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“The Heart of the Battle Is Within:” Politically and Socially Rightist and Conservative Women and the Equal Rights Amendment

By

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy in History

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An Abstract of

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This dissertation analyzes the construction of divergent definitions of womanhood of politically and socially rightist and conservative women and how those definitions affected their stance for or against the Equal Rights Amendment. It argues that the way a woman defined her gender identity informed her position on the proposed amendment. Challenging the idea that all rightist and conservative women held a monolithic political ideology, this dissertation evaluates different women and women’s organizations of the right to show that this was not the case. Instead, some of these groups and individuals supported the ERA while opposed it. Opponents, such as Phyllis Schlafly and STOP ERA, the National Association of Evangelicals’ Women’s Fellowship, and Beverly LaHaye and Concerned Women for America, did so based on more traditional definitions of womanhood. Supporters, such as Betty Ford, the Evangelical Women’s Caucus, and the Association of Libertarian Feminists, did so based on their belief in greater freedom for women outside of patriarchal constructs. While all of these women and groups were socially and politically rightist or conservative, they came to different conclusions about the Equal Rights Amendment based on how they defined their womanhood.
To my mother, Anita, for her constant support and for teaching me that being a woman means whatever I want it to mean. Thank you. My love always.
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Chapter One

Introduction

On March 22, 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed through Congress and went to the states for addition to the United States Constitution. After a strenuous battle, the amendment failed on June 30, 1982, falling short by only three states. Historians, political scientists, and other scholars from a wide range of fields have analyzed and discussed the ERA in the decades since its defeat. The majority of the literature describes the pro-ERA movement, the various organizations and individuals who fought for the amendment's success. The authors ask a number of important questions: what went wrong? Why did the Equal Rights Amendment fail? What tactics and strategies were most useful in obtaining the thirty-five state ratifications? Most importantly, if the ERA ever comes back to the states for another ratification attempt, what can be done differently to ensure success? There is a growing body of work which studies the anti-ERA movement, those who sought to secure the amendment's failure. Since the anti-ERA movement was successful, the questions these scholars ask are the opposite to those asked above: how were amendment opponents successful? What tactics and strategies did they use to assure defeat? Additionally, though, works on anti-
ERA activists ask questions which point to a discourse with great historiographical importance: who were these people, these women and men? Why did they fight against an amendment that had equal rights for women as its ostensible goal?¹

No matter if a person stood in advocacy of the ERA or in protest, all who participated in the ratification process entered into a debate over the meanings of American womanhood. The Equal Rights Amendment served as one of the most important discourses concerning definitions of womanhood during the twentieth century. Thanks to the proliferation of second-wave feminism, women's statuses within American society, politics, and law were in constant and visible flux. While it ended in failure, the ERA ratification attempt was the consummation of second-wave feminist energy as it sought to legally and politically redefine womanhood. Empowered by the growing strength of the women's liberation movement, feminists believed that the amendment was the logical and necessary next step in obtaining gender equality. While they recognized that the amendment would not be supported by all Americans, they argued that there would easily be enough support for it to pass successfully through the ratification process. Unfortunately for those who fought for the amendment's addition to the Constitution and were invested in the idea of female legal and political equality, they

were wrong. Most shockingly, some of the most vocal anti-ERA advocates were women who were against what they perceived to be changes to womanhood that were epitomized by the proposed amendment.²

The Equal Rights Amendment was not just a battle over legal and political gender equality. It was also a battle over definitions of American womanhood. While some women sought to change traditional views of womanhood through striking out legal and political inequality, other women viewed the ERA and second-wave feminism as an attempt to destroy the vision of their gender identity that they held dear. To further illuminate this discourse, this dissertation analyzes the divisions between these two groups, those who supported the Equal Rights Amendment and those who were against it, within the political and social right, which includes the Republican Party as well as self-defined social and political conservatives. The discussion is national in scope and chronologically focused on the years 1972 through 1982, the years of the ERA ratification debate, though some brief discussion of the 1950s and 1960s is included to explore women's intellectual and political motivations and philosophies. This dissertation argues that rightist and conservative women had varied reactions to the ERA based on their differing political and social ideologies and worldviews, particularly how they defined womanhood. In other words, this work participates in the debate over why conservative and rightist women held divergent viewpoints about the ERA. It answers a number of important questions which had grave implications for the eventual failure of the proposed amendment. Why did some conservative women wholeheartedly support

