sense, conservative Oklahoma values better than Jim." Senator Inhofe's change of stance on the ERA thus may have eased the way for his later political career, particularly in light of Oklahoma's burgeoning conservative social and political atmosphere during the ERA decade and in the years following.[56]

Throughout the ERA debate, a number of Oklahoma politicians appeared ready to rid themselves of their ratification predicament by proposing a statewide vote on the amendment. During the amendment decade, various lawmakers submitted legislation to refer the resolution to a state ballot, which would effectively pass accountability for the decision to Oklahoma voters. In 1975, a banner year for such moves, at least three Republican legislators had plans on the table for statewide votes.

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[56] "Inhofe, James Mountain - Biographical Information," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=I000024; "United States Senator James Inhofe : About Senator Inhofe," *James M. Inhofe : U.S. Senator - Oklahoma*, http://inhofe.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=AboutSenatorInhofe.Biography.

Muskogee Representative John Monks presented a resolution calling for a vote of the people, while Edmond Republican Representative Neal McCaleb planned to modify the pending House ERA resolution "to provide for legislative approval of the federal amendment subject to a favorable vote of the people." Also in 1975, Senator Phil Watson, another Republican lawmaker from Edmond, proposed legislation for a state ERA constitutional amendment that mirrored the language of the federal amendment.[57]

Despite a 1975 ruling by the state attorney general that concluded only the state legislature could ratify an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, in 1979 the idea remained appealing to state lawmakers. In that year, Democratic state Senator Paul Taliaferro from Lawton, Oklahoma contacted Don Owens, then-president of Lawton's Cameron University. Taliaferro had received an ERA petition from students at Cameron, and he asked the president to "let these students know my feelings" on the amendment. Explaining that he personally did not support ratification, the senator also stated he had "introduced a joint resolution to put it before the vote of the people of our state" due to the wide range of views on ERA expressed by "folks" visiting his office. Taliaferro felt ratification would "only mislead a lot of the women of our state" and, the senator continued condescendingly, "I give each and every one [of those women] the right to their opinion." Legislators' frequent attempts to relinquish responsibility for the politically

[57] For Monks, McCaleb, and Watkins' legislation see "Derryberry Says Only Legislature Can OK Rights Amendment," *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 16, 1975, 32.

onerous and controversial amendment reveal state leaders' wariness of the issue. In addition, Taliaferro's statements epitomize a patronizing attitude indicative of the gendered ideology of numerous Oklahoma legislators throughout the ERA decade.[58]

A contemporary story about long-time state senator Gene Stipe, an ERA supporter, exemplifies many Oklahoma politicians' handling of their difficult ratification plight. An antiratificationist asked Stipe if he favored the ERA. The senator purportedly replied, "Well, if I had to vote on it today, I'd vote no." When a journalist "challenged him at the next stop," pointing out that Stipe was now saying openly he favored ratification, the veteran campaigner replied, "Well, you didn't listen to what I said. I said if I had to vote on it today, I told her I would vote no. But I don't have to vote on it today." "[O]ne of the state's most respected and feared lawmakers," Stipe demonstrated his political expertise by manipulating a potentially damaging situation to his advantage. Although this anecdote is lighthearted, for state legislators, ratificationists, antiratificationists, and others, the ERA was an exceptionally grave issue. In the final analysis, state legislators bore the brunt of lobbying efforts from proponents and opponents alike.[59]

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[58] For the 1975 attorney general's ruling see Ibid.; "24 New Faces on Nov. 16," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, November 7, 1976, sec. A, 19; Paul Taliaferro to Don Owens, "Dear Don," typed, February 28, 1979, Unprocessed Presidential Papers, Cameron University Archives, Lawton, Oklahoma.

[59] See Morgan, England, and Humphreys, *Oklahoma Politics & Policies*, 85, for quote describing Stipe as "well-respected" and "feared." Morgan, et al. also stated Stipe was a

Two political science studies provide further insight into the makeup and the thought processes of Oklahoma's legislators during the ERA decade. Taken together, the two studies show a shift in legislators' beliefs about their lawmaking roles, a shift that took place during the years of the ERA debate. Professor Samuel Kirkpatrick's 1978 study of the Oklahoma legislature and legislative process categorized the belief systems and task orientations of state lawmakers. Based on 1967 and 1968 questionnaires, Kirkpatrick discovered that the "most prevalent representational role in the Oklahoma legislature is clearly that of trustee," with 50 percent of House members and 45.8 percent of Senate members "view[ing] themselves as trustees or free agents." In brief, trustees vote their consciences when in conflict with their constituents' desires. The second study, *Oklahoma Politics & Policies* by David R. Morgan, Robert E. England, and George G. Humphreys, presented data gathered from a 1986 survey of state legislators "suggest[ing] that legislators are concerned increasingly with taking care of their districts." When, for example, legislators' positions "conflicted with the opinions of their constituents," 56 percent responded "they would vote their districts," while just 26 percent "would vote their consciences." Most revealing, statistics from the 1986 survey indicated 80 percent of legislators would vote with their constituency if the conflict "was between their political party and the voters," which may in part explain why state Democratic

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long-time Oklahoma politician; For the Stipe anecdote see Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement,* emphasis original.

lawmakers deserted their party as the ideological gulf widened between national and state Democrats during the ERA campaign. In the years between Kirkpatrick's late-1960s data and the 1986 survey, state lawmakers thus became more likely to vote in accord with their constituents, often to the detriment of their political parties. These same years encompassed the ERA debate.[60]

Furthermore, Oklahoma's urban areas provided the principle source of Republican Party support throughout the years of the amendment campaign. As noted earlier, the court-mandated reapportionment that took place in the 1960s and early 1970s fostered the growth of urban (and Republican) representation in Oklahoma. As early as 1976, moreover, the Oklahoma Republican Party platform endorsed right-of-center conservative values, including resolutions for "retention of U.S. control of the Panama Canal and the removal of 'unnecessarily stringent' environmental restrictions on [the] development of energy resources." In addition, that 1976 platform "denounc[ed] the Occupational Safety Health Act, estate taxes, . . and national health care programs." Among others, the Republican state convention also passed resolutions asking for an "end to forced busing" and "personal property taxes." And four years before the national GOP eliminated ERA support from their platform, Oklahoma Republicans at their 1976 convention "condemned the Equal Rights Amendment as 'negative,

[60] Kirkpatrick, *The Legislative Process in Oklahoma*, 204-207, quotes 204, percentages 205; Morgan, England, and Humphreys, *Oklahoma Politics & Policies*, 95-97, quotes 97, 96

unnecessary, and unfair.'" State legislators' increasing tendency to follow the wishes of their constituency, coupled with the growth of state Republican representation, and viewed in tandem with the intense and efficient lobbying efforts undertaken by antiratificationists during the ten-year ERA struggle, advance the likelihood that ratification chances in Oklahoma may always have been slim to none, particularly as the decade progressed.[61]

As the amendment's last opportunity in the state legislature approached, tensions escalated, particularly among ratificationists and their allies. During its final hours, the ERA remained a contentious issue, once again causing rifts between Oklahoma politicians and feminists as well as among feminists themselves. In strategy sessions in the months before the opening of the 1982 legislative session, state Senate and House leaders, along with principals of NOW, OK-ERA, OEA, and other ratificationist groups, decided that the ERA resolution would be voted on in the Oklahoma Senate first and that legislators would move for an early vote. On January 5, 1982, Senator Marvin York, president pro tem, introduced the ERA joint resolution SJR 24 into the state's upper chamber. The Senate referred the bill to the Policy Committee. On January 7, that committee defeated a

[61] For urban areas as the principle source of the Republican Party see Kirkpatrick, *The Legislative Process in Oklahoma*, 25. See also my fn6, this chapter, for Kirkpatrick's discussion of Oklahoma's court-mandated reapportionment; See Morgan, England, and Humphreys, *Oklahoma Politics & Policies*, 89, for rates at which Republican representation in the Oklahoma legislature grew between 1959 and 1990. Between 1959 and 1980 (the last ERA year reported in the table provided by Morgan et al.), Republican representation grew by 18.1 percent and 8.3 percent in the House and Senate, respectively. (The Senate in 1959 had begun with close to double the percentage of Republicans compared to the House GOP percentage.); Tom McCarthy, "State GOP Condemns Equal Rights Measure," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, May 16, 1976, 4.

motion to table the measure while a subsequent "Do Pass" motion succeeded, bringing the resolution out of committee and to a vote of the full senate. On January 13, the Senate voted "21 aye and 27 nay against ratification." Republicans in the Senate "voted as a block [*sic*]" in opposition to ratification. After the failed vote, Senator York "immediately filed a Motion to Reconsider." Oklahoma law required reconsideration to take place within three legislative days. On January 19, York's motion appeared on the Senate floor, but was tabled on a vote of twenty-seven to twenty-one in an identical line up of the January 13 votes. Moreover, the January 19 tabling of York's resolution effectively killed the measure because that day was the third and final day for reconsideration of the bill.[62]

On the same day in the Oklahoma House, Republican Representative Helen Arnold "introduced HJR 1033," a joint resolution asking for ERA ratification. On the second reading of Arnold's resolution the next day, the bill was "referred to the Rules Committee" chaired by House Speaker Dan Draper. A few weeks later, on February 8, Senators Gene Stipe and Bernice Shedrick co-authored, and Stipe introduced, SJR 37 into the Senate, which again called for ERA ratification. Upon that bill's second reading the following day, the Stipe and Shedrick bill was referred to the Senate Policy Committee. On February 16, Representative Arnold asked for a public hearing on her bill and that her ERA resolution be voted on in

[62] Moncliff (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview." April 10, 1982; Till, "History," quotes 1, 2.

the Rules Committee. Arnold's request for a public meeting "was lost after she delivered it to [Speaker] Draper's office. No public hearing was ever called." With short notice, on February 17, 1982 Draper "announced at the end of the legislative day that there would be a special Rules Committee meeting." At that meeting, the Democratic Majority Floor Leader, Vernon Dunn, "moved that [Arnold's bill] be tabled for a Report of Progress" which, if adopted, would effectively bury the resolution. A voice vote occurred and Dunn's motion "was declared passed." Of the voice vote killing Arnold's resolution, "[w]itnesses at the meeting indicated that only two or three no voices were heard." Despite an attempt by Oklahoma County Democrat and Majority Caucus Chair, Don Denman, "to gain the attention of the Chair, Speaker Draper" to require that the vote be recorded, the Speaker "failed to recognize" Denman and then "immediately adjourned the meeting."[63]

Twenty members of the Rules Committee attended and presumably voted at the meeting, including Representative Cleta Deatherage. Deatherage, the state's leading legislative ratificationist, had failed to defend or fight for Arnold's resolution in the Rules Committee. As for Stipe and Shedrick's senate joint resolution, February 22, 1982 was "the last day upon which bills could be reported out of the committee in the House of origin."

[63] Ibid., 2-3; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Vernon Dunn," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Don Denman," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx.

