A Thesis

Entitled

We Are All from an Unratified State: The Toledo National Organization for Women and Its Pursuit of the Equal Rights Amendment

By

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Women’s organizations fueled the 20th century women’s movement. An example of this is the case of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and its fight for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The members of NOW worked for the women’s movement and its many goals primarily at the grassroots, local level. At the same time, efforts were coordinated and synchronized at the national level by an elected group of leaders. While the members of the local branches worked in their hometowns for ERA ratification, at the national level NOW coordinated these local efforts for the largest possible impact. In this way, NOW was desperately important in the struggle for the amendment across the country.

NOW came into existence at the perfect time to fight for the ERA. As the organization grew and expanded, local chapters sprang up all over the country and made ERA ratification one of their main goals. One of the problems that the local branches had to face was the unavailability of resources. Smaller branches, such as the Toledo chapter of NOW, constantly tried to figure out how to make more money and get more people involved in their events and activities. The limited amount of resources available to Toledo NOW, in terms of both money and womanpower, was a problem throughout the entirety of the ERA campaign.
The fact that the group was pulled in many different directions by other reform movements also slowed down Toledo NOW’s activism in pursuit of ERA ratification. These other reforms required time, money, and energy that could have been used to further the push for ERA ratification. Even during times when Toledo NOW’s stated first priority was the amendment, other reforms depleted the amount of resources available.

Although Toledo NOW members actively worked toward ERA ratification, a number of factors hindered the group’s efforts, including lack of time and resources, location, and other projects that the group worked on during the ratification campaign. Between the years 1972 and 1982, the ERA’s rank on Toledo NOW’s priority schema changed numerous times. It was only in the final months of the campaign that the group fully pledged itself, and its resources, to ratification. Although Toledo NOW did much for the ERA, more could have been done if only the amendment had ranked higher on the group’s list of priorities. By examining a broader context, it can be seen that the amendment was important to the women’s movement for fifty years before the ratification attempt in 1972 and, therefore, can be helpful in understanding Toledo’s involvement in the campaign.

The first chapter details the history of the Equal Rights Amendment. From its creation by Alice Paul in 1923, the ERA had a tumultuous journey through the halls of Congress. The amendment gained direct support only when the women’s movement flourished, with the help of Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, and the National Organization for Women. From 1970 to 1972, women’s rights groups and key Congressional leaders fought for the passage of the ERA. The amendment faced
problems early in its history. Opponents cited that extension of the military draft to women, further legalization of reproductive rights including abortion, equal rights for homosexuals, and the breakdown of the family were all reasons that the ERA should not be passed. These arguments haunted the amendment throughout the ratification process. This chapter also shows that the women’s movement and organizations, specifically NOW, were key to the amendment’s passage through both houses of Congress. A group of activists founded NOW in 1966 and early on made the ERA one of its primary national goals. The leaders of the fledging organization then organized direct action in the form of marches and work strikes. The creation of August 26 as Women’s Equality Day further pointed out the need for the amendment. NOW later used Women’s Equality Day as a podium not just to celebrate the gains that women made in the past, but also to push for gains in the future, specifically the ERA. This early activism by women’s rights groups is one of the main reasons that the amendment passed through the houses of Congress in 1972 and gained numerous state ratifications so quickly.

The second and third chapters focus specifically on the Toledo branch of NOW and the efforts of its members to fight for ratification. The majority of the information in the chapters comes from the Toledo National Organization for Women’s archives, housed at the Ward M. Canaday Center at the University of Toledo. There are three boxes at the archives that hold 207 folders full of documents, including correspondence, membership records, meeting minutes, and newsletters. Covering the years between 1972, the founding year of Toledo NOW, to 1994, the documents detail a wide range of materials and reforms, such as Title IX, lesbian rights, reproductive rights, and, of course, the Equal Rights Amendment. There is a large amount of material that concerns the
amendment, between three and four hundred documents. These documents provide a vivid portrayal of the group’s efforts and activism in each of the causes it advocated.

In order to better understand the activism of Toledo NOW, Chapter two discusses the early years of the ERA ratification campaign, from 1972 to 1976. The foundation of the Toledo chapter of NOW is discussed, as well as early efforts in pursuit of the ERA. During the early years, the amendment did not rank highly on the group’s list of priorities. This is partly because members, including the leadership, believed that ratification was a certainty. Initially, states raced to ratify the ERA and proponent groups, such as NOW, assumed that this pace would not stop until the amendment’s addition to the Constitution. Another reason that the amendment was a low priority was because local activities and reforms got in the way of most coordinated, direct actions. ERA activism especially showed a marked decline after Ohio ratified the amendment in 1974. At this point, Toledo NOW stopped almost all ERA activism and focused on local issues, such as fighting job discrimination and creating women’s shelters and a rape crisis center. The group’s limited resources only allowed them to do so much, and the pull of local problems was much stronger than the pull of the ERA. The years between 1972 and 1976 were also important because Toledo NOW decided upon its activism techniques. The group used petitioning, letter writing, rallies, and walkathons extensively throughout the entirety of the campaign.

The third chapter discusses the active years, 1977 to 1982. During this time, Toledo NOW went through a transition. In 1977 Toledo NOW slowly began to pay more attention to the ERA. After National NOW’s 1978 ERA state of emergency, the local group began to rank the amendment as its number one priority. Activism in support of
ratification markedly increased as many more events were scheduled which more people attended. The leadership of Toledo NOW furthered this increase by making strong efforts to listen to the members and operating the group with a streamlined, managerial style. The needs of women in the community distracted their efforts, though to a lesser degree than before. This chapter also documents the numerous activities that the group planned and executed during the final year of the ratification struggle, what the Toledo Blade designated as the “Last-Ditch Campaign”.\footnote{John Block, “NOW Begins Last-Ditch Campaign to Ratify the ERA,” Toledo Blade, July 1, 1981, page 1.} During this time, Toledo NOW organized numerous events, anything in order to tip the scales of the ERA’s fate. This was to no avail, as the June 30, 1982 deadline came and went without full ratification of the amendment.

The conclusion covers the aftermath of the ERA’s failure. According to historians, there are many reasons why the amendment was not ratified. From the moment that the ratification deadline passed, supporters, including those women involved in Toledo NOW, tried to understand and define its failure. Entire books analyze the amendment’s failure. Jane Mansbridge’s Why We Lost the ERA details the numerous reasons the amendment failed, including that many women did not support the amendment. There was fear of what the consequences of ratification would do to family life and structure. Flora Davis argues that the women’s movement was overly optimistic about the chances of success and therefore “got off to a slow start.” Proponents of the amendment were quicker to the draw and, in her view, were more organized in their opposition. Davis also notes that it was more probable that the ERA would fail than succeed. She explains that “Where pro-ERA forces needed to persuade thirty-eight states to ratify, the opposition only needed to persuade thirteen states to vote no.”
opposition had an easier task than the proponents. Finally, Davis states that the notions of including women in the military draft and the possible expansion of abortion rights destroyed the ERA’s chance for success.²

The conclusion discusses a number of these reasons and their pertinence to Toledo. It also addresses the strengths and weaknesses of Toledo NOW in its pursuit for ratification. There were some things, such as education, that the group excelled at. There were weaknesses, however, and the biggest one was that it could not stick to one goal at a time. There were so many different reforms that Toledo NOW fought for all of the time that, even if the group designated the ERA as its first priority, it was not its only focus.

It is important to understand local actions in the women’s movement. Since grassroots organizations primarily ran and founded the women’s movement, each city’s specific actions affected the goals, successes, and failures of the entire organization and movement. To understand the successes and failures of NOW during the ERA ratification campaign, each city’s must be understood. Understanding the past is important because of its implications for future activism. One of the best ways to create a successful, thriving movement is to build from the successes of the past. While Toledo NOW had much strength, it also had weaknesses and made mistakes. It is hoped that, although these mistakes cannot be corrected, they will never be repeated.

Much work has been done that looks at the ability of a grassroots organization to enact national reform. Jo Reger defines NOW as a “federated structure,” having both local and national branches, but states that the goal of NOW was to keep power in the

local branches. In this way, “The geographic location of an organization can shape a movement’s culture…and its forms of activism.” Since the local branches had the power and were autonomous, each branch focused on different reforms based on the needs of its community. She points out that Cleveland’s NOW branch focused on day care and school lunch programs because that is what the women in the community found important. Reger also points out that the need for more resources can often force a branch to add fundraising and member recruitment to its list of priorities. Each branch feels this need differently, even though they are part of a federated structure. Cleveland was important to Reger’s study because there were numerous NOW chapters in the city. She notes that this caused women to become divided and inhibited the growth of a singular feminist consciousness and activism.³

Maryann Barakso also discusses NOW’s organizational structure but applies it directly to the struggle for ERA ratification. She agrees with Reger’s conclusion that community factors sway a branch’s activism to a greater degree than available resources. Barakso goes on to argue, though, that NOW’s participation in ratification forced members to re-evaluate its organizational structure. The group’s national leadership decided early that the ERA needed to be fought for by all branches. The organization of anti-ERA groups was proof enough for the national leaders that more governance was necessary. The branches feared, though, that fighting for a unified, national reform would cause a loss in grassroots mobilization and chapter autonomy. Therefore, the biggest problem that NOW faced during the ratification was the struggle over whether

the group should be unified and ruled by a national government or if the structure should stay the same, with the power at the grassroots local level.⁴

Toledo NOW is a good case study for melding the ideas of these two scholars. Although the limited availability of resources influenced the group’s activism, it responded to the needs of the community. At times, community needs were given a higher priority than national needs, including the ERA. Focusing on community needs fragmented Toledo NOW’s available resources and support for the amendment. The grassroots orientation and organizational structure distracted the group from being fully committed to ratification. Toledo NOW focused most heavily on the amendment during the final years of the campaign. By this time, National NOW gained a governmental grip on the local branches and had the ability to place the ERA as a high priority for all of the branches. Once the national organization of NOW changed so that the national office held more sway over the branches, Toledo NOW sponsored many more events in support of the ERA and focused less on community needs. Above all, though, Toledo NOW is an example that proves Reger’s point that Cleveland’s multi-chapter approach divided feminists. On a macro level, NOW’s multi-branch, grassroots approach did the same. The autonomy given to each branch distracted them from national goals and disabled coordinated reform efforts. Full ERA support only occurred when NOW’s branches, including Toledo, gave up some of their autonomy and followed national directives. The history of the women’s movement is not a history of sweeping change in the blink of an eye, funded by grand amounts of money and huge bodies of activists. The history of

the women’s movement is more subtle than that.5 One step at a time, and one person at a time, life for women changed. Though some women became leaders, even celebrities, in the women’s movement, all gains that women made in the 20th century were made one step at a time. This thesis is a history of the steps taken by one organization in one city that strove to better the daily lives of women.

Chapter 1: Before 1972

The struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment did not begin in 1972. Many factors were necessary and came into being before the proposed amendment went to the states for ratification. When women gained the right to vote in 1920, new possibilities opened up for them in the political arena. Gaining the right to vote spurred further action, such as the fight to gain complete political and legal equality. The true impetus of the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment was the creation and evolution of the women’s rights movement. The women’s rights movement, and the groups involved in it, was essential to the fight for the ERA. Without women’s rights groups demanding political and legal equality in the form of a constitutional amendment, the ERA might have stayed on the Congressional tables forever. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the history of the ERA before 1972 in order to understand how women’s rights groups, most specifically the National Organization of Women, affected the amendment ratification process.

The first step toward a constitutional equal rights amendment occurred on August 18, 1920 when Tennessee, the final state necessary, ratified the 19th amendment that gave women the right to vote. On August 26th, the Secretary of State signed the amendment, formally adding it to the Constitution. The struggle for suffrage was long and hard; forty-two years passed between when the proposed amendment’s introduction to
Congress in 1878 and when it began the ratification progress for the first time in 1920.¹
Women across the country rejoiced and celebrated the ratification of the 19th amendment. Their protesting, picketing, and petitioning had not been in vain. Women could now vote in the United States. Even though this was a huge victory for women across the country, one of the foremost leaders of the suffrage movement, Alice Paul, did not think that simply gaining the vote gave women the equality that they deserved.

Many historians consider the National Women’s Party (NWP), led by Alice Paul, to be the most radical organization that fought for women’s suffrage. In turn, Paul was the most radical of all of the women involved in the NWP. She learned her activist techniques through her participation in the English suffrage movement during the 1900s, which was more public, loud, and confrontational than its American counterpart. During her stay in England, Paul learned to picket, throw rocks, and chain herself to buildings and gates to make a public display for the cause of women’s suffrage. She took these tactics back with her when she returned to the United States and employed them in the NWP’s activities. Many considered Paul to be such a radical suffragist, and used such radical, public tactics, that she was jailed numerous times and had to withstand the horrific process of force-feeding. Though many other women’s groups participated in the suffrage movement, Alice Paul and the NWP were the voice of the movement from 1916 on. Through their radicalism, the NWP gave suffrage the publicity that it needed and was instrumental in the ratification of the 19th Amendment.²

Alice Paul believed that although it was necessary for women to have the vote so that they could participate in politics and not be seen as politically inferior, suffrage was only the first step toward equality. In order for women to be politically, legally, and socially equal, and to be viewed as such, Paul believed that the idea of womanhood and women’s capabilities must be re-evaluated and reformed. In order to kick-start a change in the conception of womanhood, Paul decided that an equal rights amendment was a necessary addition to the Constitution. It would constitutionally protect the social, legal, and political equality of women. Equality for women was a radical concept even in the 1920s, but Alice Paul was no stranger to being radical. For Alice Paul, equality was the goal, radical or not. Even legislation that protected women would have to go if it stood in the way of legal equality for women.

With this goal in mind, Paul and the Executive Committee of the NWP met in Seneca Falls, New York on the 75th anniversary of the Declaration of Sentiments to draft what they hoped would be the next amendment to the United States Constitution. Originally named for Lucretia Mott, after the famous abolitionist and suffragist, the amendment stated that “Men and women have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.” When it was introduced to Congress on December 10, 1923, the proposal quickly lost the Mott moniker and became known as the Equal Rights Amendment. From the outset, some women were worried that the ERA would take

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away protective legislation that they previously won, especially since Paul was for the removal of such legislation if necessary. Florence Kelley, who usually supported Alice Paul, was against the ERA out of fear that the amendment would nullify the protective legislation that she fought so hard for. Once it became clear that women with political clout did not agree with the ERA, there was no future success to be had. Oppositional forces defeated the amendment in the 1920s. Groups reintroduced it to Congress every session for the next twenty years, but to no avail. Most years, the ERA did not even make its way out of committee. The amendment remained the same until 1943 when the wording changed to read “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” The meaning, however, stayed the same.

Even though the ERA never made a strong showing on the congressional floor, it was a plank in the Republican Party platform every year between 1940 and 1980. In 1944 the Democrats followed suit and added support for the ERA to their party platform, but only after discussion of the amendment became really heated. During the 1950s the ERA gained more support from both parties, thanks to the positive opinions of prominent party women. For the Republicans, President Dwight D. Eisenhower supported the ERA and placed pro-ERA women in high power government positions, such as the head of the Federal Women’s Bureau, Alice K. Leopold. For the Democrats, Eleanor Roosevelt decided to support the ERA simply because the United Nations Charter had a similar

The problem for the ERA before the 1970s was that it had no centralized backing. Most of the Republicans supported the ERA, more Democrats each year supported it, but there was no one, unified group that made passage of the ERA its prime goal. The National Organization for Women (NOW), founded in 1966, became that centralized, supportive group and its original leader was Betty Friedan.