²While there are many problems with the “waves metaphor,” the way that historians and scholars conceptualize feminist activity throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the phrase is used within this dissertation as it is the most recognizable and accepted to demarcate periods of feminist protest and activism. For more on the problem of the waves, see Kathleen A. Laughlin et. al., “Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor,” Feminist Formations 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 76-135.
the ERA while others were vehemently against it? How did these views translate into actions in the political arena and how were these actions, either for or against the amendment, received by other women?

This dissertation's argument is five-fold. First, the conservative movement and the political right in general were not ideologically monolithic; not all adherents agreed on every issue. The politics of right and left were not black and white mirror images of each other but were, instead, a spectrum of viewpoints. To this end, not all conservative and rightist Americans were the same nor did they vote or act for the same side of any debate. Additionally, not all conservatives were purely politically conservative. There were strong ties between conservative, traditional, and orthodox religious beliefs, particularly from Evangelicalism, Fundamentalism, and Catholicism, and political conservatism, which helped define each person’s political beliefs and behavior. To complicate matters, religious participation did not serve to wholly inform political viewpoints because religious denominations did not produce monolithic political and social ideologies. Though many individuals and groups had social and political labels applied to them which included connotations and social perceptions about their stand on the ERA, the women within these groups did not always adhere to these perceived standards. There was never complete agreement within any conservative or rightist organization, including within the Republican Party, evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, or within the conservative movement at large.

Second, the right experienced numerous shifts and changes during the mid to late 1970s and early 1980s which broke apart some of the ties which historically bound its members together. Traditionalists, or those who were more fundamentally conservative,
parted ways with more moderate conservatives over the ramifications of the social changes of the 1960s, formed such groups as the religiously conservative Moral Majority, and proved incredibly important to the successful election of Ronald Reagan. While the various ethnic, sexual, and racial civil rights movements played their roles in causing the chasm between traditionalists and modernists, especially in terms of classism and racism, the most formative point of differentiation was gender. Traditional notions of gender were particularly challenged by the feminist and women’s liberation movements that argued for greater gender equality and freedom of opportunity for women. While more moderate socially and politically rightist groups tended to support the quest for women's equality, conservatives and those on the far end of the political right usually struggled against what they deemed the destruction of the traditional gender roles that they held dear and saw as instrumental to the American family and identity.

To this end, this dissertation's third argument focuses on the all-encompassing term “gender.” While conservatives consistently rallied men to reclaim or reassert their masculinity, the crux of the matter was femininity, particularly in changing definitions of womanhood and reevaluations of women’s traditional role within the nuclear family structure. This dissertation argues that while historians and historical actors have used the code word “gender” to describe one reason for the social and political conflicts that caused changes to and disagreements within the right, masculinity was not being debated, challenged, or liberated—femininity was. The discourse on changing gender roles revolved around fluctuating notions of womanhood. Throughout the twentieth century, women and their identity as women were the objects of many of the most important debates within the political and social right as a whole.
Fourth, women refused to silently sit on the sidelines while their very identities were perceived to be in flux. Instead, they were active participants in the debate over femininity and womanhood. They spoke, wrote, struggled, and preached their points of view to whoever would listen. Just as conservatism and the political right were not monolithic, women’s views on changing definitions of womanhood were diverse as well. While some conservative women argued to maintain traditional womanhood as established within the paradigm of the cult of domesticity and solidified by idyllic visions of the 1950s and the legal protection of females, others who adhered to the social or political right sought to recreate womanhood with greater emphasis on individual autonomy, equal opportunity, and liberation from the dichotomy of previous ideas of gender differences. These divergent viewpoints were informed by various political, social, and religious ideologies all socially defined as conservative or on the right of the spectrum, strengthening the argument for greater analysis of the definitions and boundaries of conservatism.