According to the ERA "History," this bill was discussed before the February 22 deadline, with the decision made "in a closed meeting" of the Policy Committee that "insufficient support [existed in the Senate] to warrant reporting it out of committee." Although efforts would be made to bring the ERA again to a vote of the legislature before the June 30, 1982, congressional deadline, Oklahoma lawmakers had taken their final vote on ratification.[64]

However, the fallout from the amendment's final failure was just beginning. Accusations among state feminists and politicians made state and national news, beginning within days after the Senate vote and, in particular, after the House Rules Committee voted down Arnold's resolution. In December, 1981, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported on legislative leaders' plans for obtaining an ERA vote early in the 1982 session. In this and numerous other articles, the paper related the Speaker had decided he would not bring ERA to a vote in the House unless the Senate passed the measure first and "unless supporters [in the House] had the votes to get it passed." On February 2, 1982, after the date ERA failed in the Senate and after Helen Arnold had introduced her resolution into the House, *The Daily Oklahoman* reported that Speaker Draper said Arnold's resolution "will not reach the House floor because of the Senate's refusal to pass it [ERA]." Within a week after the February 22 deadline for reconsideration on both the Stipe and Shedrick Senate resolution and the Arnold House resolution,

[64] Till, "History," 3.

NOW's Oklahoma "project manager," Ruth Adams, announced: "It is evident to me that the ERA is being held hostage by the Oklahoma legislature," naming both Senator York and Representative Draper as complicit in that situation because both had told Adams that neither leader would move on the ERA unless the other chamber did so first. In reporting Draper's response to Adams' accusation, *The Daily Oklahoman* stated the House Speaker "said last fall he, Senate leader Marvin York and ERA advocates decided not to push [for ratification] in the House until it passed the Senate 'because there would be no useful purpose served.'" Further, Draper avowed "NOW leadership 'has known since December what the agreed strategy was.'"[65]

Moreover, a number of Ruth Murray Brown's state ERA proponent interviewees also supported Draper's assertions. One ratificationist leader told Brown that the OEA leader was present at strategy meetings with both the legislative leadership and NOW state leaders in the months leading up to the vote. The OEA leader asserted that "by early December [1981] we had worked out our position that we would try in the Senate first." She recalled one particular meeting, "which they [NOW] will never acknowledge, held that Sunday before the vote" and attended by around twenty-five people including "four or five people from NOW," among them NOW's

[65] John Greiner, "Senate Leader Launches Push for ERA Approval," *The Daily Oklahoman*, December 2, 1981, 5; "Rep. Draper Backs Off ERA Effort," *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 2, 1982, 12; Randy Splaingard, "Draper Lashes Out At NOW Leaders Over ERA Actions," *(The Daily Oklahoman)*, 1982, unknown.

Oklahoma leadership. According to the OEA interviewee, the recently arrived National Education Association representative chairing the meeting asked, "Is there any one here who's been around a long time who believes that it's in the best interests of the issue to try to hold the vote?" The response: "No one said anything." Another ratificationist who was present at those strategy meetings supported statements that NOW leadership attended the same meetings, in which "we met with Dan [Draper] and Marvin [York]." In addition, this OK-ERA leader asserted, "NOW is saying it [ERA] was lost because of a premature vote, but it wasn't, and now they are claiming they didn't want the vote that early."[66]

Each of these Oklahoma feminists stated that NOW national leaders were responsible for much of the public criticism. The state OEA leader, for example, insisted, "I've gotten calls from Washington saying we heard that Marvin York is the reason that you lost the Senate." Additionally, the OK-ERA interviewee told Ruth Brown, "We are not working with NOW anymore. They are attacking Cleta [Deatherage], Marvin [York], and Dan [Draper], especially the NOW people from out of state." Confirming state feminists' avowals that state NOW leaders agreed to York and Draper's plan of action, *The Washington Post* in March, 1982 published an account of the feud between NOW and Oklahoma legislators. That article noted, "[b]efore the

[66] For OEA leader's interview see Moncliff (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," April 10, 1982; For OK-ERA leader's interview see Mary Falk (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, February 23, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

legislative session opened in January, a coalition of ERA supporters, including [Ruth] Adams representing NOW, agreed that they would abide by a strategic decision" made by Draper and York. At the same time that these two state feminists supported Oklahoma's legislative leaders against accusations from NOW, divisive opinions and allegations of wrongdoing and betrayal raged among other state ratificationists, at times drawing national attention.[67]

The primary object of those accusations and that attention was Democratic Representative Cleta Deatherage. First elected to the Oklahoma House in 1976, Deatherage gained both state and national fame as a dedicated ratificationist and as an accomplished young state legislator. Early recognition from national women's organizations helped fuel the Representative's swift rise inside the ranks of the state and national Democratic parties, while she simultaneously became the subject of or interviewee featured in national publications. A hard worker, her rapid ascent within the leadership of the state legislature had much to do with Deatherage's keen intellect, her training as an attorney, and her "unyielding common sense and [the] ability to articulate it." Deatherage walked the halls of public power both within the state and, increasingly over the ERA decade, without. While doing so, her political clout grew. As the state's leading and

[67] Moncliff (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," April 10, 1982; Falk (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," February 23, 1982; Bill Peterson, *Washington Post* Staff Writer, "Okla. Legislator Says NOW Backers Have Turned on Her in ERA Battle," *The Washington Post (1974-Current file)*, March 27, 1982, A3.

most well-known ERA proponent by the end of the amendment decade, her story perfectly conveys the political dilemma posed by ratification. Further, Deatherage is symbolic of the politicians who became enmeshed in the ERA controversy. Later changes in her political philosophy also mirrored the state's transition from Democratic to Republican stronghold.[68]

Shortly after the House Rules committee buried Arnold's ERA resolution, Speaker Draper and Representative Deatherage faced outraged feminists' questions and angry, if not threatening, comments. Draper's questioners appear to have come primarily from the ranks of NOW members, both state and national. The House Speaker told *The Washington Post* that "he was picketed by NOW members and 'sent boxes of vicious letters' from around the country." Deatherage, however, received the brunt of feminists' queries and their anger. The Norman Democrat claimed she had "been lectured to by Eleanor Smeal," the national president of NOW at the time and "been made the subject of a NOW 'Yellow Alert' sent around the country." Following the Oklahoma ERA defeat, Deatherage also received written messages, such as one attached "to her morning newspaper saying, 'Want to talk about a dead issue: Your political future,'" and telegrams purportedly phoned from the Norman NOW office that read:

[68] "The Best Five," *Oklahoma Monthly* (5), no. unknown (1979): 54.

"Your goose is cooked." In contrast, one Oklahoma proponent leader claimed "the NOW chapter has been defunct in Norman since 1976."[69]

For her part, *The Washington Post* reported that Deatherage "blame[d]" national and state NOW leaders for the messages as well as for working to defeat her in the next election. NOW's state leader, Ruth Adams, "categorically den[ied]" both allegations, explaining that Deatherage's name did appear on a NOW Yellow Alert, but did so "to let her know that women all over the country are looking to her for leadership." Adams claimed that the "women who sent messages to Deatherage were unhappy constituents," noting also "[t]he fact is that the women of this state felt like she could have used her position to better advantage." Both Tulsa Democratic state Representative Twyla Mason Gray and the "vice-chairwoman of" OKWPC, Junetta Davis, "confirm[ed]" Adam's explanation, with Gray stating that Deatherage was "trying to make NOW a scapegoat." Further, Davis admitted she and other women sent telegrams to Deatherage "because [the women] were bitter that [Deatherage] didn't fight" for the Arnold resolution in the House Rules Committee, "of which she [Deatherage] is a member." According to this same *Washington Post* article, after the ERA failed in the Oklahoma Senate "NOW pressed for a House vote," which Deatherage "and

[69] For Draper and Deatherage quotes see Peterson, Washington Post Staff Writer, "Okla. Legislator Says NOW Backers Have Turned on Her in ERA Battle," A3; For the Oklahoma proponent's claim see Joyce Withers (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," transcript, March 1, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

others resisted because it would mean abandoning pledges made to York and Draper."[70]

In the months and years following the final vote, Oklahoma ratificationists continued questioning Deatherage's actions during the last years of ERA's life. Many of those ratificationists concluded that Deatherage had switched sides in the ERA debate in order to gain influence and curry favor within the legislature and the state. Feminists felt betrayed because they had helped elect Deatherage initially to the Oklahoma House and returned her to the legislature in successive elections. They did so in large part due to Deatherage's many years of outspoken and emphatic support for the ERA and other women's issues. After the defeat of ratification, however, state feminists' suspicions mounted as did their allegations. At the same time, their belief in Deatherage's duplicity hardened. In April, 1982 a *Dallas Morning News* article reported that Oklahoma ratificationists "claim Rep. Deatherage used women and the ERA as a springboard into politics and then turned her back on them in favor of courting power among her legislative colleagues." According to *The Washington Post*, Deatherage chose to be a political "insider and has risen rapidly" in the Oklahoma legislature. At the time of the 1982 vote, she was chair of the powerful House Appropriations and Budget Committee, "an ally

[70] Peterson, *Washington Post* Staff Writer, "Okla. Legislator Says NOW Backers Have Turned on Her in ERA Battle," A3; "Oklahoma House of Representatives - House Historic Membership - Twyla Mason Gray," *Oklahoma State House of Representatives*, http://www.okhouse.gov/Members/Mem_Historic.aspx.

of the leadership," and a member of the national Democratic presidential delegate selection commission.[71]

Furthermore, Oklahoma proponent leaders had been suspicious of Deatherage's motives for several years, particularly after she "told the [state] Women's Political Caucus on Dec. 11, 1980, that she would not push for the ERA if it would hurt her friends in the Legislature." Earlier in 1980, ERA proponent Junetta Davis received an angry letter from Deatherage, in response to Davis' asking the representative why she failed to include ERA on a constituent questionnaire. In her reply to Davis, Deatherage protested Davis' use of an "accusatory tone" and stated, "I'm getting to the point where I'm ready to quit . . . let someone else pick up the banner so you can hassle them instead of me [ellipsis original]." In her conciliatory reply to Deatherage, Davis attempted to sooth her friend, apologizing that Deatherage might "feel I'm hassling you about ERA," adding that she knew the Norman legislator had "worked hard for it [the amendment]." Davis also stated, however, that "sometimes now you seem to be speaking of ERA in the past."[72]

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[71] Teresa C. Pitts, "Representative fights criticism from feminists," *The Dallas Morning News*, April 4, 1982, 14AA; Peterson, *Washington Post* Staff Writer, "Okla. Legislator Says NOW Backers Have Turned on Her in ERA Battle," A3.