Betty Friedan is best known for being the founder and first president of the National Organization for Women and for writing the definitive book of the women’s movement, *The Feminine Mystique*. The inspiration for the book came when event planners asked Friedan to be in charge of the class survey for the reunion of her graduating class from Smith College. The answers that came from these educated, successful women astounded her. For these women, living the role of the American housewife was not all that it was cracked up to be. Their answers inspired Friedan to outline “the problem that has no name,” the overwhelming feeling of monotony, restlessness, and depression that encompassed women who were living out the role of housewife, who were supposed to be living the American dream. Published in 1963, *The Feminine Mystique* sold only 3,000 copies in hardcover in the first year. By 1970, though, 1,500,000 copies were sold of the paperback edition. *The Feminine Mystique* found its audience in both housewives and working women; the response to the book and to Friedan cemented her place as the central figure and leader of the women’s movement.9

It is no surprise that *The Feminine Mystique* reached the wide audience that it did. In the book, Friedan blames Freudian psychology, women’s education, and the media,

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8 Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, 9&10.
specifically magazines, for forging the feminine mystique and for relegating women to
the role of the housewife. In Friedan’s view, these groups of people and outlets of
communication were responsible for setting up a vision of ideal womanhood, that of the
housewife, which was simply unobtainable for most women. Those women who could
not live up to the ideal felt small and unwomanly. Those women who did live up to the
ideal, or at least came close to it, were depressed and unfulfilled. In the end, Friedan
challenged women and demanded that they move outside the ideology of the cult of true
womanhood, make lives for themselves, and not just live vicariously through their
husbands and children. Friedan had a vision for what womanhood in America should be,
a vision that she was willing to fight for and work toward. For Friedan, writing The
Feminine Mystique simply was not enough.10

Due to the support for her book and her call for an organized women’s group,
Friedan was one of the most important women in the foundation of the National
Organization for Women. NOW easily became one of the largest women’s organizations
in the United States and was the most public about its actions in the struggle for women’s
liberation. Before NOW’s foundation, many believed that a women’s rights organization
was a dire necessity. Organizations that were already in place did not do enough to help
women gain equality. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC)
specifically ignored or barely worked on cases of job discrimination that included
women. At Friedan’s urging, women sent a deluge of complaints to the EEOC and,
according to Friedan, most of the complaints were either turned away or ignored. Few
were ever investigated or fixed.11 Once it became clear that the EEOC was a failure for

women, some believed that women needed an organization that worked for them like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked for African Americans.\(^{12}\)

Though Friedan is the woman most associated with the foundation of NOW, many other prominent women, and even a few men, were integral to the fledgling organization. Before the foundation of NOW, a network of people in positions of governmental power existed that supported feminist and women’s rights ideals.\(^{13}\) These people included Catherine East, who worked in the federal government for twenty-three years before she met Friedan, and Mary Eastwood, an attorney for the Justice Department.\(^{14}\) Friedan, East, and Eastwood, along with others, were asked to take part in a convention of state Commissions on the Status of Women in 1966. It was during a meeting at this convention that the women decided that a women’s rights organization was necessary.

President John F. Kennedy had established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) early in his administration. Women were supportive of him during his campaign and some believed that once Kennedy became President he owed them. Women began to worry about Kennedy’s commitment, however, when he did not appoint any women to his cabinet. Eleanor Roosevelt questioned him on his commitment during a meeting. Esther Peterson, though, held the most sway over

\(^{12}\) There is some historical confusion over who actually suggested that women need their own version of the NAACP. According to Hennessee in Betty Friedan, a young lawyer named Sonia Pressman was the person who specifically stated the need for an NAACP-like organization. In Flora Davis’ *Moving the Mountain: The Women’s Movement in America Since 1960* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 53, EEOC commissioner Richard Graham is responsible for the NAACP statement. Though both of these books discuss the statement as if it were a verbatim quote from these two people, one has to wonder if it was simply an idea that was going around at the time.


\(^{14}\) Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain*, 53.
Kennedy’s opinion. Peterson, head of the federal Women’s Bureau, gathered groups of women to pressure Kennedy to include more women in his administration. Peterson had strong ties to the labor movement because her previous job was as a labor lobbyist and this made her particularly strong politically. She suggested to Kennedy that he create a commission to evaluate and document the status of women in the United States. She said that if he gave women this political boon, he may be able to justify ignoring the politically divisive ERA for a little longer, or possibly even for his entire term as President. Even though the amendment was not actively discussed on the congressional floor, it could still be a problem for any president who made his opinion about it known. Following Peterson’s logic, in order to avoid the ERA, Kennedy authorized the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in December 1961.15

The Presidential Commission worked together until 1963 when the group finalized their report *The Presidential Report on American Women*. This report was a mirror of the changing roles for women. Though there was agreement that women still had an important role to play in the private world of the home, the report made recommendations that showed that women were taking a greater role in the public world as well. The report recommended that child care be more readily available, that women not be discriminated against in employment or at the workplace, and that the work involved with marriage, home, and family be equally distributed between wife and husband. Though the report met with criticism,16 it was a huge step for women in politics. For the first time, the United States government inspected and analyzed

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16 Some women, including Friedan, believed that women’s subjugated status was not properly detailed. Others, such as Margaret Mead, anthropologist, believe that the importance of the woman’s role in the home was not discussed in enough detail. See Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 67. Rosen herself does not seem to be partial to the findings of the Presidential Commission as she calls the report “disappointing”. 

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women’s status in the United States. Those women who worked on the Presidential Commission learned about the inequalities in the ways that women across the country were living and, through their investigations, felt the spark of political activism.17

After Kennedy’s Presidential Commission was dissolved in 1963, states created their own Commissions on the Status of Women. By 1967, all 50 state governments included them. In 1966, in order that the state commissions could exchange information, a convention was held under the leadership of Esther Peterson. Friedan met many of the women who had worked on Kennedy’s Commission at this 1966 meeting and realized that an agenda for change was still necessary, especially after her book and the Presidential Commission’s report brought women’s issues to the public’s attention. One of the problems that participants wanted to address during the convention was the EEOC’s discrimination against women. However, when they introduced a resolution directing the EEOC to be more responsive toward women’s complaints about job discrimination, Peterson announced that the resolution would not be made. Her reasoning was that the purpose of the convention was to share information, not to make resolutions or take any action. The convention never voted on whether to bring a resolution against the EEOC.18

A group of women’s rights activists left the convention angered. They hashed out the need for a women’s version of the NAACP during an all-night meeting in Friedan’s hotel room. The next day, at the closing luncheon for the 1966 convention of state Commissions on the Status of Women, Friedan and her supporters sat at their own table

18 Davis, Moving the Mountain, 54 and Rosen, The World Split Open, 67, 74 & 75.
and passed around notes written on paper napkins. Friedan hastily scribbled on one of the napkins that there should be an organization with the goal of “full equality for women, in full equal partnership with men.” On another napkin, Friedan named this new group the National Organization for Women. In this way, NOW and its founding principles came from humble origins, conceived on a couple of paper napkins.

NOW organized quickly with a founding conference held October 29 and 30, 1966, in Washington, D.C. Organizers wrote a statement of purpose and attendees elected a national board of officials. Conference participants decided that local branches of NOW would be formed in as many cities as would support them. These local branches would be given absolute autonomy over which projects they would work on and members could fit their own branch to meet the needs of their city’s women. In its statement of purpose NOW outlined its goal “to take action to bring women into fuller participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men,” quoting almost verbatim from one of the paper napkins passed around at the CSW convention. NOW’s statement of purpose went on to list numerous ways that women were subjugated in American society, including discrimination in education, government, and society at large.

After a veritable essay on the ways that society made the status of women inferior to men, the statement of purpose lists specific goals NOW wanted to work toward. These

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21 Davis, *Moving the Mountain*, 56. Later in this thesis, it will be questioned as to whether National NOW actually gave their local branches as much autonomy as previously envisioned.
were legal, political, and social barriers that NOW believed needed to be changed and broken in order for men and women to stand on equal footing. The first item on the list was a constitutional equal rights amendment. The founding members of NOW stated “WE BELIEVE that the power of American law, and the protection guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to the civil rights of all individuals, must be effectively applied and enforced to isolate and remove patterns of sex discrimination.”23 Equal, constitutionally protected rights were on the minds of the founding members of NOW from the moment they first sketched out the goals of their organization. All of the other items that were listed, from education to simple human dignity, stemmed from basic legal and social equality, the kind that the founding members, Friedan included, believed could be best protected by the Constitution. The 1968 NOW Bill of Rights included this emphasis. When listing all of the rights that the group believed that women should have but did not, right at the top of the list was “Equal Rights Constitutional Amendment.” Even in its bill of rights, NOW committed to an equal rights amendment.24

Some members of Congress agreed that women’s right to equality should be protected by the Constitution. Martha W. Griffiths, for example, a Democratic Representative from Michigan, believed strongly in championing women’s rights. Before she was a Representative, Griffiths graduated from law school at the University of Michigan and was a practicing trial lawyer. She was responsible for keeping gender concerns a part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, even though those representatives who inserted the word sex did so to keep the bill from being passed. Griffiths was the first woman to serve on the Ways and Means Committee, the most powerful committee in the

23 Friedan, It Changed My Life, 89.
House. In the time that she served in the House, Griffiths was the most powerful female representative.\(^{25}\)

Since 1948, the Equal Rights Amendment had been trapped in the Judiciary Committee. It never got off the table, never went to the floor, and Congress never discussed it. At one point in February 1970, two dozen NOW members interrupted a Judiciary Committee meeting to demand that the committee hold hearings on the ERA, but to no avail.\(^{26}\) On June 11, 1970, Griffiths began collecting signatures on a discharge petition to force the Judiciary Committee to release the ERA directly to the floor without a committee vote of approval. Griffiths convinced a majority of the House of Representatives to sign the discharge petition and forced the ERA to the floor for a vote.\(^{27}\) On August 10, 1970, the ERA passed through the House on an affirmative vote of 350-15 with no changes made in wording. House members supported the amendment for a number of reasons, including the need to end protective legislation and to make sure that men and women got equal pay for equal work. Representatives also believed that laws that criminalized acts such as rape and domestic violence would not be affected because physical differences between men and women necessitated these laws.\(^{28}\) The next day, August 11, steps were taken by Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield to be


certain that the ERA would be voted on before the 1970 term ended and not just be tabled by the Senate’s Judiciary Committee as the House’s committee had done previously.29

Though the National Organization for Women was interested in furthering any sort of legislation that would guarantee equal rights between men and women, it was only at this point that NOW became nationally and publicly active in support of the ERA. Upon news of the House’s passage of the amendment, Friedan and NOW members planned a Women’s Strike for Equality, held on August 26, 1970, the fiftieth anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the right to vote. New York City experienced the largest strike, but women in cities across the nation, such as Chicago and Boston, organized strikes as well. On strike day, women were not asked to leave their jobs, if they had them, but to stop doing any work that a man did not normally do or that a man got paid more to do. This included waitresses refusing to wait tables in a bar where women had no opportunity to bartend, secretaries not typing in offices that did not hire female executives, and wives not cooking dinners for their husbands, even though that was what husbands expected. The point was to demonstrate the disparity of women’s compared to men’s work and how important women were to the daily tasks of the business world and, therefore, the world of men. Betty Friedan stood at the head of it all, giving the largest speech, marching, and organizing the majority of the New York strike and parade.30

The strike on August 26, 1970 was a success. In Washington D.C., 1,000 women marched down Connecticut Avenue and seven women held a vigil at the Federal

Building, wearing costumes of the suffrage era. Though D.C.’s march was noteworthy, the most monumental strike occurred in Manhattan. Over 10,000 people, mostly women, marched down Fifth Avenue in New York City, shouting, linking arms, and carrying banners with slogans such as “Don’t Iron While the Strike is Hot” and “I Love You, Susan B. Anthony.” Even though it was seen as a social taboo, many women did step away from their duties as secretaries and housewives to participate in the march. Women even went into businesses surrounding Fifth Avenue that were run by men and gave out pamphlets about the women’s movement and women’s issues. Numerous women’s liberation leaders, including Gloria Steinem and Kate Millett, gave speeches to the large crowd. By all accounts, though, Betty Friedan’s speech was the most intense and got the loudest applause. Friedan’s fiery speech touched many women that day, though her audience was not meant to be strictly the men and women who showed up to participate in the parade. Friedan foreshadowed the passion that women felt for the ERA, and the extent that they would fight for it, when during her speech she said “We serve notice, in our strike here tonight, that any senator who dares to trifle in any way with the Equal Rights Amendment trifles with his political future, for women will not forgive and will not forget.”

Friedan’s warning was necessary because some members of the Senate were beginning “to trifle” with the ERA. As early as August 17, only five days after the joint resolution landed on the senate tables, Sam J. Ervin, Jr. of North Carolina came out with a substitute bill for the ERA. His bill exempted women from the military draft and

33 Friedan, It Changed My Life, 153.
allowed for laws to be passed that were specific to women, laws that involved issues of women’s health or “enabled them to perform their duties as homemakers or mothers.”

Ervin’s substitute bill is important because it puts two issues into the spotlight that were fought over during the entirety of the ERA campaign: the draft and the inequality of laws that protected women. If women were to be legally equal to men, they would have to take on all of the responsibilities of men, including forced conscription. Also, there could be no protective legislation for women in the job force, in insurance, or about women’s health. An equal rights amendment would make all protective legislation unconstitutional. At the same time, if the Senate were to amend the ERA or change any of the wording at all, it would have to go back to the House of Representatives and would require another vote because both houses had to agree on the wording for the amendment to go to the states. It was in the best interest of those senators who did not approve of the ERA to amend it, if for no other reason than to force it back to the House and hopefully keep it stuck in legislative gridlock.

That is exactly what happened. Congress was set to adjourn in early January of 1971. From August to January is a short time for any joint resolution to pass, even one that disregards committee and goes straight to the floor. The Senate destroyed any chance for the ERA to pass in 1970 when it amended the ERA on October 13, 1970 by attaching two new pieces of legislation. The first was Ervin’s bill, and the second, a rider that allowed prayer in public schools. The draft legislation passed through the Senate on a slim margin, 36-33, while the prayer legislation passed overwhelmingly, 50 to 20. According to the New York Times, it was possible that the draft legislation may have made it through the House, but there was no way that the legislation about prayer in

schools would make it through. Even if the House passed the ERA with the prayer rider attached, it could not get through the House before the Congressional session ended. The possibility of getting the ERA to the states for ratification in 1970 was over.\footnote{Eileen Shanahan, “Senators Amend Equal Rights Bill; It May Die for ’70,” \textit{New York Times}, October 14, 1970, 1.}

The following year showed new promise. Especially after the Women’s Strike for Equality, NOW began pushing for the ERA to a whole new degree, and it was quite clear that women all across the country, and in large numbers, supported the proposed amendment. In fact, it was also clear by 1971 that the women’s movement was a powerful force. The August 13 \textit{Life} magazine cover story had the title “The ‘Woman Problem’, Then and Now.” It was the first in a series of magazines that focused on women’s position in American society and the struggle for political and social rights. \textit{Life’s} edition described early views of women’s position in society including discussions of chastity belts in the Middle Ages, artistic representations as simply a physical body, as a succubus, or as subservient to men, and the implications of the Christian bible’s notation that Eve was the source of original sin. In one article, the author noted the disparity between the available sources on women’s history and those on men’s history. In the end, the writer promised that the next edition would be about the political and social battles of nineteenth and early twentieth century women for their rights. That \textit{Life’s} editors deemed the rise of the women’s movement important enough to devote a whole edition to shows just how public the issue had become and that it was not going away any time soon.\footnote{“The ‘Woman Problem’—Then and Now,” \textit{Life Magazine}, August 13, 1971.}

To that end, once the new session of Congress started in January 1971, Representative Griffiths reintroduced the ERA with two adjustments that she thought...
could make the difference in Senate approval. The first was that the states would have seven years to ratify the ERA. The second provided a two-year period of adjustment before the amendment went into effect. The states would have time to adjust their laws instead of just having the ERA thrust upon them. On October 12, 1971, the House, for the second time in two years, passed the slightly modified ERA by a vote of 354-23. Support for the amendment was staggering and no changes were made to the wording. If the Senate passed the ERA with no amendments, then it would go to the states for ratification.