[72] Davis, "Unpublished personal interview," March 9, 1982; Cleta Deatherage to Junetta Davis, "Dear Junetta - 2," handwritten, February 6, 1980, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 6, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, ellipsis original; Junetta Davis to Cleta Deatherage, "Dear Cleta," typed, February 28, 1980, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

Such fears were not misplaced. By the last few years of the campaign, Deatherage occasionally did concede the defeat of ratification. In July, 1981, for example, *The Daily Oklahoman* quoted Deatherage as saying at a "downtown Tulsa rally" held to mark the "one-year [ERA] countdown[:]" "Even if the Equal Rights Amendment is not ratified a year from today, the fight will go on." Additionally, several ERA activists asserted to Ruth Brown that Deatherage had lost faith that proponents would be able to attain ratification. For instance, in a March, 1982 interview with one of the feminists asking questions of Deatherage, the proponent leader and interviewee maintained that, "[i]n October of 1980, [Deatherage] advised the Caucus she thought that ERA was a lost cause." In March, 1982, Junetta Davis recalled the December, 1980 OKWPC meeting for the biennial election of officers. According to Davis, at that meeting "very close friends" Becky Patten, the outgoing chair of OKWPC, and Deatherage "were ready to throw in the towel on ERA; they said with Reagan's election, there was no hope for it." Moreover, these and other accusations against Deatherage continued to escalate as feminists began to compare notes.[73]

Several state proponent leaders alleged that in 1980 Deatherage adroitly steered monies contributed by the NWPC into the campaign chests of legislators who would support Dan Draper in his reelection bid for Speaker of the Oklahoma House. They further alleged that, in return for

[73] "State ERA Backers Rallying Forces for Final Push," *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 1, 1981, 10; Withers (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," March 1, 1982; Davis, "Unpublished personal interview," March 9, 1982.

Deatherage and other legislators' support, Draper appointed many recipients of the NWPC funds into leadership positions in the House, including Deatherage. OKWPC distributed the NWPC funds. Deatherage and the president of OKWPC, Patten, were law partners and the two had "been good friends for so long, they are just li[k]e sorority sisters." In 2007, Deatherage told an interviewer that Patten had helped run "the best organized campaign I've ever been in" during Deatherage's initial 1976 run for the state House. In the same 2007 interview, the former representative said that Patten "still is one of my best friends." Because the Norman legislator was a campaign veteran, an astute politician, and one of the original founders of OKWPC, it would seem natural that Deatherage and Patten would work together to distribute NWPC funds to the legislative campaigns of Oklahoma candidates who, by inference, supported ratification. In total, NWPC contributed $16,200.00 to Oklahoma candidates for use during the 1980 statehouse elections, with a number of those candidates receiving monies for the primaries, runoffs, and/or the general election.[74]

[74] For proponent leaders who alleged Deatherage "directed" NWPC funds into certain election campaigns and that legislators allegedly were rewarded for supporting Dan Draper see, for example, Davis, "Unpublished personal interview, March 9, 1982, Hilbert-Price et al., *Oklahoma Women's Movement*, and Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton to Ellen Hume, "Dear Ms. Hume," typed, July 12, 1985, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Peltier wrote this 1985 letter to Hume at the *Wall Street Journal* (WJS) in response to a Hume article about feminists (including Deatherage) that appeared in the WSJ on April 3, 1985; For confirmation that Deatherage and Patten were law partners see again Davis, "Unpublished personal interview."; For Deatherage quotes and further confirmation that Deatherage and Patten were law partners see Cleta Deatherage Mitchell, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project,"

As noted in chapter two, by late 1980 the membership of OKWPC had dwindled to "a handful" of members, a "dwindling" that took place, at least in part, between 1978 and 1980. According to state feminists, Deatherage and Patten in 1978 called a meeting of OKWPC on "very short notice," telling other members that the purpose of the meeting was to oust the current chair because "she had not done anything to b[u]ild up the Caucus." The two reportedly "stacked the meeting" and won control of OKWPC, with Patten elected as the new chair. Ratificationist Junetta Davis stated in 1982, "I didn't like what they had done" but she "was willing to go along if they could get some [pro-ERA] legislators elected." The implied state Caucus reinvigoration, however, failed to take place under Patten and Deatherage's leadership. Instead, after "displacing all the people" who had been working for the Caucus, Patten and Deatherage "didn't do anything with it" and OKWPC "just became dormant." Furthermore, 1978 NWPC contributions to Oklahoma campaigns totaled $18,000.00 by the end of that

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interview by Tanya Finchum, transcript of recording, June 21, 2007, 7, Digital Collections @ Oklahoma State University, http://dc.library.okstate.edu/u?/women,2970; For "sorority sisters" quote see Betty Amos (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, December 11, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "NWPC ERA Update Report," August 1980, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "NWPC untitled page three of National Women's Political Caucus report on funds disbursed to OKWPC in September 1980 for runoff campaigns," September 1980, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; "NWPC ERA Update," October/November 1980, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. The $16,200.00 figure is derived from: In 1980, NWPC contributed $8,900.00 for the primary races of twenty-nine Oklahoma House and six Senate candidates, thirty-three Democrats and two Republicans. Also in 1980, five Democratic House candidates received $200.00 each of the NWPC funds for their runoff campaigns, for a total of $1,000.00. In the general election that year, four Oklahoma Senate candidates and fifteen House candidates, Democrats all, received amounts varying from $100.00 to $800.00, for a total of $6300.00.

year, money that Patten and, allegedly, Deatherage controlled. In hindsight, a number of state ratificationists believed that Deatherage and Patten gained control of the state Caucus not to rebuild the group, as they had led others to believe. Instead, as Davis put it: "Becky and Cleta found out there was some money available for campaigns." Davis further stated that the NWPC funds "[t]hey got. . . . went into races with the purpose of getting Dan Draper elected [as Speaker]."[75]

With the OKWPC "dormant," Patten and Deatherage in 1980 would have had few workers to help decide the allocation of that year's NWPC funds. However, the existing OKWPC members protested what Wanda Jo Peltier termed the "secrecy" employed in distributing the 1978 and 1980 NWPC funds. Curious about Patten and Deatherage's alleged secrecy, two months before the 1980 general election Peltier attempted to obtain information from NWPC about the 1978 and 1980 Oklahoma campaign recipients. An October, 1980 letter from Peltier to NWPC and copied to

[75] For 1980 membership figures see Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, "Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus - Press Release, 1981."; For the 1978 "takeover" of OKWPC see Davis, "Unpublished personal interview," March 9, 1982, including all quotes from "very short notice" through "willing to go along" and "Becky and Cleta" to "Draper elected." See also Betty Amos (pseud.), "Unpublished personal interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, October 6, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma, quotes of "displacing . . . the people" through "just became dormant." In addition, several Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton notes to me allege that "Cleta put the $ into House candidates' campaigns who supported Dan Draper for Speaker of the House" in Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton to Jana Vogt, "Cleta Deatherage," handwritten, December 2008, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For 1978 NWPC contributions to Oklahoma campaigns see Becky Patten, "History of the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus" (transcript of speech presented at the National Women's Political Caucus Convention, unknown, December 1980), Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

Becky Patten ultimately produced results. In that letter, Peltier complained that her concern "only heightens as Becky [Patten] and you repeatedly deny" the state feminist's request for information about the distribution of campaign funds. Peltier's largest worry was that Speaker Draper "has already paid his political debt for the ERA money" to one person only, "Cleta," by appointing Deatherage vice-chair, then chair, of the Appropriations Committee. Peltier was "not willing to . . . see the ERA jeopardized if the political debt" had been paid and "is no longer collectible by the [Oklahoma] WPC." Eventually, Peltier "acquired the list from NWPC (names/amounts) of Cleta's 1978-80 political contributions with Caucus money." Using that information, Peltier carefully studied the names and legislative histories of those lawmakers who had received NWPC funds at Patten and, purportedly, Deatherage's direction.[76]

On January 6, 1981, the first day of the legislative session, the Oklahoma House reelected Dan Draper as Speaker. As is customary on opening day of each session, Draper formally appointed the chairs, vice-chairs, and members of the House "Standing and Special Committees." As political scientist Samuel Kirkpatrick found in his 1978 study of the state legislature, Oklahoma House Speakers wielded substantial power over

[76] For "secrecy" and "acquired list" quotes and other information used in this paragraph see Stapleton to Hume, "Dear Ms. Hume."; For "only heightens," "has already paid," "Cleta," "not willing to," and "is no longer collectible" quotes as well as other information used in this paragraph, including Stapleton's original of my statement "to one person only" see Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton to Marybel Batjer, "Dear Ms. Batjer," typed, October 10, 1980, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

members of that legislative body, including through each Speaker's use of committee leadership appointments. Kirkpatrick also noted that an individual lawmaker's "legislative expertise" correlated to that member's number of years in the legislature and, therefore, was "an important criterion" for speakers when considering appointees. Kirkpatrick also found, however, that the leadership of the House "has virtually unlimited power" to produce committees "composed of loyal supporters." In November, 1980, *The Daily Oklahoman* mirrored Kirkpatrick's findings, reporting that the power to appoint committee chairs was the "most effective tool a speaker has in maintaining his control over the House."[77]

After receiving the NWPC records of its contributions to Oklahoma campaigns, Peltier compared the 1980 donation list to Draper's committee chair and vice-chair appointments in 1980 and 1981. Of the thirty-one successful 1980 House candidates who received NWPC campaign funds, Peltier found that the Speaker in January, 1981 retained three from their previous year's positions as committee chair or vice-chairs. On the same day, Draper appointed ten recipients of 1980 NWPC funds either to chair or vice-chair assignments. For each of those ten legislators, the new

[77] For "Standing" quote see page 7 of "House Journal - Second Regular Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature - pages 5-12," January 6, 1981, 5-6, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Kirkpatrick, *The Legislative Process in Oklahoma*, "legislative expertise" and "important criterion" quotes 130, "has virtually" and "loyal supporters" 122; For the "most effective tool" quote see Mike Hammer, "Draper Remains House Speaker," *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 6, 1980, 41.

assignment was a promotion, either from no previous leadership position or from vice-chair to chair of a committee.[78]

Further, during Deatherage's second term (1979-1980), Draper had appointed her vice-chair of the "important" Appropriations and Budget Committee. In the summer of 1980, the Speaker promoted Deatherage from vice-chair to chair of that committee to fill the spot left empty by the retiring chair. Unquestionably, she was an extremely bright and hardworking legislator. Deatherage's appointment, however, broke the established practice according to Kirkpatrick's study. Reappointed on opening day in January, 1981, the Appropriations chair assignment made Deatherage, born in 1950, "the first woman in the United States to hold that position" and, more significantly, the "youngest woman to serve in a House leadership position" in state history. With "only four years" experience in the legislature, Deatherage had obtained the "most powerful position in the House next to the speaker."[79]

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[78] For House committee chair and vice-chair appointments in January, 1980, see "House Journal - First Regular Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature - pages 5-9," January 8, 1980, 5-9, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For House committee chair and vice-chair appointments in January, 1981, see "House Journal - Second Regular Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature - pages 5-12", 5-12. Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton gave to me copies of her work comparing NWPC funds distribution to committee appointments. I computed the figures (such as the numbers of legislators who retained assignments or were promoted, etc.).

[79] For "important" quote see Kirkpatrick, *The Legislative Process in Oklahoma*, 129; For Deatherage's promotion from vice-chair to chair of the Appropriations and Budget Committee and "only four years" quote see Hammer, "Draper Remains House Speaker," 41; Christine Pappas, "Mitchell, Cleta Deatherage (1950-)," *Oklahoma Historical Society's Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture*, http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/MI048.html; Oklahoma State

As stated previously, a number of Oklahoma feminists believed Deatherage "privately put the [NWPC] money" into the 1980 campaigns of "supporters of Rep. Dan Draper (candidate for Speaker of the Oklahoma House, who was opposed by two other PRO-ERA candidates)." Perhaps the Appropriations and other 1981 committee appointments were not, as Peltier and other feminists alleged, "payment" by Draper for help in his reelection bid as Speaker of the House. As Deatherage noted in June, 2007, however, Draper "was obviously a great mentor to me." Deatherage continued that Draper "was a brilliant guy and I helped elect him as speaker."[80]

One final Deatherage action sheds light on her political position in 1982. In 2009, former Republican Representative Helen Arnold recalled her experience in the House the day she introduced her ERA resolution: "I was so mad when I found out that the Senate" had failed to pass ERA, "so I just introduced it. . . ." As Arnold prepared to present her resolution, "Cleta Deatherage wrote me a note on the House floor and said, 'Don't do it, Helen. Don't file that bill. Do not do that, if you do, you will be punished.'" Arnold believed that, during an election year in particular, "Dan Draper and the people in the House did not want to have to vote on the ERA," especially

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University Library, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project - Cleta Deatherage Mitchell Brief Biography," *Women of the Oklahoma Legislature*, 3, http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol/legislators.htm#Hlink; For "the most powerful position" quote see Nancy Mathis Staff Writer, "Harsh Words Exchanged in State House Contest," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 24, 1980, 81.

[80] Stapleton to Hume, "Dear Ms. Hume," emphasis Stapleton; Mitchell, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project," 10.

when doing so would leave a public record of each legislator's vote. Further, Deatherage's threat to Arnold along with the Norman legislator's alleged control of NWPC funds and her promotion to chair of one of the most powerful legislative committees, particularly at twenty-nine years of age and with only four years experience in the Oklahoma legislature, imply that Deatherage was exercising her political acumen and playing the game of *realpolitik* as well.[81]

Immediately following ERA's defeat, disappointed Oklahoma feminists may have treated Draper and Deatherage unfairly by loudly and repeatedly blaming ERA's demise in the Oklahoma House on the two legislators. At a public confrontation between Deatherage and feminists on February 18, 1982, the day after the House Rules Committee buried Arnold's ERA resolution, Deatherage told her detractors that "the votes just weren't there." The legislator talked about the ten years she had spent campaigning for ERA, reminding the feminists that "[t]here is no such thing as a miracle." She also pointed to the pro-tem's efforts in the Senate, saying "the only reason we got it as close as we did was because of Marvin York." However, Deatherage may have revealed more than intended with a

[81] Helen Arnold, "Personal interview," interview by Jana Vogt, digital recording, February 29, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Arnold also told me that she was punished for introducing the resolution. During the remainder of the legislative year, she was not "able to go to any of the [National Conference of State Legislatures'] State Federal Assembly meetings that I was vice-chair of. . . . [because] the legislature would not pay my way."; For Deatherage's birth date (September 16, 1950) see Pappas, "Mitchell, Cleta Deatherage (1950-)." Therefore, Deatherage was twenty-nine years old when Draper promoted her from vice-chair to chair of the House Appropriations Committee in the summer of 1980. For her promotion as occurring that summer see Hammer, "Draper Remains House Speaker," 41.

following statement: "And the only way we could have passed it in the House would have been because of Dan Draper and the Governor who could have – who call people in to talk to them." The statement was, perhaps, a slip of the tongue; however, other Oklahoma political observers had wondered why the resolution had failed to pass, particularly with the public support of the governor and the leadership of both Oklahoma Houses backing ERA. In 1980, an *Oklahoma Observer* editorial asked the critical question: "You mean the governor and legislative leadership can't pick up enough of those undecided votes to make equal rights a reality? Pshaw!" The situation was much the same in 1982.[82]

Perhaps Cleta Deatherage was a political realist who knew that ERA would never pass in Oklahoma. Ten years into the fight, she may have felt she needed to work within the system to achieve positive outcomes for women on other issues. Perhaps she had tired of bucking the system and putting other legislators' livelihoods on the line. As noted, at least a few of the extant sources show that Deatherage stated, during the ratification campaign, that she would not push for an ERA vote when she knew it would fail and, in so doing, engender the ire of fellow legislators. However, as her feminist detractors insisted, Deatherage was elected as a ratificationist and, indeed, built her state and national reputation on exactly that issue and that

[82] "Feminists of Norman - Transcript of recording of February 18, 1982 Democratic Women's Club of Cleveland County meeting," February 20, 1982, 1, Shirley Hilbert-Price Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma; "Whither ERA?," *The Oklahoma Observer* 12, no. 11 (March 10, 1980).

stance. In 1982, moreover, when disillusioned Eleanor Smeal "tried to organize support to form a third party to represent women," Deatherage "told her she could count me out, that I was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat."[83]

In 2007, however, Deatherage told an interviewer that after the former Oklahoma legislator moved to Washington, DC "[a]s director of and general counsel for . . . the Term Limits Legal Institute," she felt:

> the democratic party [*sic*] became and has become the party of government and I do not believe that is the same as being the party of the people. I think that's the antithesis of what our founding fathers had in mind. They had a limited government in mind to leave more space for the people and their ability to do what they want without being bossed around by the government. . . . I don't think it's a change in my philosophy. It's just a change in my understanding of how my personal beliefs fit into the political spectrum.

Moreover, Deatherage told *The New Yorker* in 1996 that her husband's 1992 federal conviction on "five counts of bank fraud" for crimes committed in the mid-1980s convinced Deatherage that "overreaching government regulation is one of the great scandals of our time." As *The New Yorker* article further noted, it was "disconcerting" that Deatherage's fight for term limits and against big government "has brought her under the support of the power structure." While laboring to obtain congressional term limits, Deatherage worked in Washington for "Americans Back in Charge," an "umbrella organization" that "has been backed financially by powerful

[83] John Herbers, Special to The New York Times, "Women Turn View To Public Office - Equal Rights Defeat Prompts New Interests in Elections : NOW Chief Suggests Corporations Played Major Role in Defeating the Equal Rights Amendment," *New York Times (1857-Current file)*, June 28, 1982, B7.

conservative foundations." By 2007, Deatherage was a "partner in the Washington, DC, law firm of Foley & Lardner" where she represented "a number of [R]epublican candidates, campaigns, and members of Congress," including Oklahomans Senator Jim Inhofe and Congressman Tom Cole. In addition, several biographies mention that Deatherage "has . . . served on the legal counsel to the National Republican Senatorial Committee."[84]

Currently, Deatherage remains a partner at the Washington, DC office of Foley & Lardner LLP. At that firm, she "advises corporations, nonprofit and issue organizations, candidates, campaigns, and individuals on state and federal campaign finance law, election law, and compliance issues related to lobbying, ethics, and financial disclosure." She has served as co-counsel in at least two U.S. Supreme Court cases, one representing the National Rifle Association "in a case involving the 2002 federal campaign finance law." Deatherage serves also on the Board of Directors

[84] For director and general counsel of the Term Limits Legal Institute, and "five counts," "overreaching government regulation," "disconcerting," "has brought . . . structure," "Americans Back," "umbrella organization," and "has been backed financially by" quotes see Jane Mayer, "Abstract: Annals of Activism, 'The Outsider'," *The New Yorker* (October 21, 1996): 107; For long, indented quote see Mitchell, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project," 18; For the "five counts of bank fraud" quote see Ed Godfrey, Staff Writer, "Ex-Banker Gets Parole For Fraud - Restitution Payment Ordered : Mitchell," *The Daily Oklahoman*, April 15, 1993, 1; For the quote regarding "Republican candidates, campaigns, and members of Congress" see Oklahoma State University Library, "Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project - Cleta Deatherage Mitchell Brief Biography," 3; For "partner" quote and Deatherage as representing Inhofe and Cole in 2007 see "ACU: Board of Directors: Cleta Mitchell," *The American Conservative Union*, http://www.conservative.org/about/board/mitchell.asp; For Deatherage's service as legal counsel to the National Republican Senatorial Committee see, for example, "TheVanguard.Org: Senior Leadership Team, Rod D. Martin, Chairman," http://www.thevanguard.org/thevanguard/about/staff.shtml According to its website, The Vanguard.Org is attempting to "build a state-of-the-art technological platform" that will allow conservatives to attain the same success Democrats and President Obama achieved by utilizing the internet in the 2006 and 2008 elections.

both of the American Conservative Union (ACU) and the National Rifle Association. In addition, she "is national co-chairman" of the Republican National Lawyers Association and is General Counsel for The Vanguard.Org.[85]

Further, information from her most recent appearances and work also reveals Deatherage's current conservative views. For example, Republican U.S. Representative Marsha Blackburn from Tennessee and Colin Hanna, the co-founder and president of Let Freedom Ring, a "non-profit, nonpartisan," "grassroots public-policy organization," introduced Deatherage as the chair of the ACU Foundation (ACUF) at the ACU's Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) held in Washington, DC February 18-20, 2010. Blackburn's preliminary remarks introduced Deatherage during the opening of CPAC, at which Deatherage was presenting conservative columnist George Will as the conference's "keynote speaker."[86]

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[85] For Deatherage's current employment and the long "advises," the NRA Supreme Court case, and the "national co-counsel" quotes as well as her other Supreme Court case and that she serves on the NRA board of directors see "Foley & Lardner LLP - Our People - Cleta Mitchell," *Foley & Lardner LLP*, 2010, http://www.foley.com/people/bio.aspx?employeeid=18472; For Deatherage as a director of the ACU see "ACU: Board of Directors: Cleta Mitchell."; "TheVanguard.Org: Senior Leadership Team, Rod D. Martin, Chairman."

[86] For Blackburn as a Republican U.S. Representative from Tennessee, her introduction of Deatherage, and the "keynote speaker" quote see *Conservative Political Action Conference Opening - C-SPAN Video Library* (Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC: C-SPAN, 2010), http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/id/219763; For Hanna as co-founder of Let American Ring and his introduction of Deatherage see *John Boehner Remarks - C-SPAN Video Library* (Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC: C-SPAN, 2010), http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/id/219808; For Hanna as president of Let Freedom Ring and "non-profit, nonpartisan" and "grassroots, public-policy organization" quotes see "Let Freedom Ring | About," *Let Freedom Ring*, 2009,

According to Blackburn, "as chairman" of the ACUF, Deatherage had "a very important and special role in planning the CPAC program." In turn, Deatherage's introduction of Will noted that the long-time columnist had two particular enemies. She called those enemies "the environmental crazies" and the "crazies on the campaign finance reform jihad." Further, Hanna later introduced Deatherage in her role of presenting House Minority Leader John Boehner, Republican from Ohio, to the conference. According to Hanna, Deatherage "happens to be our lawyer at Let Freedom Ring [and] she also sometimes [jokingly] calls herself the 'consigliore of the vast right-wing conspiracy,'" among others of Deatherage's achievements Hanna noted.[87]

In March, 2010, moreover, *The New York Times* reported on the U.S. House of Representatives Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE), a new ethics watchdog board of private citizens created in 2008 by Democrat and current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. According to the *New York Times* article, the OCE recently has been having success policing House members. However, the article quoted Deatherage as referring to the OCE as "a very arrogant, dangerous little outfit" and "a rogue operation that needs

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http://www.letfreedomringusa.com/about and "Let Freedom Ring | Home," *Let Freedom Ring*, 2009, http://www.letfreedomringusa.com/home.