Once the ERA hit the Senate floor problems again arose. Though many senators supported the amendment, there were some that did not. The ERA was put on the Senate calendar so that it would not linger in the Judiciary Committee, but be voted on. Like the last time the ERA came to the Senate, the draft became the big issue of contention. Charles E. Wiggins, a Republican from California, sponsored a change to the ERA to exempt women from the draft. According to Wiggins, the Department of Defense informed him that the armed services would not be able to function if women were included. At the same time, huge amounts of money would have to be spent in order to make the armed services accommodating to women as well as men, such as adding women-only barracks and bathrooms. The Senate shot down the amendment and, instead, the debate about the ERA focused on the possible consequences of ratification. The Senate must not have thought the consequences of the ERA to be too dire because on March 22, 1972, it passed the amendment with a vote of 84 to 8. Since the House and

37 George, Martha Griffiths, 177.
39 Ibid.
the Senate both passed the same version of the ERA, the next step in the constitutional amendment process was to have the ERA go to the states for ratification.\textsuperscript{40}

As historians and other scholars have noted, there was reason to believe that the ERA would have smooth sailing through this process, and many contemporaries believed that ratification of the ERA would be easy.\textsuperscript{41} For those people and groups that supported the ERA, the huge margins of support in the congressional votes were the cause of great optimism. If so many legislators supported the ERA, it was likely that the states and the American people would be supportive of it as well. The women’s movement was powerful and gaining more public prominence every day. On the same day that the Senate passed the ERA, Hawaii unanimously ratified the amendment, becoming the first state to do so. For people who supported the ERA, there was much to be excited about.\textsuperscript{42} In terms of women’s rights, 1972 was, therefore, an important year because it marked the start of the fight for the ERA that supporters thought was easily winnable. At the same time, 1972 was also the year of the foundation of the Toledo chapter of the National Organization for Women.

\textsuperscript{41} For more information on optimism about ERA ratification, see Mansbridge, \textit{Why We Lost the ERA}. In addition, many of the \textit{New York Times} articles previously cited refer to the thought that the ERA would have smooth sailing through the ratification process. Some Senators, including Senator Bayh of Indiana, believed that it would only take two years for the ERA to be ratified.
Chapter 2: 1972-1976

As the National Organization for Women’s statement of purpose shows, the group’s reform interests included a number of different women’s issues, including the Equal Rights Amendment. To this end, NOW at the national level and branches at the local level used their resources to further a wide range of goals. Especially during the early years of the pursuit for the ERA, however, national NOW focused time, money, and womanpower on the struggle for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. Local branches, by comparison, had limited resources. Cities with larger populations had more resources to expend, but cities with smaller populations had fewer. In cases where there were fewer resources, issues had to be prioritized in order for anything to be accomplished. This was the case with Toledo, Ohio. Once proponents believed that ratification of the ERA was going to be successful, the Toledo chapter of NOW decided to focus its limited resources on reforming issues that were higher in their local priority schema.

The early years of the pursuit of the Equal Rights Amendment, 1972 to 1976, were the slow years. Though groups that were in favor of the ERA were actively

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1 Stephanie Gilmore, “Rethinking the Radical/Liberal Divide: The National Organization for Women in Memphis, Columbus, and San Francisco” PhD Diss., The Ohio State University, 2005. In her discussion of NOW in three large cities, Memphis, Columbus, and San Francisco, Gilmore mentions the resources available and they are discernibly larger than those at Toledo’s disposal.
working towards its ratification, such as NOW and ERAmerica, the amount of action and work being put into ERA ratification was small compared to the level of effort during the later years of the ERA pursuit, from 1977 to 1982. In the early years, it was believed by many groups, including the National Organization for Women, that the ERA was going to be ratified quickly and easily. During the first four years of the ERA pursuit, supporters of the amendment were a bit lax in their effort as they may have taken ratification for granted. By the end of 1976, it was painfully clear that ratification was going to be problematic and was not an absolute certainty as previously thought.

The first year of the campaign, 1972, was a successful year for ERA ratification. Within four days of Congressional approval, six states, Hawaii, Delaware, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Iowa, and Idaho ratified the ERA, putting it that much closer to becoming a constitutional amendment.\(^2\) After these four days were over, ERA support did not stop. There seemed to be a mad rush to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment in the first year. By the end of 1972, twenty-two states ratified the ERA, with only thirty-eight states necessary for the amendment to be added to the Constitution. Only sixteen states still needed to ratify the ERA. Supporters were ecstatic. It seemed absolutely certain that the amendment was going to be ratified well within the seven-year deadline. After all, an overwhelming majority of Congress voiced their approval of the ERA when they voted in support of it in 1971 and early 1972. Pair this feat with the fact that over half of the states necessary ratified the amendment within the first year and it is no wonder why supporters of the ERA were so optimistic.\(^3\)

On July 1, 1972, the Toledo chapter of NOW held its first meeting. There is little in the records about the formation of Toledo NOW. Before foundation of the chapter, there was a need for a women’s rights group in Toledo. An article in the Toledo Blade in June, right before the founding, pointed out that women were discriminated against in the job market. The article also noted that women were becoming more vocal in their protest against their unequal treatment. Issues like these that were discussed in the newspaper’s public forum were indicative that women were ready to fight for their rights. Even with women’s rights issues prevalent in the public eye, it is probable that only a handful of women founded the chapter. Membership dues were $35.00 per person per year, with $5.00 going into the Toledo treasury and the rest going to the national office. Meetings of the executive board were held once a week at one of the board member’s houses. General meetings, where all members could attend, were held on the second Tuesday of every month, either at the University of Toledo’s Student Union or at one of the public libraries around town.

The Toledo chapter of NOW was no different than the National NOW. It participated in so many different activities in its early years that the ERA was only one among many goals the group worked toward. As stated in its founding document, the purpose of the Toledo chapter of NOW was to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American Society, NOW, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men. This purpose includes, but is not

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5 Though there are no membership statistics for 1972, statistics are available for every year after. Up until 1985, there were never more than 100 dues-paying members involved in the Toledo chapter of NOW at one time. For most years, the membership number did not even reach 50 dues-paying members.
6 “Chapter Bylaws,” Toledo National Organization for Women Records, The Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, The University of Toledo Libraries, Box 1 of 3, Folder 1, and “New Member Information,” TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 3. (TNOW)
limited to, equal rights and responsibilities in all aspects of
citizenship, public service, employment, education and
family life, and it includes freedom from discrimination
because of marital status or motherhood.\textsuperscript{7}

Toledo NOW, in its founding documents and its statement of purpose, mirrored National
NOW’s statement of purpose. The group at all levels, including the local, had a lot of
reforms that they wanted to achieve. Even though the amount of goals was large, this
was not even all of the things that Toledo NOW wanted to fix. A pamphlet given to any
new member of NOW, including those who joined the Toledo branch, contained a larger,
more detailed list of goals. All branches of the organization, including Toledo, wanted
reform in reproductive rights, media reform in how women were portrayed, an end to
violence against women, and an end to the double discrimination that lesbians and
women of ethnic minorities had to face.\textsuperscript{8} Therefore, it became necessary for the
members to use a wide variety of tactics to pursue their goals with the limited resources
available to them. These often meant public, organized, and aggressive actions that were
unlike the behind the scenes political activities of other pro-ERA groups. Toledo NOW
used the same public, direct actions that all other branches of NOW used.

From the moment of the Toledo chapter’s foundation, it used the same tactics that
NOW employed on the national level. The methods that NOW used to influence people,
government and ordinary citizens alike were reminiscent of the tactics used by the civil
rights movement. Instead of behind-the-scenes politicking to achieve their goals, NOW
was confrontational and preferred public, direct action, such as Women’s Strike for
Equality Day. When the NOW members interrupted the Judiciary Committee hearings to

\textsuperscript{7} Toledo Chapter of NOW Founding Document, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{8} Goals Pamphlet, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 1, and NOW Goals Sheet, 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 3.
demand ERA hearings it was the same sort of tactic that suffrage supporters, civil rights workers, and the women that participated in Women’s Strike for Peace used to make sure their voices were heard. Other women’s reform groups that supported the ERA did not agree with NOW’s aggressive, pro-active tactics, but for better or worse, NOW used those tactics throughout the entirety of the ERA campaign.  

In *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women*, Maryann Barakso states that NOW’s board, at the national level, wanted to “cement a member-focused, participatory ethos” into the group. NOW wanted the members to participate in the daily activities of the group. Each local branch sent delegates to the state branch’s meetings and each state branch sent delegates to the national meetings. In this way, all branches of NOW, from the local to the state, had some say in what happened with their organization at all levels of its governance. What Barakso noted, though, was that NOW consistently got caught up in the bureaucracy that it tried to avoid. How to involve all of the members in the decision-making process took a lot of time during national, state, and local NOW meetings. This bureaucracy and focus on organizational representation took substantial time away from NOW branches at all levels that could have been used to further the group’s activism, the true purpose of the group as a whole.

Though NOW wanted to eliminate bureaucracy and involve members at the most grassroots levels, the group was not always successful in this endeavor. The minutes for

9 See Donald T. Critchlow and Cynthia L. Stacheki, “The Equal Rights Amendment Reconsidered: Politics, Policy, and Social Mobilization in a Democracy.” This article cites that other pro-ERA groups, ERAmerica, often stated that they believed that NOW’s use of civil rights tactics of aggression and confrontation often hurt ERA pursuit rather than helped it.

the general and board meetings of Toledo NOW are filled with discussion over which members were to lead the various task forces, which member was to be the Ohio NOW delegate for Toledo, and worries over whether the rules of order were followed to the highest degree. There are numerous times in the minute records where discussions of this type overwhelm discussion of reform and activism for women’s rights. At the same time, National NOW did not seem to be as supportive of Toledo NOW, and possibly other branches, than it should have been in order to have a successful group fueled by grassroots activism. Money was very tight for Toledo NOW, and presumably for other local branches across the country, in the early years of NOW. National NOW ate up a great portion of the dues money, diminishing the resources of local branches. In fact, money became such a big issue that in May of 1974 Toledo NOW sent an angry letter to the national office claiming that national was not funding the local branches but that money was flowing from the bottom up. The letter writer took particular offense to the fact that local branches did not get their task force information kits for free but had to pay for them from the national office.\footnote{Letter to National Office, 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 13.} There is nothing in the records about national ever giving resources, money or otherwise, to the local branches or in any way facilitating their further growth and success.

Toledo NOW sent its Ohio representative to participate in the meeting of the board of NOW at the state level on July 29, 1972. Toledo NOW was the fifth chapter to be founded in Ohio. Though Ohio NOW was also concerned about the same plethora of goals other than the ERA, ratification of the amendment was still on the group’s front burners. At this board meeting, Phyllis Harris, the state coordinator for the NOW task force on legislation, discussed the formation of Citizens for the ERA, a group meant to
work solely on ratification in Ohio. One way that the group worked to educate the public was through a booth at the state fair, run by members of NOW who were also members of Citizens for the ERA. This effort was a success, as 4000 signatures were gathered on pro-ERA petitions and 8000 pieces of pro-ERA literature were passed out. Though the fair booth educated many and gave further support to ratification, it also illuminated one of the problems with all levels of NOW. Ohio NOW stated emphatically at the September 30, 1972 board meeting that NOW and Citizens for the ERA were to be maintained as two separate groups.\textsuperscript{12}

Why was it necessary to keep NOW and Citizens for the ERA separate? No reasoning or explanation appeared in the records. This decision of separation does point out NOW’s interest in maintaining its reputation as a group that fought for women’s rights, in general and a large amount of specific rights, without being pinned down to fight for only one right.\textsuperscript{13} If Citizens for the ERA associated directly with NOW it would be possible that NOW could be seen as sticking to specific goals and not working toward the betterment of women and women’s rights as a whole.

Working toward many goals is another characteristic that NOW had in common with other groups that used a civil rights model of activism. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) all focused on many different goals at once.\textsuperscript{14} This is also an important point to note because after 1976, when

\textsuperscript{12} Ohio NOW Board Minutes, July 29, 1972, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 31, and Ohio NOW Board Minutes, September 30, 1972, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 31.

\textsuperscript{13} Critchlow discusses this idea slightly, though Betty Friedan addresses the need for NOW to embrace all aspects of positive change for women in much more detail in \textit{It Changed My Life}.

\textsuperscript{14} Many sources list and analyze the numerous goals of all three of these groups. For more information, see Klaus P. Fischer, \textit{America in White, Black, and Gray: A History of the Stormy 1960s} (London: Continuum, 2007).
the possible success of ERA ratification began to take a downturn, NOW focused much more heavily on the ERA than on all of the other rights they were fighting for combined.

Other than a press release from Citizens for the ERA on October 25, 1972, urging voters to vote only for politicians that supported the ERA, not much else is in the records about Toledo NOW’s first year. The ERA, though important, was not seen as a high point of concern. The only real way that Toledo NOW showed their support for the ERA was during their 1972 Women’s Equality Day celebration. Though the turnout was poor, according to the Toledo Blade, because only a little over 50 people showed up, those who attended not only listened to speeches about women in the workplace and abortion reform, but also about the ERA. State Senator Marigene Valiquette, a longtime advocate for the ERA and women’s rights, pleaded with those present, including Toledo NOW members, to write to their local and state legislators and ask them to support the ERA. Valiquette, who spoke about letter writing campaigns, touched on one of the modes of activism that members of Toledo NOW used heavily all throughout the ERA ratification campaign. From this early point in the ratification struggle, the ERA was an important goal for Toledo NOW. It just was not one they focused much attention and resources on.

In terms of attention given to ERA ratification, 1973 was little different from 1972. Eight more states ratified the amendment, raising the number of ratified states to 30. Groups in support of the ERA still felt optimistic as only eight more states needed

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15 Citizens for ERA Press Release, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 1.
16 Diane Duston, “...What They May Have Lacked in Numbers.” Toledo Blade, 1972. TNOW, Box 3 of 3, Folder 62.
17 “Ratification Status in the States and State ERAs.”
to ratify before the ERA officially became part of the Constitution.\textsuperscript{18} Though there were many reasons to feel optimistic, there were also many reasons to worry about the fate of the ERA. For example, some states rejected the ERA in 1973, Florida and South Carolina among them.\textsuperscript{19} The number of rejections of the ERA, or even the number of legislative bodies that tabled the amendment so that it did not have the chance of being rejected or accepted, was growing. Though the ERA only needed eight more states for the amendment to be added to the Constitution, the number of states that could potentially ratify began to get slim.

At the local level, Toledo NOW had reason to worry about its ability to fund pro-ERA activism because of the small amount of money in the coffers. Members were required to pay dues in order to stay active members of the organization, but, as discussed earlier, most of the dues money went to national and did not stay in Toledo or any other local branch. Because of this, there were limited funds in the Toledo NOW bank account at any given time. In 1973 that amount never exceeded $150.00 in the treasury and dropped as low as $17.26. Between September 10, 1973 and November 25, 1973, Toledo NOW did not even gross any money and lost $133.28.\textsuperscript{20} This is partially because some members, who were active in the organization, did not have the money to pay their dues and asked for an installment plan.\textsuperscript{21} Classified as a non-profit organization with tax-exempt status, Toledo NOW could only fundraise the specific amounts of money necessary for activities that dues alone were insufficient to cover. If Toledo NOW wanted to hold a rally and needed extra money it could fundraise. If it

\textsuperscript{21} 1973 Treasurer’s Reports, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 20.
\textsuperscript{21} 1973 Toledo NOW Minutes, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 4.
wanted to build up savings in the treasury with no designated purpose, it could not.\textsuperscript{22} Toledo NOW sold feminist literature, mugs, pens, and bumper stickers and held a garage sale and a raffle to make enough money to be able to fund all of the activities they wanted to do, but the money they made never seemed to be enough. At almost every meeting in 1973, and for years after, fundraising was one of the first pieces of discussion on the agenda.\textsuperscript{23}

Ohio NOW was much more active in pursuit of the ERA than Toledo NOW. Ohio NOW pressured its local chapters for substantive ERA support all throughout February and March of 1973. On March 3, at the Ohio NOW board meeting, the state president advocated a “mail blitz” to politicians urging them to support the ERA. These letters were to be postmarked March 6 to celebrate the day that the amendment got Congressional approval. There were also plans for a demonstration and a candlelight vigil outside of the capital building in Columbus within the next week in order to show the government just how many women supported ratification. Gaining the approval of politicians was key and Ohio NOW stuck with the position that persuading government officials should be their number one priority all throughout 1973. Ohio NOW’s involvement in the pursuit of the ERA was so large that a member of the group suggested hiring a paid lobbyist to specifically fight for ratification in Ohio. By October there was a woman designated as state coordinator of ERA efforts, though she did not receive pay, and never named in the meeting minutes.\textsuperscript{24}

Toledo NOW members were quite active with the limited resources that they had. Toledo NOW excelled at putting together PARs, or political action research booklets.