[87] For Blackburn's "as chairman" and "very important and special" quotes as well as Deatherage's "environmental crazies" and "crazies on the campaign . . . jihad" quotes see *Conservative Political Action Conference Opening - C-SPAN Video Library;* For Boehner as an Ohio Republican and House Minority Leader as well as "happens to be our lawyer" and "consigliore" quotes see *John Boehner Remarks - C-SPAN Video Library.*

to be shut down." As these examples show, Deatherage's ideology remains traditionalist in 2010, while she also continues her efforts on behalf of conservatives and their organizations.[88]

In the early 1980s, however, the Democrat and feminist Deatherage may simply have been a political realist and, thus, had recognized that the chances for ratification in Oklahoma and the nation were low. In February, 1982, state feminists confronted Deatherage and asked if the reason she had failed to work to bring ERA out of the House Rules Committee was to "buy some time" for two other states to ratify, with the hope that Oklahoma would join those states before the June deadline. Deatherage responded: "I don't think there are two more states. . . . I've never believed it." These statements, added to Deatherage's earlier warnings to Oklahoma ERA proponents that ratification was a lost cause, paint a portrait of Deatherage as a pragmatist.[89]

Still, political realism does not necessarily entail a metamorphosis from "dyed-in-the-wool" Democrat to ardent Republican, a transformation that Deatherage undertook, but one that is not easily fathomed. Perhaps

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[88] Eric Lipton, "House Ethics Office Gains, Dismissals Aside," *The New York Times*, March 22, 2010, sec. U.S. / Politics, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/23/us/politics/23ethics.html?scp=1&sq=Cleta%20Mitchell&st=cse; For private citizens as constituting the OCE board see "About - Office of Congressional Ethics," *U.S. House of Representatives Office of Congressional Ethics*, http://oce.house.gov/about.html.

[89] "Feminists of Norman - Transcript of recording of February 18, 1982 Democratic Women's Club of Cleveland County meeting," 1-2, quotes 2.

her particular brand of "Democrat" followed the state's predominant Southern Democrat ideology which, if true, makes Deatherage's turn to the right at least comprehensible. But that ideology did not seem to inspire her political stands before 1982. Deatherage was a feminist throughout the amendment decade. She also was a Democrat who mirrored in many ways the philosophies of the national Democratic Party, an outspoken fighter for the ERA and, as *The Oklahoma Observer* put it in 1980, "public enemy number one of reactionary Republican legislators. . . ."[90]

In December, 1979, for example, Deatherage and former Oklahoma U.S. Representative Ed Edmondson were named co-chairs of Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy's Oklahoma presidential campaign. Edmondson and Deatherage told *The Daily Oklahoman* they both believed that Kennedy could "better advance the principles of the Democratic Party" than could incumbent President Carter. Further, Deatherage spoke statewide on women's issues, including the topic of teenage girls and pregnancy. Advocating that girls at a young age be given opportunities for "leadership experience," the representative also stated that "society undervalues" traditional women's roles. Moreover, in 1978 *Time Magazine* reported that Deatherage had added a "protest amendment" to an antiabortion bill in the Oklahoma House. Deatherage's amendment would have required men "to obtain written consent" from women "before engaging

[90] Frosty Troy, "Top Ten Legislators - Best Of The 1980 Session : Top Ten," *The Oklahoma Observer* 12, no. 11 (June 10, 1980): 15.

in intercourse" and for women simultaneously to "receive a warning" about the risks of pregnancy and childbirth. *Time* noted that Deatherage's amendment mimicked "sections of the proposed bill that would require doctors to issue similar warnings to abortion applicants." In these and other ways, Deatherage's words and actions of the ERA decade aligned more closely with a number of feminist and national Democratic Party objectives than they did with either Southern Democrats or the GOP.[91]

In exploring Deatherage's reasons for joining the Republican ranks, perhaps one state ratificationist in 1982 captured the representative's disposition: "Cleta is very ambitious and sometimes she lets that goal take precedence over her issues." In 1981, moreover, one young male state lawmaker spoke disparagingly of the legislative "power of Cleta Deatherage." Further, in 1980 *The Daily Oklahoman* printed that Deatherage's "rapid rise in the [House] power structure has reportedly angered some" more experienced lawmakers. While in the Oklahoma House, Deatherage's attempts to "centralize budget-making power" in the Appropriations Committee counteracted the "legislature's populist and parochial traditions" even as "her style grated on many" of the lawmakers. In addition, Deatherage told *The Wall Street Journal* in 1985 that she had

[91] "Deatherage, Edmondson To Lead Kennedy Effort," *The Daily Oklahoman*, December 4, 1979, 87; Rita F. Douglas, "Growing Up Female: Not Like Grandmother," *The Sunday Oklahoman*, November 9, 1980, sec. Women, 1; "Love? Sign Here," *Time*, March 13, 1978, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,919392,00.html.

"burned out" after all those years of fighting for the ERA, but she expected to return to politics in the future.[92]

Certainly the effects of work-place envy and chauvinism would test Deatherage's patience as well as inhibit her ability to pursue her legislative goals. As an articulate woman wielding public power, Deatherage epitomized many traditionalists' fears concerning feminism and strong women, even as those fears remained largely unrecognized within the state's traditionalist culture. Simply by being successful and female, Deatherage subverted Oklahoma's gendered society. Moreover, her rapid rise within the state's Southern-conservative Democratic Party and in the Oklahoma House alienated many party members and lawmakers. As an outspoken and accomplished state legislator, Deatherage provoked the suspicions, if not the displeasure, of Oklahoma's predominantly-male, traditional legislature. Becoming an object of jealousy and feeling the frustrating effects of Democratic males closing ranks against females thus may have left Deatherage with ambivalent – if not stronger – feelings toward Democrats.

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[92] Connie Blaze (pseud.), "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, March 9, 1982, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For "power of Cleta Deatherage" quote see Ruth Murray Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown transcript - 1981 STOP ERA day at the capitol," unpublished (State Capitol, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, January 7, 1981), Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; For "rapid rise" quote see Hammer, "Draper Remains House Speaker," 41; For "centralize," "legislature's, " and "her style" quotes see Cindy Simon Rosenthal, *When Women Lead: Integrative Leadership in State Legislatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 99; Ellen Hume, Staff Reporter of *The Wall Street Journal*, "Some Women Politicians Are Backing Away From Feminist Label to Expand Base of Support," *Wall Street Journal (1923-Current File)*, April 3, 1985, 62.

Furthermore, her distasteful experiences with feminists and their expressions of anger toward and retaliation against Deatherage during and after ERA's closing moments may have influenced the former legislator's political migration to the Republican Party. The evidence suggests that Deatherage, in many ways, became a scapegoat for her former allies' disappointment over their shared ratification loss and from the legislator's deepening commitment to her career as she utilized that route to obtain her legislative goals during the final ERA years. With this reaction, a number of Oklahoma feminists exhibited both a blind commitment to principles and an inability to accept the truth behind Oklahoma politics during the ERA decade. Whether Deatherage undertook to play the game of *realpolitik* and used her influence with the NWPC to support fellow politicians and ERA advocates in their election bids misses the essential point. The pragmatist Deatherage believed ERA's hopes for ratification lessened each year and she sought to use the political process to find other solutions for helping to improve Oklahomans' lives. Simultaneously, her discouraged detractors held ideology foremost, which narrowed their vision – a condition that echoes the problems state and national feminists faced in their inability to work together to achieve their central goal.

As for Deatherage's switch to the Republican Party, perhaps the explanations noted provide some inkling of the dilemma she faced as well as reasons that, in part, may have led to her disillusionment with the

Democratic Party. Having attained political power in the Oklahoma legislature and experienced the effect that power had on making a difference for citizens, Deatherage in later years may have decided to employ her education, knowledge, and considerable legal talent to again work toward what she saw as the betterment of American government. Including Deatherage's 1992 worry over government interference in the rights of Americans, each of these clues might help explain Deatherage's words and actions of the final years of the ERA campaign and in the years since.

However her political metamorphosis came about, most significant is that Deatherage's experience with ERA exemplifies the "damned if you do, damned if you don't" existence of politicians faced with controversial proposals and the quandary of attempting to please constituents who oppose public officials and each other on the issues. Like the three Oklahoma governors and other state politicians of the ERA decade, Deatherage's failure both to live up to feminists' expectations and to secure ratification may have stemmed from the twin facts that politicians survive by reelection and amass power by becoming a part of the political culture within which they live, power that allows them to achieve at least a portion of their legislative goals. By the time of the final ERA state vote in 1982, political compromise, concession, and avoidance of the issue appeared to be the conduit to survival for many Oklahoma politicians, including those who

supported the amendment. No matter a particular politician's depth of conviction that ratification was just, in the Oklahoma political climate of 1982 ratification was not going to happen. It appears that many state legislators, including Deatherage, understood that political reality.