\textsuperscript{22} Toledo NOW Bylaws, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{23} 1973 Toledo NOW Minutes, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 4.
\textsuperscript{24} Ohio NOW Board Minutes, 1973, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 31.
These pamphlets, leaflets, or research papers detailed ways that Toledo laws would have
to be changed in order to implement the ERA. PARs also included how local politicians
voted or felt about the ERA so that voters who supported the amendment knew which
politicians to support. These PARs were important as part of Ohio NOW’s two year
ERA strategy to educate the public and pressure government officials, and Toledo NOW
produced more PARs in 1973 than any other Ohio branch. In addition to the production
of PARs, Marlene Goldberg, the coordinator of the Legislative Committee of Toledo
NOW, organized letter writing campaigns and traveled to Columbus where she
participated in the state-wide ERA task force.25

In addition, Toledo celebrated Women’s Equality Day on August 26, 1973 at
Washington Congregational Church on Central Avenue. The weekend prior, Toledo
NOW members distributed over 2,500 fliers advertising the festivities at various
locations and asked to have the event announced at a meeting of the Lucas County
Young Democrats, trying to get young adults involved. A ticket to the celebration cost a
$2.00 donation and entitled the bearer to listen to the keynote speaker, Senator Marigene
Valiquette, and a speech from Toledo NOW President Kay Fox, enjoy and purchase from
the book fair, and listen to local musician David Browning. While Women’s Equality
Day was a celebration of women’s rights and women’s lives and not just the ERA, it was
obvious that the ERA was in the minds of all there and was the true impetus for the
event. Kay Fox clearly proved this point when she said in her presidential speech that
gratitude for the women who fought for suffrage must be shown, and that the best way to
do so was by working towards “contemporary goals.” Especially because of its historical
connection to Alice Paul and the suffrage movement, the ERA was the contemporary

25 Toledo NOW Meetings Minutes, 1973, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 4.
goal that Fox referred to. In this way, even though the Women’s Equality Day celebration was meant to celebrate the achievements of the past, it also asked for the achievement of the ERA in the future.26

Toledo NOW held a Candidates’ Night on October 9, 1973, right before the upcoming local election, one of the most interesting, and politically useful, things that the group did. The group invited individuals running for political office to attend the Toledo NOW general meeting, answer questions, and have discussions with the members. Nine politicians showed up, including Mayor Kessler, candidate for Mayor Doug DeGood, and Representative Bill Copeland. Though the candidates were asked a plethora of questions pertaining to women’s issues, the group asked each candidate something about the ERA. Of the few recorded minutes taken on the candidate’s responses, whether or not they supported the ERA was noted. The number of candidates who supported the amendment was equal to those that did not.27

Two things are important to note about this event. One, Candidates’ Night proved that Toledo NOW did have some sort of political power because nine candidates showed up for their meeting, including the incumbent mayor. The candidates saw these women as a viable political force that held some sway over public opinion or else they would never have shown up for the meeting. Second, Candidates’ Night points out just how many different goals and women’s reforms Toledo NOW was working on. The fact that the candidates were asked about a wide range of women’s issues points out indelibly just how many issues the women were concerned with at the time. Issues such as

Letter to Lucas County Young Democrats, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 12.
27 Candidates’ Night, 1973, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 34.
“Candidates Court Liberation Vote,” Toledo Blade, October 10, 1973, 8.
reproductive rights, gender equal job practices, and child rearing and child care, may not have yet manifested themselves in aggressive actions by the Toledo NOW, but they certainly took away time that could have been used to pursue the ERA.

Membership problems compounded the overwhelming number of activities that Toledo NOW worked on other than the ERA. Records give some idea of the small number of women who participated actively in Toledo NOW. At the meeting held on May 20, 1973, leadership members announced that there were 33 dues-paying members. At the September 11 meeting there were 50. Although all of the women listed as members paid dues and attended the general meetings, they may have had limited involvement in other group activities. Just because a member paid dues does not mean that they actively participated in Toledo NOW’s activities. It is hard to understand how all of the goals Toledo NOW worked towards could possibly be achieved. The group’s membership levels forced them to prioritize the reforms that they worked on. Some reforms were placed as a lower priority than other reforms, as was often the case with the ERA.28

With so few members it is not hard to see that Toledo NOW worked on too many projects at once. The women raised funds, researched and wrote political action research pamphlets, organized Women’s Equality Day, and worked on lawsuits against sex discrimination in the workplace. The members also undertook huge letter writing campaigns to every Ohio and Toledo legislator urging them to support numerous proposed laws including rape legislation asking why so few women were in positions on committee boards.29 Also in 1973, Toledo NOW participated in a program called

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28 Toledo NOW Meetings Minutes, 1973, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 4.
29 Ibid.
Referral and Follow-up Team (RAFT), sponsored and run primarily by the YWCA. The purpose of the program was to provide young women in the community with mentors who checked up on them, made sure they went to school and took care of themselves, and offered advice. Toledo NOW also partnered with the YWCA to create and run a rape crisis center in Toledo so that women who were raped had a place to turn to for help. These YWCA projects that Toledo NOW worked on diverted the group’s attention away from the ERA. This diversion points out that, during 1973, Toledo NOW did not rank the ERA highly on its list of priorities.

In January of 1974, the Toledo City Council passed Resolution 28, which stated its support of the Equal Rights Amendment. It is unclear whether the actions of Toledo NOW had any effect on the Council’s decision. After this success, Linda Licata, then president of Toledo NOW, wrote a letter to the editor of the Toledo Blade that stated: “The only thing American women can gain by opposing the Equal Rights Amendment is the retention of their own dependent status which for some of them is very comfortable.” Though the women were happy that the City Council supported the ERA, they knew that it was not enough of a victory. Licata informed the members of the group that Toledo NOW was going to be working on ratification of the ERA as a chapter, that ratification was priority number one. This was the first time that Toledo NOW made the ERA a high priority and, therefore, devoted much of their resources to ratification. To this end, they participated in a rally in Columbus on January 12 sponsored by NOW and the League of Women Voters. Numerous public officials

30 Letters to and from RAFT and the YWCA, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 12.
31 Toledo City Journal, 1974, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 1.
32 Letter to the Toledo Blade, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 13.
33 General Meeting Minutes, January 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 5.
attended the rally, including Senator Valiquette and Governor John Gilligan.\textsuperscript{34} Governor Gilligan, in his speech, predicted that the amendment would gain Ohio’s ratification by the early spring.\textsuperscript{35} With the support of so many citizens, and in particular so many important government officials, some thought at the time that Ohio would ratify the ERA within the first six weeks of the year.\textsuperscript{36}

Those who supported ratification did not even have to wait six weeks. On February 7, 1974, Ohio followed Toledo’s example and ratified the ERA by a vote of 20-12, making it the 33\textsuperscript{rd} state to do so.\textsuperscript{37} Needless to say, those who supported the ERA in Ohio, including Toledo NOW, were ecstatic. They had won a major battle in the fight for the ERA. All of the letter writing, petitioning, fundraising, all of their hard work had not been in vain. Since Ohio ratified and was the 33\textsuperscript{rd} to do so, only five more state ratifications were necessary. Victory seemed closer than ever.

The members of Toledo NOW knew that it was not time to rest on their laurels and disregard ERA ratification because, although Ohio ratified the amendment, not all of the state’s legislators supported it. Five states were still needed to add the amendment to the Constitution. There was still work to be done. In its February newsletter, Toledo NOW thanked all of the representatives and lawmakers that had supported the ERA, but

\textsuperscript{34} Toledo NOW Newsletter, February 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 46.
\textsuperscript{35} Suzanne Yeager, “40 Toledoans Participate in Columbus ERA Rally,” Toledo Times, January 14, 1974. TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{36} NOW News Service, February 1974, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{37} There seems to be some confusion in the academic community as to when Ohio actually ratified the ERA and to where it falls in the order that states ratified. Primary sources, including the Toledo Blade and Toledo NOW records, indicate that Ohio ratified in February of 1974 and was the 33\textsuperscript{rd} state to ratify. Numerous secondary sources, including the Ohio Historical Society Website, available at http://www.ohiohistorcentral.org/entry.php?rec=2056, and Congresswoman Carole Maloney’s chart of ratification dates, cited in the bibliography, give a different date of ratification or else position Ohio incorrectly in the order that states ratified. In all cases of confusion, I have deferred to the primary sources. Toledo NOW Newsletter, February 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 46. “Equal Rights Amendment Gains Senate Ratification”, Toledo NOW, February 7, 1974, page 1.
singled out State Senator Howard Cook because he voted against the amendment.\textsuperscript{38} In late 1973 Toledo NOW felt that he might vote against the ERA and started a massive campaign to write letters and telephone him in order to persuade him to change his vote.\textsuperscript{39} Since he did not vote in support of the ERA, Toledo NOW made certain that all of its members knew his stance and, therefore, knew not to vote for him in the next election. Toledo NOW also reminded its members that there were still five states necessary for full ratification “So, ON WITH THE FIGHT!!!”\textsuperscript{40}

This statement becomes confusing, however, when one reads a bit farther into the February newsletter. The second page contained an announcement that the group disbanded the ERA Committee. As soon as Ohio ratified the ERA, Toledo NOW apparently felt that there was no need for them to have a committee organized specifically to fight for it. The dissolution of the ERA Committee was announced to the general members on February 12, 1974, and by March 12 the leadership asked the members to bring in any ERA memorabilia they may have so that it could be donated to museums.\textsuperscript{41} After Ohio ratified the ERA, Toledo NOW began working on different projects and allowed the fight for the ERA to become one of its lesser concerns. Throughout the months of 1974 and 1975, the ERA simply became a blip on Toledo NOW’s women’s rights radar.

The dissolution of the ERA Committee begs a simple question: why? Why would any group who supported the ERA dissolve before the ERA was fully ratified and part of the Constitution? The answer is the same that has been discussed previously.

\textsuperscript{38} Toledo NOW Newsletter, February 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 46.
\textsuperscript{39} Toledo NOW Board Meeting Minutes, November 1973, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 4.
\textsuperscript{40} Toledo NOW Newsletter, February 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 46.
\textsuperscript{41} Board Meeting Minutes, February and March, 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 5.
Membership and money were low and the number of goals the women wanted to achieve was high. As discussed previously, Toledo NOW had sent a letter to National NOW at this point, indignant over having to give National NOW so much money. There were also many different reforms and activities that were pulling Toledo NOW away from a vigilant pursuit of the ERA. The group was participating in a big project about job discrimination in the banking industry based on gender and was using much of its resources fighting that at the public and judicial levels. There were so many other projects that needed money and womanpower that it must have seemed silly to waste them on a project that they believed they won. In fact, it is not surprising if Toledo NOW felt that full ratification of the ERA was a certainty and, in a way, became complacent. After Ohio ratified, only five more states were needed. After the end of 1975, only three more states were needed. Licata even mentioned in the December of 1974 that she believed that 1975 would be the year that the ERA would be added to the Constitution. It seemed almost impossible that ERA ratification could be a failure.

That is not to say that during 1974 and 1975 the ERA was not thought about or discussed at all. It was still an important issue and Toledo NOW certainly deemed it worthy of attention, just not as much as before. Because of other activities, the ERA was lower on the group’s list of priorities. For Valentine’s Day in 1975, the members participated in a valentine drop in Indiana where they sent cards to Indiana legislators asking them to support ERA ratification. Toledo NOW participated in a women’s conference held in the summer of 1974 that discussed, among many other things, the

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43 Women’s Equality Day, 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 40.
44 Letter to General Members, December 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 5.
implications of the ERA and how women proved that they could affect legislation through their struggle for the ratification.45

Candidates’ Nights were also held during both years and included the question, “Would you favor the establishment of a municipal [ERA] implementation task force and what would be the scope of its activity? If not, what alternatives would you propose?” Of the ten candidates that attended 1975’s Candidate’s Night, three supported the creation of a municipal ERA task force, two would consider it, and four candidates were against it. Those against stated that affirmative action already did the job necessary and since the ERA was not in the Constitution yet that it was not the right time to try to implement any possible changes in the law. In fact, one candidate, Ray Kest, who was running for City Council for the first time, did not even know what the ERA was; he believed that the ERA had to do with the economy.46 His lack of knowledge was especially surprising after the president of National NOW, Karen DeCrow, at a press conference, announced that “NOW has gone political—our first move being to replace anti-ERA state legislators.”47

The members of Toledo NOW proved that they went political because a few women from Toledo NOW participated in Governor Gilligan’s Ohio Task Force for Implementing the Equal Rights Amendment. Ohio was picked to be one of few states to test ERA implementation. When the delegates discussed the Implementation Task Force at a meeting of Ohio NOW, twelve branches were present. Toledo was one of only five branches that agreed to participate in the task force. The other branches that decided to

45 Women Conference 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 33.
46 Candidates’ Night, 1975, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 36.
Ray Kest biography, Toledo Blade, September 7, 1975.
47 Letter to NOW Politics Task Force, 1975, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 36.
participate were located in Columbus, Cincinnati, Licking County, and Butler County.48

This task force was responsible with going through the Ohio Code and noting all of the laws that would have to be changed when implementation went into effect. They were also to amend those laws as they saw fit to adhere to the ERA, submit a final report to the governor about these necessary future changes, and decide whether an Ohio Commission on the Status of Women was necessary in order to maintain gender neutral legislation in Ohio. A computer search of the entire Ohio code looking for any word that indicated the gender of the citizen found over 900 instances. After the places of gender discrimination were noted, laws were revised by the task force in a myriad of categories, such as laws about prisoners, rape, marriage, and children. In all, task force members submitted 400 pages of recommendations for changes in laws that discriminated because of gender.49

The recommendations given to the governor were in no way legally binding, but the members of the task force hoped that he would take action to make the Ohio code more gender neutral. As it turned out, few changes resulted. A 1977 study outlined a number of the recommendations that had been made and detailed whether or not Ohio and Toledo legislators had acted on them. When dealing with laws that gave women larger access to education opportunities, allowed women to choose their name upon marriage, and dealt with equalizing penal corrections facilities for women, legislators either took no action to reform or else tabled legislation that proposed reform. In addition, the task force had stated that there was a need to have an Ohio Commission on the Status of Women. Though the state created a group, it rarely met and did not

48 Ohio NOW Board Minutes, May 11, 1974, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 32.
represent standards outlined by the Implementation Task Force. It must have been frustrating for task force members to see some of their recommendations go unheard and the time that they spent squandered.50

Aside from the possibility of amending Ohio’s legal code to fit the ERA, there were other related worries that members of Toledo and Ohio NOW faced. The biggest of these concerns was that other, more controversial issues that NOW fought for tarnished the reputation of the group as a whole and, therefore, negatively influenced public perception of the ERA. NOW fought for reforms that more traditionally minded people did not agree with, such as furthering opportunities for women to find employment and leave the home. Easily, the most controversial reform that NOW fought for was abortion rights. In 1973, after the Supreme Court handed down its ruling in *Roe v. Wade* and first trimester abortions became legal, NOW kept fighting so that *Roe* was not overturned or questioned. Gaining more reproductive rights for women was always an objective of NOW but the victory of *Roe* strengthened its adherence and fervor for that goal.51

Many members questioned whether the controversial topic altered some people’s opinions of the ERA for the worse. Even members of Toledo NOW and Ohio NOW worried that the group’s support of abortion and reproductive rights alienated some women who might want to be members of NOW and supported the ERA, but did not want to be part of a group that supported abortion.52 A speaker even noted at an Ohio NOW board meeting that the same people who did not support the ERA also did not...

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50 To Make History: The Unfinished Agenda of the 1975 Governor’s Task Force Report for the Implementation of the Equal Rights Amendment. TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 46.
52 Toledo NOW Board Meeting Minutes, November, 1973, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 4
support abortion.\textsuperscript{53} This must not have been the case with all people who did not support the ERA. Still, the abortion issue certainly drove some people away from NOW who may have become active members. Entire groups of women actually parted ways with NOW over the abortion issue. One whole group of women broke their ties with NOW over abortion and went on to create the Women’s Equity Action League.\textsuperscript{54}

Another controversial issue that NOW discussed and fought for was lesbianism and lesbian rights. In the 1970s, lesbian rights were a controversial topic. Toledo NOW’s support of lesbian rights hindered the group in a physical way. In 1975, the group used a room at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church as a meeting room. After a presentation and discussion about lesbianism and lesbian rights at the church, the group received a letter from the church stating that it was being evicted from the church meeting room because of that meeting.\textsuperscript{55} Of course, Toledo NOW members were outraged, but the real damage was not to their egos or to the cause. The real damage came in the form of the mad scramble that ensued to try to find a new place to hold meetings. This eviction also points out that some people, such as the people who rented out rooms at the church, did not support Toledo NOW because it supported lesbian rights.