During the amendment decade, Oklahoma legislators submitted resolutions for ratification sixteen times, with the majority of those sixteen resolutions "buried in committee." The legislature actually voted on the amendment five times only – the Senate in 1972 and 1982, the House in 1972, 1973, and 1975. Six months after the final upper chamber vote, Senate leader Marvin York "broke several months of silence" and talked about the 1982 ratification fight. The Senator said, "I'll go to my grave believing" that if "just one more [Oklahoma] state senator" had voted for ratification in January, "it would have ignited a chain reaction that would have placed the amendment in the U.S. Constitution." York explained that he had needed twenty-five votes to ratify, but he had only twenty-two votes on that January day. One of those "yes" voters later switched "when the senator saw the issue was going to fail."[93]

[93] For "buried in committee" quote see Jim Young, "ERA deadline caps 10-year hassle in Sooner Legislature," *Oklahoma City Times*, June 29, 1982, 6. The Young article erroneously reported that the Oklahoma legislature voted on ERA three times only, omitting the House votes in 1973 and 1975. Although three roll calls were taken in the 1975 House vote, none were recorded in the official journal "since it was not advanced to [the] 3rd reading" according to "Legislation for ratification of U.S. Constitution – Equal Rights Amendment." In addition, the above Young article reports seventeen resolutions were introduced into the legislature during the ERA decade. However, I have used the Oklahoma Legislative Reference Division's count of sixteen resolutions as their figure is, in my opinion, more reliable. All the above information garnered from Legislative Reference Division, "Legislation for ratification of U.S. Constitution - Equal Rights Amendment," 1, 6-9,

In addition, the Senate leader "had commitments" for the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth votes, but "I could never get that 23rd vote." York talked with various senators, attempting to change their minds. One senator he spoke with agreed to cast the needed ratification vote. The senator told York, however, "as soon as I do, I will walk out of the chamber and submit my resignation" because the senator had made "too many commitments" to vote against ratification. York decided he "didn't want to apply the kind of pressure that was needed to be applied to get that [twenty-third] vote." The senate leader then explained his belief that if the amendment had passed the Senate, "there was a good chance it would have swept through the House." And, York continued, if the ERA had passed in Oklahoma, a "good possibility [existed] it would have passed in two other states."[94]

York's belief that Oklahomans held within their power a chance at national ratification presents the perfect irony as Oklahomans also helped create and shape the antifeminist movement that ultimately defeated the ERA. A further irony is that antifeminists and their movement were an unforeseen consequence of the very existence of feminism and feminists, a consequence that feminists and the Equal Rights Amendment initiated, defined, and helped build. Among feminists' many accomplishments, this

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quote 1, Legislative Reference Division, Jan Eric Cartwright Memorial Library, Oklahoma Department of Libraries; Jim Young, "ERA needed only one vote, York says : York," *(Oklahoma City Times)*, June 6, 1982, 1-2, quotes 1.

[94] Ibid., quotes 1, 2

one in particular was perhaps the most difficult for them to accept or understand.

By the end of the ERA decade, the ratification debate had turned many former political allies into enemies as well as engendered new alliances. The divisive amendment question also brought into conscious thought as well as open political debate issues that Oklahomans had not dealt with in any practical way since the early twentieth-century suffrage debate, subjects such as the role and place of both women and men in society and the disparate meanings of family and religion. The two factions who fought the battle placed Oklahoma politicians squarely in the middle of those issues and that fight. In addition, those groups that lobbied state politicians evolved over the ERA decade. Ratificationists' distrust of officials grew, precipitating open breaches between allies that displayed proponents and state politicians' growing frustration as the decade wore on. Simultaneously, the pro-family movement developed into an efficient and persuasive political machine, one that became a resourceful and influential producer of voters and votes. By the end of the ten-year amendment campaign, Oklahoma's political and cultural conservatism had deepened, which would eventually transform politics within the state.

Afterword

The Oklahomans who undertook the ten-year battle over the Equal Rights Amendment did so to uphold firmly held beliefs that shaped the meaning of ratification for them and for their nation. For each faction of the debate, achieving their separate goals represented the apotheosis of two opposing value systems. They each believed that realizing their objective would safeguard American rights for every individual and enhance the lives of all citizens. The lengthy fight over the amendment, however, revealed the great disparity between those belief systems.

For state feminists, ratification represented a struggle for justice, an honorable contest for the realization of the principles of democracy for over half of America's citizens. They looked to redress the legal and societal discrimination women had suffered since before the founding of the country. In feminists' minds, too many years had passed in which the nation allowed gendered cultural beliefs and legalized inequity to go unchecked. In 1972, state ratificationists founded one of, if not the, earliest organizations for ratification of the amendment in the nation. Oklahoma ERA proponents eventually established a diverse number of state organizations to carry out their campaign, groups that evolved with and adapted to the needs of the ten-year fight. Like their nationwide counterparts, state ratificationists often came to the debate from a variety of preexisting women's organizations, utilizing those groups in their struggle for equality. In addition, Oklahoma ERA proponents sought and achieved advancements for women and for

their status in all walks of life, whether housewife or attorney, midwife or doctor. By the end of the decade, state ERA advocates had become well-versed in politics. A number of Oklahoma amendment activists used their ratification experiences to establish political careers in their own right, ultimately helping to alter state laws and further improve women's lives well beyond the amendment years. State ratificationists shaped state culture simply by taking part in the ERA campaign. By their efforts and that visibility they brought about changes in the state and the nation, improvements in women's opportunities and a more receptive atmosphere for women's participation in the civic life of the nation as well as within business ventures and many other arenas. Despite losing the ERA battle, Oklahoma by 1982 accepted women's right to a public and political presence and recognized women's capabilities and worth.[1]

During the amendment decade, feminists' simultaneous dedication to a great number of admirable and essential women's issues served often to divide their limited resources and drain ratificationists' energy and focus, drawing them further from their central goal. In the same way, the diverse number of state groups ERA proponents established helped lead to both disorganization and disunity. The entry into the state of national groups

[1] After repeated tries, Representative Maxine Kincheloe in 1984 obtained passage of a bill modifying the widow's portion of inheritance from one-third to one-half. See "House Journal - Second Regular Session of the Thirty-ninth Legislature - pages 1124 (Index), 857," 1984, 1124 (Index), 857, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Again after repeated attempts, the state legislature finally repealed the section in Oklahoma's Head of Household law that specified males as the head. Representative Freddye Williams authored the bill: "House Journal - Second Regular Session of the Forty-first Legislature - pages 1470 (Index), 35," 1988, 1164 (Index), 35, Wanda Jo (Peltier) Stapleton private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

mirrored those experiences, causing inefficiency and tumult at a time when commitment to achieving their shared purpose required primacy of place. Proponents also carried out their battle in raucous and spirited ways, tactics grounded in 1960s' radicalism but which served ultimately to hurt their cause. Moreover, the ratification loss came about in part due to the ideology feminists held dear. Precepts of inclusiveness led each individual to both fight for her right to be heard and caused all feminists to believe each viewpoint should be championed and advanced. For the ERA battle, however, that culture of inclusiveness led to too many contending voices, a large number of organizations that both duplicated efforts and competed for resources, and a multitude of causes that splintered their groups and their solidarity. In the end, that ideology of inclusiveness helped to bring about the loss of ratification.

At the beginning of the ERA campaign, feminists were the outsiders, sixties' radicals who loudly demanded that the country and its government fulfill America's founding doctrines. For the first eight years of the decade, the feminist movement and the federal government in many ways became partners, with the shared goal of achieving equality and recognition for all Americans. Antiratificationists skillfully cast ERA advocates as both radicals and allies of a feared, intrusive government, with each group invested in subverting traditional American values. In this and other ways, ratificationists failed to realize the threat their opponents presented and failed to adequately prepare for and counteract that threat.

In Oklahoma, a significant number of state citizens neither recognized the injustice feminists proclaimed nor respected the oftentimes public clamor of feminists' protests. Like ratificationists, these Oklahomans also fought for strongly-held, cherished beliefs in democracy and in their perceived rights – the right of women to choose to remain at home, the right of parents to raise their children as they saw fit, the right of citizens to live independent lives without debilitating interference from government, and the right of Americans to publicly celebrate and legally recognize inherent differences between women and men. Believing ratification would destroy those rights, they saw the amendment as unnecessary and thought it would limit, rather than broaden, democracy. For these Oklahomans, the struggle was thus also a battle for justice. Threatened by the permissiveness they saw around them, their fight became a moral imperative to save the state and the nation from its steady decline into intemperance and liberal profligacy. Most important, antiratificationists believed they were answering a higher call to save the country from its self-inflicted, ongoing fall from grace, a fall the amendment embodied and that ratification would only hasten.

Like state feminists, antiratificationists had no organizations dedicated to the campaign at the beginning of the ERA decade. Despite that lack, in 1972 a few Oklahoma women carried out the first national defeat of the amendment and, shortly thereafter, helped found the nationwide antiratification campaign. Like Oklahoma ratificationists, ERA opponents quickly established organized state opposition groups. Those

groups flourished through largely private connections between women, many of whom were drawn into the fight to defend their Biblically-based views of the proper role of women and men in society. As the decade progressed, antiratification groups grew in numbers, experience, and strength, developing well-organized, yet rarely seen networks of activists who mobilized quickly in response to their leaders' calls. Significantly, state ERA opponents' link to the national movement represented a symbiotic relationship between Oklahoma's conservative women and their national leader, Phyllis Schlafly. In large part, the nationwide success of the antiratification movement came about because of that thriving, mutually-reinforcing relationship, one that allowed each side to realize its intent. Schlafly became the highly visible embodiment of the STOP ERA movement, gaining respect, fame, and power. With Schlafly as the polestar of the movement, state antiratificationists remained within their culturally acceptable roles, keeping for themselves the image that they stayed within their self-imposed boundaries even as they were moving well beyond those confines.

Most important, the antiratification fight politicized the Oklahoma women who took up the cause, particularly large numbers of state female fundamentalist Christians. Over the course of the decade, amendment opponents carried their newfound skills and activism into the political arena, becoming involved in campaigns for state and national conservative candidates. By 1980, Republican candidates within the state began publicly

aligning themselves with the values of pro-family antiratificationists and those candidates began winning, particularly at the congressional level. As the New and Christian Rights attained Republican Party dominance nationally in the 1980s and 1990s, Oklahomans who had inherited Democratic Party affiliation began switching to the GOP or, at the least, voting Republican even while remaining registered Democrats. Leading the way in this voting phenomenon, many of Ruth Murray Brown's 1980 antiratificationist interviewees stated that they were either changing their registration to Republican or voting for GOP candidates in that election year. State female amendment opponents thus initiated and spread this political realignment beginning in the ERA years.[2]

During the amendment battle, the national Democratic Party was the party of the ERA and other liberal causes. Throughout that decade, state female antiratificationists attacked the amendment and other liberal goals and beliefs, inexorably linking each of those issues in the minds of voters. As in many Southern states, however, the Oklahoma Democratic Party was decidedly Southern Democrat and espoused a conservative, hierarchical ideology welcomed by ERA opponents. Moreover, state Democratic politicians of the era often distanced themselves from the national party and espoused the same gendered, traditionalist beliefs as antiratificationists.

[2] For the growth in the numbers of registered Republicans and state voters' propensity to vote Republican while remaining registered Democrats see, for example, Charles S. Copeland, Rebecca J. Cruise, and Ronald Keith Gaddie, "Oklahoma: Evangelicals and the Secular Realignment," in *The New Politics of the Old South: An Introduction to Southern Politics*, ed. Charles S., III Bullock and Mark J. Rozell, 3rd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 237-261, especially 255.

Certainly, those Democrats failed to support the ERA in sufficient numbers to obtain ratification within the state. Thus Oklahoma Democrats' ideological propensity, the party's incumbent status, and a strong legacy of voting Democratic among state citizens allowed Democrats to retain control at the state level well past the end of the ERA decade.[3]

However, the 1992 election of Democrat Bill Clinton to the presidency, in conjunction with a Democratically-controlled Congress and a nationwide effort by Christian organizations to convince voters in 1994 to elect Republicans, spurred state voters to increase their desertion of traditional voting patterns. Begun with the 1994 congressional elections, the state's still predominantly conservative Democratic Party suffered and began losing its hegemonic position within Oklahoma, a process that was complete by the early twenty-first century. State antiratificationists, particularly fundamentalist Christians, set the stage for and initiated that progression during the ERA decade.[4]

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[3] For Oklahoma's Southern Democrat heritage see, for example, David R. Morgan, Robert E. England, and George G. Humphreys, *Oklahoma Politics & Policies: Governing the Sooner State*, Politics and Governments of the American States 4th (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in association with the Center for the Study of Federalism, 1991), 8-9 and Cindy Simon Rosenthal, *When Women Lead: Integrative Leadership in State Legislatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 100-102; For the state Republican Party's 1994 Congressional delegation wins as well as its increasing dominance statewide over the next ten years see, for example, Copeland, Cruise, and Gaddie, "The New Politics of the Old South," 241 and *passim*.

[4] For Clinton's 1992 election see, for example, "William J. Clinton | The White House," *The White House*, http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/williamjclinton; For the switch with the November, 1994 elections from a Democratic (103rd) to a Republican (104th) Congress see, for example, L. David Roper, "Composition of Congress Since 1867," *Blacksburg Electronic Village - David L. Roper*, http://arts.bev.net/roperldavid/politics/congress.htm.

Grounded in the activism of state amendment opponents, the dominance of the Oklahoma GOP in part grew from a deepening adherence to fundamentalist Christian values as the numbers of state evangelicals rose during the ERA decade. Most important, as the rhetoric and beliefs embraced by Oklahoma pro-family activists flourished and spread in the state through their outspoken opposition to the ERA, their political and cultural influence grew. As noted in chapter three, 60 percent of 1980 state ERA pro-family activists came from the ranks of Christian fundamentalists. With the addition of Mormon ratification opponents, that 1980 figure rises to 69 percent.[5]

Moreover, almost 33 percent of Oklahomans were Christian fundamentalists in 1971, a figure that includes state Mormons. By 1980, 38.3 percent of the total state population held membership in Protestant evangelical and LDS denominations, a gain of over 5 percent. Increasing by 9.2 percent between 1971 and 2000, the total number of evangelical religious adherents and LDS members in Oklahoma rose to a markedly significant 42.2 percent of the state population by the twenty-first century. While the total population rose only 9.7 percent between 1980 and 2000, the numbers of religious adherents of all denominations within the state increased 19.4 percent. This sharp growth in religious adherence over those two decades reveals an increased culture of religion permeating

[5] See Ruth Murray Brown, *For a "Christian America": A History of the Religious Right* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), 69 for the percentages of 1980 state fundamentalist and LDS adherents participating in the anti-ERA crusade.

Oklahoma, a culture spread through the rise of the Religious Right within the state during the ERA decade and fostered by the highly pervasive and successful rhetoric of the Christian pro-family movement, testimony to state female antiratificationists' continuing bequest, an endowment that bestowed both cultural and political consequences.[6]

By the early years of the twenty-first century, Oklahoma's apparent "new" lean to the right in the 1990s resulted in the ascendancy of a Republican Party dominated by social and economic conservatives at both the state and national levels. With the 1970s' entry into the political arena of large numbers of state female amendment opponents and their anti-ERA, anti-liberal rhetoric, the state Republican Party during that decade came to mirror amendment opponents' beliefs and, as a result, better represented and espoused antiratificationists' traditional values than did the Democratic

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[6] See Samuel A Kirkpatrick, David R Morgan, and Thomas G. Kielhorn, *The Oklahoma Voter: Politics, Elections and Parties in the Sooner State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 29-30 for 1971 figures. Kirkpatrick, et al. footnote 17 noted that the authors included Mormons in their 33 percent figure; I calculated percentages for 1980, 2000, and the change over time using the following three sources: Glenmary Research Center, "'Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1980' distributed by the Association of Religion Data Archives | Maps & Reports, Oklahoma Denominational Groups," *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/state/40_1980.asp, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), "'Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States, 2000' distributed by the Association of Religion Data Archives | Maps & Reports, Oklahoma Denominational Groups," *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/state/40_2000.asp, and Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB) and Glenmary Research Center, "'Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States, 2000' distributed by the Association of Religion Data Archives | Maps & Reports, State Membership Report - Oklahoma Denominational Groups - 1980-2000 Change," *The ARDA: Association of Religion Data Archives*, http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/reports/state/40_compare80.asp This ARDA 1980-2000 Change report provided the figure of 19.4 percent for the increase in state religious adherence over those twenty years.

Party. During the 1980s, registration in the Oklahoma Republican Party "surged," with the greatest growth taking place "between 1980 and 1990." Referring to the 1994 Republican electoral sweep at the Congressional level, political scientists in 2007 noted that in Oklahoma the "political force of the evangelical right movement and its influence within the Republican Party, and the state more generally, was undeniable – an influence that persists, if not still growing, today." As witness to that continued growth, those same political scientists reported that state exit polling in 2004 revealed the "proportion of self-identified evangelicals at 44 percent (almost double the national electorate average of 23 percent)."[7]

However, that 1990s' apparent new Oklahoma lean to the right had its roots in the ERA decade and the largely Christian conservatives who were the backbone of the antiratification, pro-family movement. Significant numbers of those female adherents began campaigning and voting for Republican candidates by 1980 at the latest. In addition, their successful state fight against ratification spread traditionalist values throughout

[7] For Republican Party ascendancy at the statehouse level see, for example, Ryan McNeill, "Republicans to take control of state House : State House: Republicans 57, Democrats 43 1 not called - Republicans take control of House - Unofficial returns show Dems losing House control for first time since 1923," *The Oklahoman*, November 3, 2004, sec. Front page, 1, 8A and Julie Bisbee, "Republicans take control of Oklahoma Senate - For the First Time in State History, GOP will Control Legislature : State Senate - With GOP Win, the Party Takes Legislature Leadership," *The Oklahoman*, November 5, 2008, sec. Front page, 1, 5A; Copeland, Cruise, and Gaddie, "The New Politics of the Old South," quotes 241, 255. Copeland, et al. attributed the 1980s' state GOP registration growth in part to the effects of the 1986 Oklahoma "oil bust," which caused a loss of registered Democrats. They note that GOP registration "hovered around 600,000" after the oil bust. According to their graph on page 242, the sharpest spike in GOP registration looks to have occurred between 1980 and 1982 (ERA years), although Republican Party registration continued an upward climb throughout that decade.

Oklahoma, leading to a growing and highly visible culture of religion and outspoken conservatism. State amendment opponents thus transformed Oklahoma politics, cementing the state firmly within a heightened political conservatism evinced by a Republican Party that embraced the values and language of state female Christian conservatives of the ERA decade.

Beginning in the 1980s, the national Republican Party also began increasingly to reflect the deeper traditionalism of its new activists, the Christian women who opposed the ERA. Much of the historical literature recounts the rise of the New Right, most recently citing disgruntled conservative business leaders as the main actors in harnessing Christian traditionalists to their cause. In 2008, for example, historian Sean Wilentz in *The Age of Reagan* credits a coalition of New Right activists, including Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie, with establishing a conservative Republican counterestablishment that "fully emerged after 1976." Wilentz and other political observers also accurately credited Weyrich and other New Right conservatives with the 1979 founding of the Christian Right group Moral Majority and in finding a viable leader for that movement, evangelist Jerry Falwell.[8]

According to historians, New Right conservatives thus executed a concerted and successful effort to tie disaffected 1970s' Christian social conservatives to the counterestablishment business leaders. In addition,

[8] Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper, 2008), 85, 89-95, quote 85; For a full treatment of the business leader connection to the rise of the new conservatism see Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

historians and political scientists also attributed such luminaries as Falwell, Tim and Beverly LaHaye, and James Dobson, among others, with the successful mobilization of Christian traditionalists to the New Right cause. While these assertions accurately assess the rise of national Christian groups and their link to the New Right, they fail to describe fully the reasons behind the New Right leadership's decision to attempt to garner those Christian conservatives to the counterestablishment cause. In failing to include that description, these works also imply that 1970s' religious traditionalists lacked cohesive direction and purpose before the establishment of Moral Majority and other New and Christian Right groups.[9]

While including the nationwide ERA antiratification campaign as one of the engines behind the 1970s' growth of conservatism, many treatments credited Phyllis Schlafly with the success of that movement, typically relegating the role played by rank and file antiratificationists to a clause added to sentences noting Schlafly's mobilization of Christian traditionalists. Moreover, those studies often gave little mention to the strong presence of 1970s' women's Christian fundamentalist groups, such as WWWW (later Pro-Family Forum), in establishing and supporting the growth of the Religious Right in the political life of the nation. In 2005, for instance, historian Donald Critchlow wrote: "[Phyllis] Schlafly claimed that the

[9] Crediting national religious fundamentalist leaders and their popularity for the country's political shift to the right see, for example George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 234, 237 and Mark J Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *God at the Grass Roots, 1996: The Christian Right in the American Elections*, Religious Forces in the Modern Political World III (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), *passim*.

pro-family movement had been especially important to the [1980] election" of Ronald Reagan and other conservatives. At the same time, however, Critchlow's text suggested that he was not convinced of the accuracy of Schlafly's statements, writing: "In making this claim for the pro-family movement, Schlafly was less interested in setting the historical record straight than in shaping the policy agenda for the incoming administration" and "However accurate Schlafly's claims for the success of the pro-family movement, . . ." The tenor of Critchlow's prose as well as his repeated use of the word "claim" suggest that the historian lacked confidence in Schlafly's assertions.[10]

Adding to Wilentz' analysis and in contrast to Critchlow's, political scientist Anna Harvey argued in *Votes Without Leverage* that independent women's organizations of the 1970s successfully obtained their political goals without the direction or influence of male "party elites." Referring to NOW and other feminist women's groups, Harvey averred that "all the lobbying activity engaged in by those [women's] organizations throughout the 1970s was clearly electoral in nature." She noted also that ERA passage in the U.S. House of Representatives came from pressure applied by women's organizations as did "every other piece of legislation during the 1970s that involved conferring benefits on women as a group, . . ." Moreover, 1970s' defeats for those feminist groups emanated from a

[10] Donald T Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 267-268.

"competing network of independent women's organizations," with that network comprised of the antiratification and antiabortion groups that arose in response to the ERA and other liberal aims. Thus both feminist and antifeminist independent women's organizations of the 1970s successfully utilized their electoral clout well before either mainstream political party began serious attempts to mobilize women under the party banner.[11]

As do many studies, in 2007 Sean Wilentz noted that, by 1978, "ERA was obviously on the ropes, mainly because of Phyllis Schlafly and her supporters," placing those supporters in a secondary status as well as failing to distinguish among the differing ideologies of anti-ERA activists. In addition, the historian credited Schlafly for organizing a "counterdemonstration" to the 1977 Houston IWY National Conference. Wilentz noted that "20,000 'pro-family,' antiabortion, anti-ERA women" attended that counter-conference. In contrast, Ruth Brown related that the leader of Pro-Family Forum, Lottie Beth Hobbs, "planned the [pro-family] rally and made arrangements for the speakers, the hotel rooms, and the Astrodome itself." Although Hobbs was a vice president of Eagle Forum at the time and the membership of that group, the pro-family movement, and other conservative organizations overlapped as well as supported one another's efforts, in this instance Hobbs and members of her Christian fundamentalist Pro-Family Forum conceived and executed the November,

[11] Anna L. Harvey, *Votes Without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920-1970*, Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 209-237, especially 212-221, quotes 214, 215

1977 well-attended Houston Pro-Family Rally, not Schlafly and Eagle Forum. [12]

Comprehensive treatments like Critchlow and Wilentz' along with their primary topics argue implicitly that the record of the pro-family movement, for example, fails to be germane to their subjects. Still, the lack of a conversation about the political affect of ERA opponents in these recent works shows that the history of those women and their movement deserves a more complete discussion as well as should be more thoroughly incorporated into the historical record. In addition, evidence such as Harvey supplied as well as that from this study also urges the need to revisit basic assumptions about the mobilization of the Christian Right, adding to that history the early political influence of and role played by the largely Christian, female pro-family movement.