Worries that views on abortion and lesbianism hindered ERA support were not unfounded. “The Structure of Belief Systems among Contending ERA Activists” by Carol Mueller and Thomas Dimieri pointed out that opponents of the amendment cited complete legalization of abortion and homosexual marriage as possible consequences of the ERA. In fact, their study pointed out that “opposition to abortion was the common

\textsuperscript{53} Ohio NOW Board Meeting Minutes, May 1974, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 32.
\textsuperscript{55} Letter to Toledo NOW Members, 1975, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 14.
link with the South Shore [anti-ERA] group.”\textsuperscript{56} Wilbur J. Scott went one step further and said that abortion and lesbianism were just two different issues of contention between two polarized points of view: the views of those who supported the ERA and those who did not. He claims that opponents fought with such spirit for the ERA because “Defeat or passage of such legislation dramatically represents a public, official statement of which side is ‘winning’ in this tug of war of conflicting values.”\textsuperscript{57} Therefore, some of the members of Toledo NOW’s worry that abortion and lesbianism would cause some people not to support the ERA was valid.

The year 1976 was the last of the quiet years in the pursuit of ERA ratification. Though there was not much headway on gaining ratification in any of the last states necessary to add the ERA to the Constitution, there was still plenty of time before the March 22, 1979 deadline. Toledo NOW still scrambled for more monetary funds and members to further all of their causes, and the ERA moved up a few notches on its list of priorities. This can be seen from the fact that the group discussed the amendment more frequently during general and board meetings and in its newsletter. To help the group gain the reforms that they thought were necessary and to be able to fight for them more efficiently, in 1976, Toledo NOW went through an intense change in management structure. This enabled Toledo NOW to work more efficiently with the limited resources available to it. The new streamlining allowed Toledo NOW to fundraise and gain additional members more effectively. Not only did Toledo NOW learn to better manage

its resources, it also had more resources at its disposal, though not enough to accomplish all of the goals that the group pursued.\textsuperscript{58}

The largest effort by Toledo NOW in the 1976 ERA fight was participation in a huge mobilization effort in Illinois.\textsuperscript{59} As one of few states left that could possibly ratify the amendment, many supporters believed that if Illinois rejected the ERA that all hope for ratification was lost. An article written in 1978 showed that there was reason to worry that Illinois might reject the ERA. Using data from Illinois during 1976 and 1977, the authors showed that Illinois citizens, specifically males, were concerned over possible consequences of the ERA. Illinois was going through an economic downturn and some male citizens were worried about what would happen to the economy, and to their jobs, if women were given equal rights. Worries such as these made it clear that NOW needed to focus on activism in Illinois to further the cause of ratification.

To this end, on May 15 and 16, 1976, members of NOW from all areas near and around Illinois went to Springfield to canvas door to door and at shopping marts to get as many petitions signed and as much support possible in support of ERA ratification. Finally, all of these activists attended a huge rally with numerous prominent speakers to show solidarity for the ERA. They hoped that a large-scale public action was enough to make legislators and voters alike realize just how many people supported the ERA. Quite reminiscent of the massive rallies held by civil rights organizations in the 1960s, activists organized this rally to create a large public spectacle in order to further inspire thought and action about the ERA.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Toledo NOW Board Meeting Minutes, January 1976. TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
\textsuperscript{59} Illinois remains one of the few that has not ratified the ERA.
\textsuperscript{60} Illinois Mobilization Meeting, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
To venture outside of Ohio was a big deal for Toledo NOW. Up until 1976 the group felt that they could not do much to further the ERA on a national scale. Since Ohio ratified the ERA, Toledo NOW had disbanded its ERA task force and focused much more heavily on other activities and goals. ERA ratification once again became important to the members and executives of Toledo NOW because of the close proximity between Ohio and Illinois and since there were so few states left that could ratify the amendment. In April, Toledo NOW released a public announcement to the Toledo Blade stating that they, as a group, were going to the Springfield rally and invited anyone else who wanted to participate to come along.  

From 1976 on, Toledo NOW became more interested in national pursuits than before, and, at the same time, realized that even though it was just a small, local branch, they could actually play a part in politics at that level. As stated in their March 1976 newsletter, “women who live in the 34 ratified states are being denied their rights by the failure of other states to ratify.” The members of Toledo NOW wanted to do something to help women that lived in unratified states. At the same time, the members wanted to do something to help themselves, and other women who lived in ratified states. Unless three more unratified states signed the ERA, no one would have the amendment as law.

Before the May mobilization in Illinois, Toledo NOW held a general meeting to make sure that its members understood the issues that surrounded the ERA and why NOW believed that the ERA was so important. This meeting tried to make sure that the members had all of the information necessary to answer any questions or confront any attacks from opponents. First Toledo NOW stated that the 14th amendment made racial,

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61 Toledo NOW Minutes, April 1976, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
not sexual, discrimination illegal. Second, the ERA was clearer than the previous amendment and, if tested at the Supreme Court level, left little room for interpretation. The ERA also allowed Congressional enforcement to make sure that no laws were made that circumvented the amendment. In addition, state laws that protected against gender discrimination were not uniform and instead varied wildly across the country. The ERA was to have uniform application, something that individual state laws could never achieve.63

ERA opponents attacked a variety of effects predicted to result from implementation. Toledo NOW identified two of these concerns as spousal support and the draft. According to Toledo NOW, the court barely ever involved itself with matters of the family unit, and, in any case, the relationships of the family and between husband and wife were simply personal matters that the court should not have any interference in. As evidence, Toledo NOW cited a Nebraska Supreme Court decision where the court refused to have any say in divorce proceedings. Two of the goals of the ERA were to make an equal credit law and a husband support law, so it was in the financial best interest of both genders to support the ERA.64

Toledo NOW’s views on the draft were not as concrete. Realizing this was the largest point of attack among opponents of the ERA, Toledo NOW was equivocal in what it told its members to say. Though a person could not be excluded from conscription on the basis of gender, they certainly could be based on physical characteristics, such as strength or pregnancy. Family status could also exclude a person from the draft, though it is not recorded as to what a person’s family status would have to

63 Illinois Mobilization Meeting, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
64 Ibid.
be in order for this to happen. In addition, being a member of the military affords some privileges and benefits during peacetime that soldiers get but citizens do not. Finally, possibly just a rationalized justification, involving women in the draft and in the military in greater numbers might deter the United States from going to war any time in the near future.  

Toledo NOW also addressed the worry over abortion. Toledo NOW stated to its members that, unequivocally, the ERA and abortion were two completely separate issues. The group’s view was that one did not affect the other in any way. Also in terms of sexual reforms, the ERA would transform rape legislation so that the new laws would forbid one person penetrating another without consent. This gender-neutral language would make it so that women were not always seen as the victim and therefore would lose that stigma. Finally, Toledo NOW made sure to point out to its members that public bathrooms would not be affected by the ERA, no matter what Phyllis Schlafly had to say about the subject.  

Forty-six well-informed members of Toledo NOW participated in the Springfield rally. After the day of canvassing and petitioning, they participated in the Saturday rally after being met by a group of NOW members from Pittsburgh. These Pittsburgh members took a self-designated “freedom train” to Springfield in order to support ratification in Illinois. In mass solidarity the women rallied and listened to speeches by such prominent leaders as Gloria Steinem, Bella Azburg, and Betty Ford. According to

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 There is confusion in the records over whether 46 or 48 members of Toledo NOW attended the Springfield rally. I have chosen to stick to the more conservative number.
Toledo NOW, the rally was a huge success.\textsuperscript{68} The rally was also a huge first step for Toledo NOW in that its members realized that they could effect the ratification of the ERA in states other than Ohio. In this small way, they began to realize their power on a national scale.

After the rally in May, the ERA, once again, dropped off of Toledo NOW’s list of priorities. The group spent most of its resources throughout May and June of 1976 working, again, on fixing gender discrimination in the banking industry and planning Women’s Equality Day.\textsuperscript{69} Even though the group showed that the ERA was important to them and there was still a lot of fighting left to do in order to get it ratified, by July of 1976 there was still no ERA task force or committee.\textsuperscript{70} In fact, resources were so few during 1976 that group members brought up in several meetings that the number of committees should be reduced because there were not enough members to serve on them properly. Though Toledo NOW worked hard all throughout 1976 to try to get more members to join their ranks, they had little success.\textsuperscript{71}

After August, Toledo NOW barely whispered about the ERA for the rest of the year. There was a brief mention in the December newsletter about Massachusetts gaining a state ERA by referendum and asking for more donation money so that the ERA could be ratified at the national level.\textsuperscript{72} Other than that there was nothing. With little money, little time, and few members, it is no surprise that Toledo NOW little discussed the amendment. Still, the ERA’s March 22, 1979 deadline loomed ever closer and there was little action in states that had not ratified yet. Soon, however, a fire would be lit

\textsuperscript{68} Illinois Mobilization Meeting, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
\textsuperscript{69} Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, TNOW, May and June 1976, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
\textsuperscript{70} Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, TNOW, July 1976, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
\textsuperscript{71} Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, April 1976, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 7.
\textsuperscript{72} Toledo NOW Newsletter, December 1976, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 48.
under all branches of NOW, Toledo included. Once the turn of events showed that ERA ratification was not going to be as easy as everyone anticipated, all branches began to undertake efforts to persuade ratification. Resources were used and spent that the branches did not even realize they had in large, orchestrated, well-organized feats of public solidarity. The years between 1977 and 1982 were different from the years between 1972 and 1976 because ERA ratification depended on it.
Chapter 3: 1977-1982

Between 1977 and 1982, the National Organization for Women, at all levels, worked incredibly hard for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. In fact, “The years 1978-82 marked the National Organization for Women’s full commitment to the ERA strategy,” wrote Maryann Barakso.1 During those five years, NOW at the national level marked the ERA as priority number one and requested, if not required, that all of the state and local branches do the same. Toledo, of course, was no different. Between 1978 and 1982, there was a marked increase in the amount of resources that were spent to further ERA ratification goals. After Toledo NOW re-organized its management structure, there were more resources in terms of money and womanpower at the group’s disposal. At the same time, the ways that Toledo NOW pursued ERA ratification changed almost entirely. After the Illinois mobilization effort, the members and executive board began to look for ways that they could help persuade ERA ratification in other states as well as fund ERA ratification at the national level. This meant working on a much larger scale and realizing that the group, and its members, had political power not just in Toledo, but also in the nation at large. In this way, Toledo NOW’s efforts focused more on pushing ratification in states other than Ohio while, at the same time, educating Ohioans on the necessity for and urgency of the ERA.

Although 1977 showed less activity than years to come, it is important because it marked change in Toledo NOW’s priorities. Only one state ratified the ERA in 1977, Indiana, which was the final one to do so.\(^2\) Though it must be remembered that only three more state ratifications were necessary, the fact that only Indiana ratified the amendment worried proponents of the ERA. The March 22, 1979 ratification deadline was quickly approaching. With only one new state approving ratification, it became more and more possible that the amendment was not going to be ratified in time. Though NOW at the national level only asked its branches to become committed to ERA ratification beginning in 1978, the Toledo chapter of NOW began evincing a much stronger commitment in 1977. It is evident through the better-organized activities and the resources expended to produce them that in 1977 Toledo NOW ranked ratification higher on its list of priorities than ever before.

Since there was nothing left for Toledo NOW to do in Ohio because it was a ratified state, the group realized that they needed to focus on a way that they could help support the push for ERA ratification in unratified states. The members decided that the best way they could help was by fundraising. At its July 1977 board meeting, Toledo NOW came to the emphatic conclusion that those opposed to the ERA, such as Stop ERA, were well funded. NOW, and other groups that supported the ERA, generally were not.\(^3\) From 1977 on, Toledo NOW mounted numerous fundraising campaigns. The money raised from these campaigns went to National NOW which then funneled it to the


\(^3\) Toledo NOW Newsletter, July 1977, Toledo National Organization for Women Records, The Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, The University of Toledo Libraries, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49. (TNOW)
different branches of NOW that were in unratified states. Not only did these actions supply resources to local branches of NOW, it also raised publicity for the ERA and NOW. To this end, every fundraising letter that Toledo NOW sent out said that “Working with women’s rights groups across the nation, we are mounting a crucial 1977 era campaign to ensure that this will be the year that ERA goes over the top.”

From the beginning of 1977, Toledo NOW used organized activism to support and promulgate ERA ratification. The biggest way that the group supported ratification was through fundraising activities. Though the early half of the year did not have as much activity as the later half, it was apparent from January on that Toledo NOW held a stronger commitment to ERA activism in 1977 than it did in 1976.

The first change that shows this point is that an ERA task force was once again a part of Toledo NOW. Its first chair was Sheila Ostrow and her job was to make sure that Toledo NOW had an organized plan to help with the push for ratification. Also, along with focusing on strengthening ERA support in Toledo and Ohio and educating those who did not know the specifics of the amendment, the goal of the ERA task force was to help ratification efforts in other states nationwide. As the president of Toledo NOW, Linda Furney, said, “The chapter is dedicating its time and energies to the ERA for the remainder of the year.”

The first bit of interstate activism that Ostrow planned was a trip to Indianapolis, Indiana between March 3 and March 5 to help with Indiana’s ERA proponents’ efforts for ratification. The leaders of Toledo NOW told their members that “While the ERA has been ratified in Ohio, we still have a responsibility to our sisters in unratified states.”

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4 Fundraising Letter, 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 15.
5 Toledo NOW Newsletter, January 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
6 Letter to Toledo NOW Members, June 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 15.
Many women from Toledo NOW joined with over 600 activists in Indianapolis at a huge, successful rally. After the members returned from Indianapolis, the group devoted the entire March 8 general meeting to why the ERA was important and needed to be ratified, much like the 1976 meeting that did the same thing. Florida was another state that had yet to ratify the ERA. The members of Toledo NOW were encouraged to write letters to Florida legislators and send donations to Florida branches of NOW to help fund their ERA efforts. Members were even encouraged to travel to Florida to attend rallies if it was financially feasible.

The largest action that Toledo NOW organized in 1977 was a walkathon that took place on September 24. It was the most organized activity that Toledo NOW planned so far in support of ERA ratification. From the moment of its inception, the group believed that the walkathon was not only good for the ERA but for Toledo NOW as well. Toledo NOW’s newsletter told its members that “This walk can be successful not only in the money we raise for the national task force, but for the publicity and interest we can generate.” Toledo NOW’s member count and funds in the treasury were still low and members hoped that by organizing an ERA walk that the group could gain publicity, support, and more members. In this way, the group understood that, by furthering national goals, it was helping itself as well.

Unfortunately, on September 24, the day of the walkathon, it rained, and turnout was smaller than Toledo NOW hoped for. Before the walk, only 60 people attended a rally at the courthouse. Those present listened to a speech by Toledo Mayor Doug

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7 Toledo NOW Newsletter, January and March 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
8 Toledo NOW Newsletter, April 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
9 There are no membership records, meeting minutes, or treasury reports for 1977. Therefore, it is a probable assumption that membership and treasury levels did not increase by any substantial amount.
10 Toledo NOW Newsletter, July 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
DeGood who encouraged them to continue to support the ERA at the national level even though Ohio ratified it years earlier.\textsuperscript{11} From the courthouse the walkers began a ten mile trek that took them about four hours and forty five minutes to complete. They walked from Monroe to Secor, Secor to Bancroft, and ended up at a park at the corner of Robinwood and Bancroft, where they attended a luncheon and celebration of women and the ERA.\textsuperscript{12} Even though the turnout was small, all those involved deemed the walkathon a great success. The event raised about $1,000,\textsuperscript{13} and the walkers and members of Toledo NOW got the psychological benefit of knowing that they contributed to the movement. A member of the group expressed her feelings about the walk when she wrote in the December newsletter that “As a ratified state I’m sure we’ve all felt the frustration of not being able to help with the ratification drive. The ERA Walkathon gave us a great chance to use this energy.”\textsuperscript{14}

Near the end of 1977 it became quite apparent that the ERA was not going to have enough states ratify the amendment before the 1979 deadline. The Justice Department decided that it was constitutionally possible to extend the deadline after women’s groups and other proponents of the ERA demanded an inquiry.\textsuperscript{15} National NOW asked that its members support an extension of the deadline and create an ERA extension task force. Each task force was given an information kit full of everything they might need to push for the extension. The purpose was not only to inform the branch’s membership and general populace about the ERA, but also to barrage members of

\textsuperscript{11} Toledo NOW Newsletter, October 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
\textsuperscript{12} Walkathon, September 24 1977, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Toledo NOW Newsletter, October 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
\textsuperscript{14} Toledo NOW Newsletter, December 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
\textsuperscript{15} “Congress Is Told It Can Extend Deadline for ERA Ratification,” Toledo Blade, November 2, 1977. TNOW, Box 3 of 3, Folder 62.
Congress and state legislators with letters asking them for support.\textsuperscript{16} By December, Toledo NOW established the ERA Extension Committee and began developing action strategies.

Aside from fundraising and the ERA extension in 1977, Toledo NOW also dealt with the media. Not all people, groups, and media conglomerates agreed with the ERA or considered it important news. David Drury, editorial director for WSPD radio and television in Toledo, wrote numerous scathing editorials against the ERA. In November Drury published and put on the air an editorial that said that the ERA was not only unnecessary, but that laws that were meant to construct literal gender equality were a hindrance to many occupations, such as firefighting. He then called for Ohio to rescind its ratification. Although there is no record that Toledo NOW ever formally answered Drury’s editorial, his opinion, and the airing of it, certainly could not have helped the cause.\textsuperscript{17}

Drury is an example that shows that Toledo NOW did not always have a positive relationship with the media. The group also wrote a letter to WSPD’s station manager that criticized the lack of coverage of the women’s movement and Toledo NOW’s efforts in pursuit of the ERA. They were especially upset because WSPD aired nothing about the September walkathon. As the group said, “Writing women into the Constitution certainly deserves some consideration by your news department, and what better way to highlight this national struggle than through local events?”\textsuperscript{18} The Toledo \textit{Blade} also gave little coverage to the ERA during this time period. There was no coverage of the September walkathon in the \textit{Blade}’s pages.

\textsuperscript{16} Letter from National NOW, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 15.
\textsuperscript{17} WSPD Editorial, November 1977, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{18} Letter to WSPD, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 15.
Even though Toledo NOW stated that the ERA was to be its top priority in 1977, the group did two things that went against this statement. First, the group established an abortion task force. This not only took time away from the struggle for the ERA but it also further blurred the lines between abortion and the ERA. Even though it was a worry that the radicalism of supporting abortion was going to hinder the group’s efforts with the ERA, Toledo NOW formed the task force anyway.19 Second, during 1977’s Candidates’ Night, the participants were asked three different questions on their positions concerning rape legislation reform but nothing about the ERA. Toledo NOW should have asked the candidates a question about the amendment. Past NOW leaders, at the local and the national levels, made it clear that only politicians who supported the amendment should be elected.20 While these two different actions may not have directly taken away from the group’s support of the ERA, valuable resources were used on other projects when Toledo NOW’s resources should have been more focused on the amendment if the group wanted to further ratification.

ERA activism kick started in 1977. Toledo NOW did what they could to gain more money and more members. They also only bit off what they could chew. Fundraising efforts such as a walkathon were not easy to plan but were manageable with the few members and little money available. A definite change in prioritization occurred in 1978. During 1978, it was possible that the ratification deadline was not going to be extended. There was an all-out struggle for ERA support because proponents believed that 1979 was going to be the year that the ERA failed. Even though Toledo NOW should have been doing all that it could to support the ERA, its small amount of

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19 Toledo NOW Newsletter, March 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 49.
20 Candidates’ Night 1977, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 37.
resources, specifically in terms of active members, caused them to flounder during this crucial year.

The biggest change for Toledo NOW in 1978 was that National NOW instructed all of its branches that the ERA was to be NOW’s number one priority. In 1978, National NOW called for an ERA “state of emergency”. Because the deadline for ERA ratification was rapidly approaching with the chance of success getting slimmer, President Ellie Smeal stated that NOW, at all levels, was going to be fully dedicated to the ratification of the ERA above anything else. Toledo NOW felt obligated to expend more of their resources on the ERA at the detriment of other local causes. During the majority of 1978, Toledo NOW participated in many activities that tried to support the ERA, such as petitioning campaigns and walkathons, although the group was not always entirely successful.

The most striking difference after the call for an ERA emergency was that the amendment was the first thing discussed at general and board meetings. Not even fundraising or membership drives came before the ERA. This shows that the ERA ranked much higher on Toledo NOW’s priority schema after the emergency call. In order to explain to the members why the group was going to focus on the ERA, the executive board told them that “Being part of a ratified state must not give us a sense of security…The critical need to work for the extension is seen by the fact that only one more state will even vote on the ERA this year.” In other words, the fact that Ohio previously ratified would be meaningless if three more states did not ratify. As the previous statement indicates, there was no reason to feel secure that the amendment would pass because there was only one more state that could ratify in 1978. This placed

21 Barakso, Governing NOW, 70.
ratification on shaky footing. It became imperative that, for national ERA success, all state and local branches participated in any way that they were able.\textsuperscript{22}

In order to be able to fight strongly for the Equal Rights Amendment, the first item of business that Toledo NOW tackled in 1978 was gaining new members. With only around 50 members at any given time, Toledo NOW needed more individuals willing to devote their time, energy, and money to the cause. The group developed the NOWComers program and held a preliminary get-together in early 1978. This meeting highlighted the social aspects of being part of NOW, such as making new friends, having something social to do outside of the home, and participate in the group’s activities. Personal growth and consciousness raising workshops were also highlighted as they were thought to be the main draw for new members. Dues were lowered to $12 for students and $20 for other members so that more women could join without having to worry about their finances, though these dues were separate from national dues. Even with the NOWComers meeting, member numbers did not rise by any appreciable amount until 1981.\textsuperscript{23}

Most Toledo NOW members were not active and so the group had to stick to small projects that could be achieved by a few people. Letter writing and petitioning became the two main ways of activism. The purpose of the letters and petitions were to convince legislators to support the ERA. Though some were addressed to Ohio legislators, legislators from Florida and Illinois were sent them as well. At almost every meeting members were urged to write letters to city, state, and national officials, in support of the ERA. Letter writing parties were held at various NOW members’ homes,

\textsuperscript{22} Toledo NOW Newsletter, April 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 50.
\textsuperscript{23} New Member Meeting, 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 3.
and letter writing tables were set up in the University of Toledo’s Student Union and at the Southwyck Mall.\textsuperscript{24} Petitions were also passed around by NOW members in their neighborhoods and local shopping centers. One petition had over 200 signatures on it, though there is no indication as to how many of these petitions were circulated.\textsuperscript{25} As will be shown, actions that were larger than petitioning and letter writing were none too successful in 1978.

Aside from petitioning, letter writing was the method most used to support ratification. Especially after Virginia, Alabama, and North Carolina defeated the amendment, the group’s leadership asked its members, over and over, to write letters to legislators to ask them to support the ERA.\textsuperscript{26} The group targeted Congressman Thomas Ludlow Ashley of Ohio as he began to waver from supporting the ERA to becoming ambivalent about its success. Members were encouraged to send public opinion telegrams to legislators in states other than Ohio letting them know that their vote affected women other than those who were residents of their respective states. Members were also encouraged to petition wherever they could and set up letter writing parties so that letters were written and mailed en masse.\textsuperscript{27}

Toledo NOW planned a letter writing and petitioning event on May 13, 1978, Mother’s Day. As many members who were also mothers as possible were to go to local shopping centers and ask patrons to write letters, sign petitions, and join lists of people who were willing to pay to have telegrams sent to legislators asking for ERA support. It was hoped that people would respond more positively to mothers asking for ERA support.

\textsuperscript{24} Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, April 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 8, and Toledo NOW Newsletter, March 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 50.
\textsuperscript{25} ERA Petition Campaign, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 9.
\textsuperscript{26} Toledo NOW Newsletter, March 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 50.
\textsuperscript{27} Toledo NOW Newsletter, May 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 50.
on Mother’s Day than on any other day of the year.\textsuperscript{28} The leadership of Toledo NOW was disappointed when barely any members showed up to canvass on Mother’s Day. After the event, President Linda Furney told the members that “If this lack of involvement continues, this organization will cease to exist.”\textsuperscript{29}

One of the reasons why the Mother’s Day plan failed because there were so many issues facing Toledo NOW right before and on Mother’s Day. Groups of local women asked Toledo NOW for help and pulled the group away from national ERA goals. Members wrote to Congressman Ashley about housing developments because a group of local women felt discriminated against by development practices.\textsuperscript{30} Toledo NOW also donated money to a local farm worker’s organization to go and meet with Cesar Chavez for more information and hands-on experience with collective farming.\textsuperscript{31}

Aside from groups of women, Toledo NOW received many requests from individual women seeking help. One woman was going through a divorce and was having problems economically. She did not have the money necessary to take her husband to court and worried about paying the bills. She asked Toledo NOW advice and asked “What are my hopes?” Another woman asked for help in fighting the dress code at the hospital she worked at which stated that “Women wear scrub dresses and pants. Women will not attire in scrub shirt and pants. Men will attire in scrub shirt and pants.” She believed that this code was unfair and discriminatory based on gender. A third woman looked to Toledo NOW for help when she lost her job at a metal stamping plant. Her employer told her that she was laid off because she was “unable to cope with the

\textsuperscript{28} Toledo NOW Newsletter, May 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 50.
\textsuperscript{29} Toledo NOW Newsletter, June 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 50.
\textsuperscript{30} Letter to Ashley, October 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 16.
\textsuperscript{31} Letter from Farmworker’s Organization, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 16.
pressure”, was given no explanation other than that, and felt that she was discriminated against.\textsuperscript{32} When local women were asking for help, how could any group unquestioningly fight for a national cause? Unfortunately, there is no record of any action that Toledo NOW took to help these local women with their problems.

The most successful piece of organized activism that Toledo NOW participated in during 1978 was the National ERA March in Washington, D.C. on July 9. Calling the March 22, 1979 ratification deadline arbitrary, participants hoped to persuade Congress to allow an extension. As the members of Toledo NOW stated, “there can be no time limit on equal rights for women.” Two hundred Toledoans went to Washington, D.C. in five busses and joining 100,000 other ERA supporters. The group cancelled the July general meeting of Toledo NOW so that as many members as possible could travel. The supporters rallied on the steps of the Capital building, wearing purple, white, and gold in an obvious homage and reference to the suffrage struggles of the 1910s. In fact, the reason that the ERA proponents picked July 9 was because it was the one-year anniversary of the death of Alice Paul, suffragist and originator of the ERA. It was the hope of all of those involved that a mass showing on a symbolic day might spur Congress to action and get them to extend the ERA ratification deadline.\textsuperscript{33}

When the members of Toledo NOW returned from the D.C. rally, it is impossible not to note the sense of energy, positivity, and invigoration with which they told their tales of activism. They stated that over 100,000 people showed up to support the ERA...
and the deadline extension. They talked about the flowing white dresses accented with purple and gold and the tableaus created on the Capitol steps. The rally was a great success, for the ERA and for Toledo NOW. It awakened the feeling of activism that was sleeping dormant in so many of the members. Those who came back from the rally said that they never felt so happy before, and at the same time, some of them stated that they never felt so alive.  

This spirit of activism slowly trickled into actual activism by the beginning of 1981. In October of 1978, Congress passed an extension of the ERA deadline and set the new deadline at June 30, 1982. Groups that supported the ERA had three more years to get only three more states to ratify the amendment. Therefore, it was important that groups, including NOW, work harder for ratification. As Toledo NOW evinced throughout 1979 and 1980, proponents of the ERA were lulled back into a false sense of security during the more successful years of the ratification campaign. In 1981, with the deadline once again looming uncomfortably close, proponent groups, including NOW, became truly active again. Because of this heightened awareness of possible impending failure, there was more activism in 1981 than in all previous years combined.

Throughout 1979, members of Toledo NOW focused on Florida’s ratification effort. They wrote letters to Congressman, state, and local legislators urging them to support the ERA and sent money to help finance campaigns in Florida. Toledo NOW members were especially excited when they heard that the labor union AFL-CIO pulled their national conference because the union supported the ERA and Florida had yet to

34 Toledo NOW Newsletter, August 1978, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 50.
35 National Organization for Women, “Chronology.”
36 Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, March 1979, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 8 and Toledo NOW Newsletter, March 1979, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 51.
ratify. Florida lost around $1 million in revenue because the convention pulled out.\textsuperscript{37} Proponents hoped that actions like these might persuade Florida legislators to ratify the ERA, but no luck was had.

Toledo NOW organized another walkathon on September 22, 1979, though it was not as successful as the one held in 1978. The event did not even raise the previous year’s sum of $1,000.\textsuperscript{38} The walkathon’s lack of success clearly notes the group’s main, and recurring, problem in 1979. Like in previous years, the ERA was not Toledo NOW’s only point of concern. The group was not able to put more time into activities such as the 1979 walkathon because there were so many other issues to discuss. Meetings did not focus on the ERA, but instead Title IX, battered women, divorce, abortion, and consciousness-raising. Toledo NOW monitored the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and made sure that charges of job discrimination filed by women were investigated and taken seriously. The group also organized a new labor task force whose purpose was to make sure that women were represented in labor organizations and not discriminated in unions or in employment.\textsuperscript{39} The active members of Toledo NOW were stretched thin. The group used time and resources on these other reforms that could have been used to fight for ratification.

Because the group worked towards so many other goals at once, 1979 was not one of the stronger years for Toledo NOW’s fight for the ERA.

On the other hand, 1980 was a transitional year for Toledo NOW’s pursuit of the ERA. Thanks to some new leadership, the ERA took on much more importance to

\begin{itemize}
  \item Toledo NOW Newsletter, April 1979, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 51.
  \item Toledo NOW Newsletter, July, September, and October 1979, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 51.
  \item Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, 1979, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 8, Letter to Toledo NOW, May 1979, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 17, and Toledo NOW Newsletter, November 1979, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 51.
\end{itemize}

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Toledo NOW and activism increased. Julia Stevens, the new President of Toledo NOW, organized the group’s pursuit of the ERA and made sure that the process became streamlined and efficient, to make the most use out of the group’s limited resources as possible. Sue Schwartz became the new head of the ERA Task Force and looked into many new ideas to help the group become more effective with their activism. Finally, Johey Crawford-Sevilla not only worked incredibly hard for the ERA, but was most responsible for figuring out why the group had low membership levels and therefore low financial levels. Toledo NOW’s pursuit of the ERA was successful because of the hard work of these three women. At the same time, membership numbers were finally rising, due to membership drives and NOWComer meetings. During 1980 membership numbers were somewhere between 75 and 86 members. This allowed Toledo NOW to participate in a much greater range of activities than it could previously. The pairing of new, more organized leadership and a higher membership level created a stronger, more organized, and more effective Toledo NOW.

Early in 1980, the leadership of Toledo NOW wanted the members’ opinions about the group and the way it was being run. They also wanted to know which reforms the members were most interested in and how much time they were willing to give. To this end, Crawford-Sevilla wrote and distributed a survey that asked the members which women’s reforms they were most interested in, how much time they had to give, and if they had any suggestions for the leadership of Toledo NOW. Around fifty members filled out and returned these surveys. The members’ responses indicated the weaknesses

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41 Membership Lists, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 22.
of the organization. They also helped inform the path that Toledo NOW took in the near future.

One of the most prominent conclusions drawn from the survey was that every member had interested in and supported the ERA. The problem was that the members also supported a wide range of other reforms, so many in fact that it is easy to see why Toledo NOW had such a hard time focusing on one project. Most of the members were also involved in other organizations including women’s groups, religious groups, unions, and local PTAs. The members noted that membership in other organizations and other restraints limited the amount of time they could devote to Toledo NOW. Members noted that they were students, mothers, and that they held jobs. These other devotions help to explain why Toledo NOW had such a hard time getting their members involved, specifically in such actions as the Mother’s Day canvassing.