Furthermore, Oklahoma political scientists Nancy Bednar and Allen Hertzke reported in 1995 that national Christian Right groups and their leaders, particularly James Dobson of Focus on the Family, became aware during the years from 1988 to 1994 that Congressional leaders failed to respond to the issues and solutions advocated by Christian conservatives. Like other studies, Bednar and Hertzke's work credited those national, predominantly male-led Christian Right organizations with initiating the solution of mobilizing Christian Right voters for the next election cycle.

[12] Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008*, 94-95; Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 111.

Moreover, the political scientists stated those national organizations were successful in their 1994 Election Day muster of social traditionalists. In that election year, Republicans swept the congressional polls, both within Oklahoma and nationally. While those countrywide conservative organizations deserve much of the credit for successfully motivating traditionalist voters, the record often fails to examine the role of ERA antiratificationists in helping to found and providing much of the momentum behind the national Christian Right movement.[13]

Specifically, Ruth Brown argued that Oklahoma and other states' antiratificationists provided the underpinning of the New Right movement, writing: "What started as simple opposition to the ERA evolved into the pro-family movement and then the Christian Right." Both Brown's study of the ERA decade and her extant interviews provide compelling evidence that her conclusion is credible and merits further attention. As noted in chapter three, antiratificationists founded both the original Texas chapter and the Oklahoma chapter of WWWW in 1974. By 1977, that organization had changed its name to Pro-Family Forum and joined with "Eagle Forum, some right-to-life groups, and other smaller conservative organizations in a Pro-Family Coalition." These Christian conservative women led the fight at the state and national IWY conferences, ultimately electing a significant number of delegates to the November, 1977 Houston IWY meeting. As

[13] Nancy L. Bednar and Allen D. Hertzke, "Oklahoma: The Christian Right and Republican Realignment," in *God At the Grass Roots : The Christian Right in the 1994 Elections* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), 91-107, especially 93-94.

mentioned, Lottie Beth Hobbs and other leaders of Pro-Family Forum organized their own rally in Houston, held the same weekend as the IWY Conference. While the IWY "galleries were seldom more than half full," the Pro-Family meeting at the Houston Astrodome garnered at least 12,000 attendees, with a Houston newspaper placing the figure at 20,000. Either number illustrates the ability of Christian antiratificationist women to attract and mobilize large numbers of activists to their cause on the national level.[14]

Moreover, a direct Oklahoma connection existed between state ERA opponents and New Right conservative leader Paul Weyrich. According to Brown, Weyrich told her in a 1996 interview that when Schlafly "began working with Christian conservatives" to defeat the ERA, Weyrich believed the antiratification leader was "on a fool's errand." By 1979, however, Weyrich had changed his mind and began wooing Christian conservatives, including Pro-Family Forum, to join with him and other economic conservatives in a coalition to work toward the national realization of conservative social and economic values. Having seen the successful anti-ERA activism of female Christian traditionalists, Weyrich apparently wanted to harness the movement's energy, organization, and political clout. According to Brown, Weyrich adopted moral issues as his own at that time, "seven years after the beginning of the ERA campaign." In addition, antiratificationist Ann Patterson related that Phyllis Schlafly arranged for Weyrich and one of his executives, Connie Marshner, to lead a 1980 "good

[14] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 111-114 and passim, quotes 271, 112.

government seminar" in Oklahoma on "how to campaign." Moreover, historian Donald Critchlow noted that Weyrich's group, the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, and Eagle Forum "sponsored several training programs" for important 1980 Senate campaigns in eight states, including Oklahoma. Critchlow also noted that Ronald Reagan in his 1980 campaign established a Family Policy Advisory Committee to garner "links with the pro-family organizations," with Marshner as chair.[15]

Further, Oklahoma antiratificationists and others from a number of states became heavily involved in the White House Conferences on the Family, with state meetings held in 1979 and the resulting three regional conferences in 1980. Connie Marshner became "chairman of the Pro-Family Coalition" for those conferences. From those meetings, two organizations joined the Pro-Family Coalition, Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America (founded in 1979) and James Dobson's Focus on the Family (founded in 1977 following the national IWY Houston Conference in November of that year). Originally mobilized by the ERA campaign, the successful battle against the amendment waged by Oklahoma and other states' conservative Christian women attracted national New Right leaders. Those leaders helped found later organizations, like Moral Majority, in part

[15] Ibid., 131-137, quotes 136, 135; Ann Patterson, "Unpublished telephone interview," interview by Ruth Murray Brown, transcript, September 16, 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma and Ruth Murray Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown 'Chronology - Pro-Family Movement'," unpublished (Norman, Oklahoma, undated), Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 265.

to pull Christian Right women into mostly male-dominated and often New Right-directed organizations. Thus, pro-family female activists became the backbone of the national Christian organizations, providing a large part of the political support needed by economic conservatives to advance their New Right agenda nationally – a partnership that also advanced the goals of socially conservatism Christian women.[16]

Moreover, those new national Christian organizations as well as the Republican Party espoused the ideology of their latest partners, in particular adopting the language first used by Christian fundamentalist women in their fight against ratification of the ERA. As pro-family activist Anna Meyer stated in 2009: "I am a Christian and believed and I still do that the ERA destroys families." With these words, Meyer once again articulated a central theme of the amendment decade pro-family movement – the protection of family as seen through the eyes of conservative Christians. For Christian traditionalists, ratification of the ERA would have destroyed the family and traditional family values.[17]

Further, the meaning buried within the word "family" for those Christian women became ensconced within the rhetoric of the Republican Party and its New Right leaders. In 1981, Ruth Brown attended a Dallas, Texas rally of traditionalists at which Paul Weyrich spoke. According to Brown's transcript of his address, the New Right leader elicited many cheers

[16] Brown, *For a "Christian America"*, 131-137, 141-154, quotes 136, 135, 143.

[17] Anna Meyer, "Interview questions - Anna Meyer," interview by Jana Vogt, email and hard copy, October 19, 2009, Personal collection of author, Norman, Oklahoma.

from the crowd with the following words: "We are a tripartite coalition – economics, defense, and pro-family. Without [the] pro-family emphasis, the Republicans will lose again. . . . We'd rather get back to our homes and families and churches, but we're involved because we have to be." The triumph of this new symbolism, and of the women who introduced its use, ultimately led members of the Republican Party and its increasingly dominant New and Religious Right members to adopt the language of the conservative and Christian women who first expressed it in their fight against the ratification of the ERA.[18]

The success of social conservatives during the decade of the ERA struggle has had long-term and widespread political consequences, both statewide and nationally. By the end of the ERA decade, a groundswell of traditionalists placed Oklahoma firmly within a heightened political conservatism, a groundswell initiated and led by female conservatives as well as fundamentalist Christian women. Moreover, their success in waging the anti-ERA campaign spread their message and their influence in the state, leading to a political realignment that began in the latter years of the

[18] Ruth Murray Brown, "Ruth Murray Brown transcript - 1981 Dallas Rally," 1981, Brown family private collection in possession of author, Norman, Oklahoma. Although undated, references by Weyrich and other rally speakers to Sandra Day O'Connor's current status as a U.S. Supreme Court nominee place the date as between July and September, 1981. For confirmation of these dates see, for example, "LII / Legal Information Institute: US Supreme Court: Justice O'Connor," *Cornell University Law School*, July 30, 2007, http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/justices/oconnor.bio.html. Further evidence that Republicans and New and Christian Right male leaders mirrored the ideology and/or adopted the language of anti-ERA conservative and Christian women includes, as previously noted in this chapter, Ronald Reagan's 1980 establishment of a "Family Policy Advisory Committee" and James Dobson name for his Christian group, "Focus on the Family."

amendment decade. That political influence has grown since the end of the amendment campaign, helping to foster a deepening conservatism within the national Republican Party, a party that now largely mirrors the ideology of those female ratification opponents who constituted the heart of Christian Right conservatism nationally. Although the 2008 presidential election saw shifting political alignments from Republican red to Democrat blue in states throughout the nation, not one of Oklahoma's seventy-seven counties voted "blue," marking the Sooner state as the only completely "red" state in the nation – an enduring legacy of the women who undertook to fight against the Equal Rights Amendment some thirty years earlier.[19]

[19] "Oklahoma," http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0108260.html; "Map: Presidential Election Winners by County | Election 2008 | washingtonpost.com," http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/interactives/campaign08/election/uscounties.html; "Alaska Election Results," http://www.mahalo.com/alaska-election-results.

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Acronyms

AAUW	American Association of University Women
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ACU	American Conservative Union
ACUF	American Conservative Union Foundation
BPW	Business and Professional Women
CPAC	Conservative Political Action Conference
CRL	Citizens for Responsible Legislation
CWU	Church Women United
DOE	Department of Energy
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EPA	The Environmental Protection Agency
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
GCRW	Governor's Commission on the Rights of Women
GCSW	Governor's Commission on the Status of Women
HCR	House Concurrent Resolution
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
HOTDOG	Housewives Organized To Defend Our Girls
HJR	House Joint Resolution
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
IWY	International Year of the Woman
JBS	John Birch Society
LWV	League of Women Voters

NFBPW	National Federation of Business and Professional Women
NFRW	National Federation of Republican Women
NOW	National Organization of Women
NWPC	National Women's Political Caucus
Norman WPC	Norman, Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus
OBU	Oklahoma Baptist University
OCE	U.S. House of Representatives Office of Congressional Ethics
OEA	Oklahoma Education Association
OK-ERA	Oklahomans for the Equal Rights Amendment
OKWPC	Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus
OPUBCO	Oklahoma Publishing Company
OSBI	Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration (or Act)
OU	University of Oklahoma
RAF	Radical American Feminists
RCERA	Religious Coalition for the ERA
RNC	Republican National Committee
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SCR	Senate Concurrent Resolution
STOP ERA PEC	STOP ERA Political Education Committee
UMW	United Methodist Women

WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WEAL	Women's Equity Action League
WRL	Women for Responsible Legislation
WWWW	Women Who Want to be Women (renamed Pro-Family Forum in the mid-to-late 1970s)