Finally, the members echoed past worries in the comments sections of the survey. A number of the women were worried that the group was too radical and that hurt its efforts in pursuit of the ERA. Mary Shiver worried about Toledo NOW’s involvement in the abortion debate and noted that “NOW is hurting the ERA issue by talking of both in the same breath.” Dorothy Brown stated that the most important reform that Toledo NOW fought for was “To pass the ERA- although I’m afraid it’s a lost cause- we blew it!” Brown also cited radicalism as the cause of the possible and in her mind probable, failure, and said that “We should become aware of the values of the society in which we live and respect those values, even if we disagree. I’d hate to win the battle of lesbianism and lose the whole war for women’s rights.” In Brown’s view, Toledo NOW’s view on and fight for lesbian rights was too radical and was a detriment to women’s rights as a
whole, including the ERA. In this way, the membership survey pointed out the same problems that were noted previously: the lack of member time at the local level and NOW’s radicalism at all levels.\textsuperscript{42}

Sue Schwartz, the ERA Task Force Leader, fought against these detriments in a number of ways. First, she established a new ERA task force run by members who strongly supported the ERA and had time to plan and work activities.\textsuperscript{43} This allowed for the most efficient use of member time because only women who were truly committed to the ERA were part of the task force. Schwartz supplemented the membership by contacting women in other groups and asking them for help, in the form of time and money.\textsuperscript{44} In this way, Schwartz reversed Toledo NOW’s earlier policy of group isolation. By including women from other pro-ERA groups, Schwartz added much to the limited resources that Toledo NOW’s members alone were able to give.

Schwartz, with the help of other members, organized two trips to participate in marches and rallies outside of Toledo. The first was on May 10 in Chicago, Illinois. Toledo NOW’s participation in the Chicago rally was a success. Members were persuaded to go to Chicago after reading a leaflet that detailed how well the anti-ERA groups were doing. The West Toledo Herald also advertised the event and gave Toledo NOW’s office phone number. Those who could not go were asked to support the rally financially. Twelve busses drove out of Ohio, three of them from Toledo. The participants rallied in downtown Chicago and once again commented on the thrill of activism. In fact, so many activists gathered in Chicago to support the ERA that Phyllis

\textsuperscript{42} Toledo NOW Membership Survey, 1980, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 31.
\textsuperscript{43} Toledo NOW Newsletter, February 1980, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 52.
\textsuperscript{44} Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, January 1980, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 9.
Schlafly, head of the anti-ERA groups, later claimed that NOW paid random strangers to participate in the rally.\footnote{Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, March 1980, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 9, Toledo NOW Newsletter, May and June 1980, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 52, and “Supporters of ERA to March in Chicago,” \textit{West Toledo Herald}, May 7, 1980.}

The other big march that Toledo NOW participated in during 1980 was in Detroit, Michigan. On the eve of the Republican National Convention that was to begin on July 14, the platform committee refused to add a plank calling for the ratification of the ERA. National NOW sponsored the walk and rally in order to show the committee that women across the country did not approve of the lack of an ERA ratification plank. Although event organizers thought before the event that 1,500 people would show up, police in Detroit estimated that 4,000 or 5,000 people attended the event. Many Toledoans, including thirteen members of Toledo NOW, traveled to Detroit by bus to participate in the rally. Once in Detroit, they participated in workshops, listened to speakers such as Gloria Steinem, and were entertained by comedienne Lily Tomlin. Just as in Chicago, Toledo NOW members who rallied in Detroit brought back with them a spirit and exuberance which furthered activism in the years to come.\footnote{“NOW in Detroit for National Meeting,” TNOW, Box 3 of 3, Folder 62, “Toledo Protesters in Detroit Have Their Say About ERA,” Toledo \textit{Blade}, July 15, 1980, TNOW, Box 3 of 3, Folder 62, and Toledo NOW Newsletter, July 1980, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 52.}

The last piece of major activism that Toledo NOW members participated in during the 1980 pursuit for the ERA, was the annual Toledo walkathon. Toledo NOW decided to organize the walkathon for August 23, three days before Women’s Equality Day. The sole purpose of the 1980 walkathon was to raise money for the national ERA campaign. A bulletin given to Toledo NOW members proclaimed that there were only 700 days left until the new ratification deadline and that it was important to have a
“strong financial base.” Local organizers told each walker to get 20 sponsors willing to donate between fifty cents and one dollar for every mile the walker finished of the five-mile walk. The importance of the national campaign was stressed because even though Ohio ratified the ERA, “WE ARE ALL FROM AN UNRATIFIED COUNTRY!”

During 1980, Toledo NOW went through many changes. ERA ratification efforts changed from a few members participating in isolated, somewhat successful endeavors to a larger group of members participating in far-reaching, highly successful endeavors that spurred further activism. The leaders and membership of Toledo NOW learned how to use their limited resources effectively and efficiently. These methods and successes spread into 1981, when ERA ratification was more tenuous than ever. The deadline for ratification was June 30, 1982, a year and a half away. If ratification was going to be successful, Toledo NOW, and all local branches of NOW, were going to have to give it everything they had.

Although 1981 was a success for the ERA in Toledo, during the beginning of the year National NOW did not focus entirely on ratification. As Sue Schwartz claimed at the January board meeting, most of national’s energy focused on reproductive rights. From January through March, NOW worried about the newly proposed Human Life Amendment (HLA). The purpose of the HLA was to prohibit abortion. It was introduced in January of 1981 to both the House and the Senate as a joint resolution. Understandably, National NOW began to worry that reproductive rights were in jeopardy and placed the defeat of the HLA at the highest priority level.

47 700 Days Bulletin, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 2.
48 Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 10.
Though this fervor over the HLA did not last for long, it got in the way of work to benefit ratification of the ERA. Members of Toledo NOW circulated a petition to reject the HLA and even helped pay to have an anti-HLA billboard erected.\textsuperscript{50} The March edition of the Toledo NOW newsletter contained a handout about the HLA, what enactment of the amendment would mean for reproductive rights, and what members and local organizations could do to stop it.\textsuperscript{51} Activism against the HLA used up resources that could have been used to support the ERA. Especially with the ratification deadline less than a year and a half away, it is surprising that NOW, at all levels, did not commit fully to the ERA but still worked on side projects. Advocating for the rejection of the HLA may also have hurt ERA ratification efforts by once again showing that NOW supported both abortion rights and the ERA, strengthening connections that ratification of the amendment would legalize further reproductive rights. It was a constant, and documented, criticism of NOW that it was too radical. NOW’s decision to reject the HLA did nothing to assuage this criticism.

Even with the problems of activism against the HLA, NOW worked diligently for the ratification of the ERA. The group had a high of 83 members in 1981, the largest number so far.\textsuperscript{52} Even though membership levels had reached a new high, Toledo NOW worked hard to enlist as many new members as possible. In late May, Toledo NOW issued a press release stating that it was starting a membership drive. Since the ERA ratification deadline was approaching rapidly, the group wanted anyone who had any time or money to spare to sign up for the cause. Though there are no figures to show whether the drive was successful, this was the first time that Toledo NOW went public

\textsuperscript{50} Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, March 1981, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 10.
\textsuperscript{51} Toledo NOW Newsletter, March 1931, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 53.
\textsuperscript{52} Toledo NOW Membership Lists, 1981, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 22.
and issued a press release asking for new members. This shows that they realized that
the next year was going to be the last chance that they had to ratify the ERA. As
members of the Toledo NOW women in the labor task force stated, “The need to
continue active support of the ERA was stressed.”

It was a good thing that Toledo NOW asked for more members because the first
bit of public activism that it took on was quite large-scale. The group planned a
countdown rally for the ERA. On June 30, members and all other people that wanted to
come out and support the ERA, met in front of the courthouse for a three hour rally. The
group advertised the event in the Toledo NOW newsletter, with fliers, and with a
personal ad in the Toledo Blade that had the wording of the ERA in big letters at the top.
Those who attended were asked to wear green and white in reference to suffrage marches
and parades, although green came to replace suffrage’s purple or yellow. At the rally,
supporters listened to speakers and musicians, participated in a feminist sing-along,
purchased ERA balloons, buttons, t-shirts, and literature, and, of course, were asked to
volunteer time and donate money.

According to the Toledo Blade, 75 people showed up for the ERA countdown
rally, though Toledo NOW later commented that this was a poor turnout. Participants
listened to speeches by Karen DeGood, Toledo NOW member and wife of Mayor Dough
DeGood, and Toledo NOW President Julia Stevens. One of these speakers, whose name
was not recorded, spent time asking for more contribution money, as all those that
attended realized that June 1981 to June 1982 was going to be Toledo’s, and the

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54 Toledo NOW Meeting Minutes, June 1981, Box 1 of 3, Folder 10.
55 Toledo NOW Newsletter, July 1981, Box 1 of 3, Folder 53, Countdown Rally Flier, TNOW, Box 2 of 3,
Folder 8, and Countdown Rally Personal Ad, Toledo Blade, TNOW, Box 3 of 3, Folder 62.
country’s, last effort for the ERA. With that in mind, the speaker asked everyone in the crowd to double the monetary contribution that they made or were going to make. In fact, the speaker made it quite clear that doubling the donation, and all other effort put into the ERA during this June to June year long span was going to be the legacy that 1980s women would leave behind. She stated that “And 20 years from now, when some young woman you care about asks about the final push for the E.R.A., look her in the eye and say, ‘I was there. I did everything I could.’” The participants and onlookers must have heeded her words, as 75 people raised a little over $530.56.

Once the countdown rally kick started the final year of the push for ratification, Toledo NOW organized and participated in a flurry of activities. In August, to celebrate Women’s Equality Day, Toledo NOW organized a Maumee River cruise for the ERA. At Toledo’s International Park, 35 people on the ship Arawanna set sail full of drinks, food, and music, for a $10 ticket price. In addition, Toledo NOW members were encouraged to fast one meal each week and donate the money to the ERA ratification effort. Members were also asked to purchase pro-ERA gifts for birthdays and holidays instead of presents from stores. That way, more money would go towards the ratification efforts.

Toledo NOW organized two more large-scale activities in the later months of 1981. The first was the annual ERA walkathon, though this one gained the name “The Last ERA Walk.” Beginning at noon there was a rally in Ottawa Park and, from there,
the walkers made their way around the nine-mile path to Wildwood Metropark and back. During the rally, walkers listened to speeches from Linda Furney, who was now the Ohio NOW president, ERA task force coordinator Crawford-Sevilla, and women from the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, and even a Methodist church. Pro-ERA items, such as buttons and t-shirts, were sold during the rally as well, to raise more money and further the resources available for ratification efforts at the national level as well as the local.60

The goal for 1981’s walkathon was to have 100 walkers raise $5,000. For this walk, no holds were barred. Local businesses and unions, including UAW Local 892, the grocery store Bassett’s Market, and Pizza Hut sponsored the walkathon. Walkers were asked not only to dress in green and white, but also to dress historically in order to force people to remember the struggles of the suffragists. Some participants walked in suffrage-period costume with their hands tied behind their backs with black strips, metaphorically indicating how they were discriminated against. The walkathon was well advertised. For the first time in the records, Toledo NOW paid for radio advertising and wrote a series of ten second advertisements, including “Do you know what you can do for women’s equality? Walk with Toledo Chapter of NOW for equal rights on Sept. 26 at Ottawa Park beginning at 12:00 Noon.” Spots such as these helped inform all people, not just those who were members of Toledo NOW, that there was a way that they could support the ERA. This kind of advertising expanded Toledo NOW’s available resources without the need for more members. Those in the community who supported the ERA could participate in the walk without feeling pressured to become a member. The Last

ERA Walkathon was a great success. In the end, Toledo NOW exceeded their goal as 150 people walked and raised over $5,100.61

The last major endeavor that Toledo NOW organized in 1981 was ERA Awareness Week that ran from November 30 to December 6. The purpose of this week was to get every person informed on what the ERA was and what it meant for the country. The first thing that was necessary, therefore, was to make sure that everyone actually knew the exact wording of the amendment. Public service announcements were played on the radio that said “You have heard a lot about the Equal Rights Amendment. Now, take twenty seconds to hear it.” These were then followed by a reading of the ERA. Fundraising was also key to ERA Awareness Week. Toledo NOW hoped that after people knew the facts about the ERA that they would want to support it monetarily. People were asked to purchase pro-ERA merchandise to give away as Christmas presents, including giving Equacards, which were donations to the ERA fund given in the recipient’s name. Efforts such as ERA Awareness Week looked to further national and local resources. The goal of ERA Awareness Week, other than to make people aware of the ERA, was to gain more supporters and more funds, two things that Toledo NOW historically lacked.62

Efforts such as these also show that it was readily apparent to Toledo NOW that it had little time left to ratify the ERA. The fervor of pro-ERA activism that encompassed Toledo NOW in 1981 spread into the following year when there were only six more months left to ratify the ERA, and little happening in the states that had yet to ratify. In

61 Toledo NOW Newsletter, October 1981, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 53, Notes for Last ERA Walkathon, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 8, and Radio Spots for ERA Walk, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 6.
62 Toledo NOW Newsletter, December 1981, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 53 and ERA Awareness Week Public Service Announcement, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 10.
1982, Toledo NOW continued to raise money for the national ERA effort, but no mass activism occurred in Toledo to further education and support. Instead, Toledo NOW members participated as much as they could in out of state efforts, specifically in Florida and Illinois. In this way, the group’s efforts were hindered by location as well as resources. This close to the deadline, with Ohio having ratified previously and only sparse travel resources available, there was little left to do.

With only six months left, few state legislatures were going to vote on the ERA before the ratification deadline. NOW was most hopeful about their prospects in Florida and Virginia, but three states were needed. Georgia, Virginia, Oklahoma, and North Carolina scheduled votes on the ERA in 1982 and it was possible, though not probable, that at least one of these states would ratify the amendment. Defeat came quickly when, in January of 1982, Georgia and Oklahoma’s legislatures defeated it.63 In February, Virginia’s legislature denied the ERA as well, and proponents believed at the time that the ERA had been delivered its deathblow.64 Even with these three defeats one after another, NOW did not give up and chose instead to focus its efforts on Florida and Illinois, which were to vote in June. NOW also worked in North Carolina to get its legislators to ratify, as well as in Oklahoma to try to get that legislature to reverse its decision.65

Toledo NOW, because of its location and limited resources, decided to focus all of its efforts on the two states where ratification was more probable: Florida and Illinois. Illinois got special attention from Toledo NOW because of its closer location. Especially

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after Virginia defeated the ERA, Toledo NOW pleaded with its members to support ratification efforts in Florida and Illinois in any way that they could. After all, this close to the deadline, NOW and all groups that supported the ERA were giving ratification their last ditch effort. Toledo NOW members were practically begged to donate whatever time and money they could to the cause of getting the ERA ratified in these two key states.66

In late March and early April, at least three Toledo NOW members went to Chicago to work on the ERA ratification campaign in Illinois. These women spent at least four days at the Chicago ERA ratification office, manning the phones, asking for donations, and writing letters to public officials pleading for them to support ERA ratification. Aside from actually going to Illinois, Toledo NOW members were encouraged to write letters every single day to Illinois legislators and to continue donating whatever money they could spare.67

Toledo’s efforts in Florida were a different story because of its distance from Toledo. Toledo NOW members were ensured that Florida’s ratification office and campaign was huge and well organized, consisting of over 100 phone banks and enough volunteer workers that they already canvassed over 110,000 homes. Members were also told that the problem was not with the Florida House but with the Florida Senate. Therefore, they were instructed to write letters every day to Florida Senators urging them not to kill the ERA. They were also to send all of their spare money to Florida to support the ratification effort.68

66 Toledo NOW Newsletter, March 1982, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 54.
67 Toledo NOW Newsletter, April 1982, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 54 and Ohio NOW Meeting Minutes, April 1982, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 34.
68 Toledo NOW Newsletter, May 1982, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 54.
The biggest problem with Toledo NOW’s ERA ratification effort in 1982 was that it asked so much of its members. They were supposed to write a letter to Illinois and Florida every single day, even though the 1980 member survey informed the leadership just how busy they were. Members were also asked to donate spare money to Illinois and Florida. This might have been the best that Toledo NOW could do at the time. Toledo NOW was in such dire financial straights in 1982 that it admitted to its membership that the funds in the treasury were abysmally low. Donating money to Toledo NOW also lowered the amount of money that members had available to send to Illinois and Florida’s ratification efforts.  

June of 1982 was a month of desperate acts and a sullen understanding that the ERA was likely not going to succeed. On June 6, members of Toledo NOW traveled to Springfield, Illinois to participate in a large rally. Eleven Illinois women even went on a hunger strike, saying that they would not eat until their state ratified the ERA. The largest push for ratification was in Florida because the state’s legislature was to vote on the ERA before Illinois. If Florida voted against ratification then there was no hope for the ERA. The members of Toledo NOW continued to send money and letters to both states but by late June it was well understood that the fate of the ERA was out of their hands.

Florida was to vote on the ERA in late June, right before the deadline. Though the leadership of Toledo NOW told its members to be hopeful and positive, word from Ohio NOW at the board meeting was different. They told the leaders of all of the Ohio branches that “we expect a vote in Florida this Tuesday or Wednesday but we’re not

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69 Toledo NOW Newsletter, June 1982, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 54.
70 Ibid.
optimistic.” In fact, the branches were told to be ready to hold a press conference on June 30 with the understanding that the ERA was going to be defeated. In response to the probable defeat, the branches were urged to say that the “loss of the ERA was due to a small handful of white male legislators who defied the strong majority support among the general public.” This response, indirectly, stated that women, the majority of the country, were let down by a group of white men, and it was men that were to be blamed for women’s loss.71

Toledo NOW did not have to wait long to give this bitter blame to white male legislators. On June 21, 1982, Florida legislators defeated the ERA. The amendment had no chance of ratification before the June 30 deadline. To make matters worse, Illinois rejected the ERA on June 25, shoveling dirt on top of the ERA’s coffin. After a ten year long battle, thousands of dollars, thousands of signatures on petitions, hundreds of walks and rallies, and thousands of hours of time spent working towards ratification, the ERA was defeated.72

On July 19, 1982, Toledo NOW celebrated the tenth anniversary of the branch. Toledo NOW formed at the perfect moment to fight for ERA ratification, and it was a sad coincidence that the group celebrated its tenth anniversary during the early aftermath of the ERA loss. A banquet marked the occasion, and during the keynote speech those present were instructed on what they should do, and how they should feel, now that the ERA was defeated. Members were told that instead of feeling positive about the ERA, instead of being happy about how far women’s right had come in the years since Toledo NOW’s inception, they should be angry. They should be angry because, as they were

71 Ohio NOW Meeting Minutes, June 1982, Box 2 of 3, Folder 34.
told, a few white males denied women the equality they had fought for and deserved.\textsuperscript{73} Those who attended the banquet were also told to turn that anger into fuel for more activism and prove that, even though the ERA failed, the women’s movement was not dead. As President Johey Crawford-Sevilla stated in her address, “We are alive and well and more determined than ever in our struggle toward that day when we will no longer need a women’s movement.”\textsuperscript{74}

Though the women of Toledo NOW may have been incredibly angry, frustrated, and, in some cases, emotionally defeated with the rejection of the ERA, there is nothing in the records to corroborate this. In fact, after July of 1982, all through the meeting notes and newsletters of 1984, there is not another mention of the ERA or its defeat. With so few resources available in terms of time, womanpower, and money, and so many local problems to work on, Toledo NOW did not have the capability to focus on a reform that, for the moment, could not be helped. Toledo NOW kept its focus on strengthening the city’s rape crisis center, continuing its pursuit of anti-discrimination in the banking industry, and recruiting as many new members as possible in order to raise greater resources and further more local goals.

Still, the members of Toledo NOW must have questioned what went wrong, why the ERA failed. Women questioned why the ERA ratification effort failed. Books have been written detailing why ratification was unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{75} The failure of the ERA shows just why case studies such as this are important. They show where the faults may have been and to try to understand what may be done differently in the future.

\textsuperscript{73} Toledo NOW Newsletter, July 1982, TNOW, Box 1 of 3, Folder 54.
\textsuperscript{74} “Area NOW Chapter Plans 10\textsuperscript{th} Birthday Celebration,” Toledo Blade, July 20, 1982.
\textsuperscript{75} One in particular, Mansbridge’s \textit{Why We Lost the ERA}, will be discussed in the conclusion.
Conclusion

Johey Crawford-Sevilla, President of the Toledo National Organization for Women, in a speech given on June 30, 1982, discussed the numerous reasons why she believed that the ERA’s ratification failed. Crawford-Sevilla blamed the Republican Party for its policy reversal in 1980 and for turning its back on the ERA. She went on to note that even though the Democrats officially supported the ERA, it was not a priority in their legislative agenda and therefore they did not give the amendment nearly as much attention as it deserved. In fact, Crawford-Sevilla stated that it must be a goal of Toledo NOW, and NOW in general, to elect more female candidates to government positions. She also said that NOW members should not vote for those candidates, male or female, that do not support women’s rights. In her view, NOW’s goal should be to become much more active in pushing a women’s rights agenda into state and federal legislation through electing representatives at all levels of government who supported women’s rights. ¹

By far, Crawford-Sevilla blamed corporations and corporate interests for the downfall of the ERA. As she stated “Those corporations which benefit from paying lower wages to women, charging women higher insurance rates, and practicing other forms of discrimination are the real cause of the defeat of the E.R.A.” In Crawford-

Sevilla’s view, though the groups and people who opposed the ERA did so for political or moral reasons, they were all funded by corporate interests that funded simply for monetary gain. Certain corporations, such as insurance agencies, stood to lose much if the ERA was ratified. In fact, it was Crawford-Sevilla’s claim that NOW’s new goal was to fight against these corporate interests and show all of the ways that they discriminated against women. In this way, NOW would not die after the failure of the ERA like so many people prophesied. Instead, NOW would fight for new causes. Crawford-Sevilla wanted it to be understood that “[NOW] will not quit, we will not give in. We will continue to work, lobby, demonstrate, and fight until that day when justice is ours and women can stand proud knowing that we are finally recognized as full-fledged citizens and human beings.” NOW may have lost the battle over the ERA, but its members did not believe that they lost the war for women’s rights.²

NOW was certainly not dead, but the defeat of the ERA was crushing for the movement. Many supporters of the ERA were left questioning the defeat. When the Congressional votes were so supportive and it seemed like so many legislators supported the amendment, why did it fail in the states? How was it possible that the amendment failed when so many states supported it and only three more states would have made the difference? Crawford-Sevilla answered these questions poignantly in her speech. In her view, corporate interests were to blame, and the corporate money that funded the anti-ERA groups was what really destroyed the ERA’s chances of being ratified. At a National NOW rally on June 30, 1982, members Judith Mann and Jackie Hilyer stated that although NOW was not dead, the group was not going to push Congress for the amendment any longer. What the group was going to do was call out those members of

² Ibid.
Congress that Mann and Hilyer called “Opportunists for the ERA,” Congressmen that said that they supported the amendment but really did little to help it through the ratification process. In this way, Mann and Hilyer indicated that they believed that false Congressmen were to blame for the ratification failure. Both of these views may be over-simplifications of the number of variables that led to the downfall of the ERA. Historians and social scientists have debated the defeat since it occurred in 1982 and have come up with numerous reasons to explain, at least in part, the ERA’s defeat. Many factors led to the defeat, and all must be taken into account in order to fully understand why the Equal Rights Amendment is not part of the Constitution.

Jane J. Mansbridge sums up these reasons in her book *Why We Lost the ERA*. First, she states that there was not a large amount of public support for gender role change. Though some people were not happy with the political, legal, and social situation for women, lots of women were either content with their position or else did not want a change. Through the use of many surveys, Mansbridge used statistical data to show that not as many women, and people in general, wanted the ERA as women’s rights groups, including NOW, wanted to believe. Across the board, level of education did little to sway the person’s opinion of the amendment. Religion, though, made all of the difference. Church attendance heavily swayed opinions. Those who never attended church answered with 83 percent support while those who attended church several times a week showed only 47 percent support. Other factors, such as age, region of the country, and political party, also played a significant role in whether a person supported the amendment. People who were younger, lived on the East and West coasts, and voted

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3 Ohio NOW Meeting Minutes, August 1982, TNOW, Box 2 of 3, Folder 34.
4 This book was chosen for discussion because almost all other sources cite this book in their work.
as Democrats tended to favor the amendment more than their counterparts who were older, lived in the middle of the country, and voted Republican.⁶

Support for the ERA also changed with time. Earlier surveys, taken between 1972 and 1978, show stronger support for the amendment than surveys taken between 1978 and 1982. In fact, Mansbridge pointed out that in Illinois in 1976, 58 percent of people supported the amendment and 27 percent opposed. By June of 1982 the numbers changed to favor the opposition. In Illinois in 1982, 38 percent of people favored the ERA while 45 percent opposed. In Oklahoma, the numbers were more skewed. In July of 1978, 45 percent of Oklahomans supported the ERA while 36 percent opposed it. By August of 1982 the numbers completely flipped. Then, only 36 percent of people supported the ERA while 56 percent of people opposed it.⁷ Findings such these led Mansbridge to the conclusion that “the puzzle is not why the ERA died but why it came so close to passing.”⁸

As the statistical evidence points out, the closer to the ratification deadline, the more people opposed the amendment. Using this data alone, it is possible to understand why the ERA was not ratified. At the same time, other factors must be taken into account. One factor, only briefly discussed in the Toledo NOW records, was the opposition. Many organizations formed to combat the amendment, though Phyllis Schlaffly’s Stop ERA was the public figurehead. Mansfield also discusses that the opposition, spurred to movement in the later part of the ratification process, focused on the physical and legal repercussions of the ERA, such as forcing women into the selective service program and, infamously, the use of unisex bathrooms. While NOW

⁶ Ibid, 213.
⁸ Ibid, 2.
discussed women’s probable gains from the amendment, publicly the group focused more on the moral righteousness of the ERA. Toledo NOW is a prime example of this tendency. While meeting minutes and newsletters are rife with examples of how women’s lives would be improved by the amendment, at public gatherings, such as walkathons and rallies, the group discussed ideology much more than physical effects. Newspaper articles in the Toledo Blade, transcripts of speeches given at the events, and even the signs held by proponents at the events all point to this idea. If NOW focused more on the positive substantive changes that the ERA might bring women it is possible that the amendment might have been passed.9

Toledo NOW exhibited the same kind of faults that Mansfield and other historians point to as explanations of why the amendment failed. Since women’s organizations primarily organized the fight for ratification, it is important to understand the histories of local branches of those organizations, as the local branches make up the whole. Therefore, this case study of the Toledo chapter of NOW can be used as an example to explain a good number of the things that went wrong for those groups and people that supported the ERA. Each local chapter of NOW was inherently tied together in their struggles, as well as with the national organization.

NOW was a centralized women’s movement. It had a national headquarters, and all of the other branches, state and local, gained limited support from National in terms of money, information, and organization. At the same time, as has been discussed, NOW was a grassroots organization. Power was not to flow from the top down but instead

9 The theory that NOW, and other proponent groups, did not focus enough on substantive gains is a running theme through Mansfield’s Why We Lost the ERA. For further information on the opposition movement’s tactics, see Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
from the bottom up. Therefore, the local branches had autonomy to choose which reforms and goals they worked toward. This style of organization made sure that the problems of local women in each community got taken care of, but, as the ERA struggle exemplified, it could become problematic for national issues.

One of the biggest problems that Toledo NOW had with its efforts for the ERA was that it involved itself in so many different projects throughout the ratification years. This is partially due to the localized, community nature of NOW in general. Just because Toledo NOW needed to fight for the ERA did not mean that local women stopped coming to the group for help. In fact, there were numerous times between 1972 and 1982, as pointed out, that local issues were prioritized above the ERA. Fighting discrimination in the banking industry, creating better rape crisis centers, and helping individual women fight against discrimination in Toledo all took time and resources away from the amendment. Toledo NOW’s participation in other national reforms, such as with reproductive rights and the proposed Human Life Amendment, also took time and resources away that could have been used to support ratification. It is possible that stronger leadership from National NOW may have been necessary to fight for national reform. There were just too many other problems pulling Toledo NOW away from the ERA.

Centralized, stricter leadership might have been necessary to ratification. As Mansbridge’s statistics point out, the public’s opinion of the ERA fell during the ratification years. Grassroots methodology was necessary in order to persuade individuals to support the ERA when their beliefs and upbringings might sway them in the other direction. In order to keep the people of Toledo in support of the ERA, local
NOW members had to not only keep the amendment in the public eye, but also had to support it actively to show the public that it was not a dying or dead issue. With so many other valid, important issues needing attention, there is no way that Toledo NOW alone could have done all that was necessary. Even though the group constantly tried to raise more money and recruit members to help the cause, with all of the issues pulling it in other directions, nothing that it did was enough. This does not fault Toledo NOW in any way; no single group could achieve such a grand reform by itself. There were just too many local problems to worry about to focus all of the group’s time on a national one.

In addition, membership levels were problematic for Toledo NOW throughout the ratification campaign. Changes in the status of women between 1972 and 1982 that lowered the amount of support for the ERA and partially explain why more women did not rally around the cause. As Mansbridge points out, housewives, specifically those with children, became less supportive of the amendment as the ratification campaign went on. Some marriage laws that were detrimental to women, such as over joint property, were amended during the ratification decade and became more equitable to wives. Mansbridge states that these changes made the ERA less necessary. Some housewives were also worried that the amendment would take away the economic protection of their husbands. If the amendment gained ratification, wives would no longer have any stake on their husband’s income. Mansbridge notes that this caused some housewives to oppose the ERA, and turn away from any feminist groups that supported it.\(^1\)

At the same time, though, it must be asked what more Toledo NOW could have done. The answer, most likely, is little. Every year during the ratification campaign, the

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 96-108.
group staged at least one major organized event and most years had two or three. It
publicized the positive aspects of the ERA in print and radio media. Group members
traveled all over the country in order to help ratification efforts in other states such as
Florida and Illinois. Since the amendment was on the national agenda, there was only so
much that one branch of NOW could do. Especially since a national reform was decided
on a state by state basis, how much influence could any group have outside of its home
state?

Ohio’s ratification may have been the biggest problem facing Toledo NOW.
Once Ohio ratified the ERA in 1974, how much sway could the group actually hold? To
be politically active for the amendment the women had to travel outside of Ohio, which
only a few could manage to do financially. Otherwise, the group had to resort simply to
letter writing and fundraising in order to support the ERA. Toledo NOW did this
successfully and sent National NOW thousands of dollars raised from walkathons,
cruises, rallies, and pro-ERA merchandise sales to be disbursed to NOW branches in
unratified states. But, because of the group’s location in Ohio, members could do little
traveling to states where support and ratification were still needed. This greatly hindered
Toledo NOW’s ability to actively support the ERA.

At the same time, after Ohio’s 1974 ratification, there were years where the ERA
was basically off of Toledo NOW’s reform radar. Once the group disbanded the ERA
task force in February of 1974, it did little for years to actively support the ERA. It was
as if the spirit of activism for the amendment was dead in Toledo. But, at the same time,
this can be explained by the certainty felt at the time that the amendment would be
quickly ratified. When so many states, including Ohio, ratified so quickly, people
became certain that the amendment would be ratified in 1974 or 1975 at the latest. This created an activism gridlock. People and groups began to look at reforms other than the ERA and devote their time and energy to them because they were sure that the amendment did not need their help any more. The problem is that they were wrong. Whether proponents of the ERA ignored the signs, were overly optimistic, or just got caught up in the activist fervor of the moment, it was a mistake to remove resources from the ERA. It is possible that if there was more support of the amendment during the early years, when statistics show the public was more favorable to it, that it might have been ratified.

Further research is needed to prove this theory. A case study such as this, that focuses specifically on one branch of one women’s organization, is an example of how this theory may be true. What it does show, though, is that local branches, local experiences, and grassroots movements are important to the success of a national movement as a whole, though sometimes not enough to make a movement successful. Even without success, it is undeniable that without local groups, such as the Toledo National Organization for Women, fighting for the ERA that the ratification process would not have gotten as far as it did. In this way, the history of Toledo NOW is important to the field of women’s history. After all, grassroots, local organizations fueled the women’s movement. Therefore, Toledo NOW, and its fight for the Equal Rights Amendment, was responsible for another step on the women’s path to equality.
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