The fifth argument within this dissertation is that the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment best illuminates the shifts within the right based on the role of women within the family and society and, specifically, definitions of womanhood. These notions are inherently tied to conservative and rightist women’s reactions to and beliefs about their own identity. The ERA ratification period, from 1972 to 1982, encapsulated the majority of the time period of the challenges within the right. It is also an event which would have drastically redefined legal definitions of womanhood as well as the opportunities presented to women. Conservative women held different viewpoints on whether to ratify the ERA based on their political and social ideologies and made themselves active
subjects in a debate of which they were also the objects of discussion. Their debates, among themselves as well as with men, exemplified the divergence between traditionalist and moderate conservative and rightist viewpoints. They also portrayed women as active agents over their own legal futures and personal identities as they chose between oppositional views on the Equal Rights Amendment. These were very personal decisions which had grand repercussions as they believed that the fate of legal equality for women was at stake. While some conservative and politically and socially rightist women who argued for or against the ERA agreed with the other members of their communities, such as political organizations or religious denominations, others were moved to support the opposite position of their peers, hoping to secure their own personal identities while putting their community identities at risk.

This dissertation necessarily begs the question of what is meant by conservative and rightist. It encompasses both political and social rightists, including the Republican Party, conservative and rightist political organizations, and social institutions, including Christian religious denominations, which had conservative, rightist, or traditional ideologies and historical ties. Definitions of conservatism were gathered through reading and analyzing the historiography of modern American conservatism, primarily during the twentieth century. It is impossible to give a concise definition of conservatism or the ideology of the political right that will encompass the plethora of beliefs held by its adherents, which is a partial argument of this dissertation. A glimpse of the current state of historiography, though, shows that there are some common threads among conservative and political rightists which point the way toward a workable definition.
The following historiography, therefore, serves to showcase the evolution of the terms.³

The historical study of the New Right is usually stated as beginning with Richard Hofstadter's 1952 publication of *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, though newer editions came out in subsequent years including 1965 to address Barry Goldwater's campaign. Hofstadter originally wrote the essays during the early years of the Cold War when fear of the communist menace was at its height, particularly in the guise of Joseph McCarthy and the Red Scare. Hofstadter sought to display the mindset of the far right, groups who normally called themselves conservative, by defining the “paranoid style.” In his view, far right groups were fearful, confused, and angry with the changes in their status due to modernization of American society and culture. In addition, psychologically, Hofstadter considered the conservative as a deviant personality. He or she saw conspiracy everywhere, especially in the government, and believed that the goal was the destruction of the American way of life. This paranoia was paired with a “disorder in relation to authority, characterized by an inability to find other modes for human relationship than those of more or less complete domination or submission.” For the conservative mind, the world was black and white, morally objective, and unfortunately edged ever closer to a communal or socialistic form of

governance and society. These numerous fears fueled an irrational insistence that the
country revert back to its historically populist and individualistic nature and away from
any expansion of the social welfare state, especially through removal of laws and
programs promulgated by the New Deal. Hofstadter relied on psychological and
sociological studies to support his claims and used historic examples, such as the populist
movement at the turn of the nineteenth century, to show historical precedence for the
1950s and 1960s New Right.4

Modern historians challenge and usually dismiss Hofstadter's largely
psychological explanation. Numerous problems exist within The Paranoid Style, but the
most important one is that he denied that conservatives had any sort of personal agency
or critical thinking skills. They, in Hofstadter's view, were not the movers and shakers of
history. After years of expansive liberal agendas and reforms, the conservatives (or
pseudo-conservatives, as he termed them), built up large enough groups of people that
they could start a revolt on the local or national stage. In effect, they were reactionaries,
and dangerous and psychologically ill ones at that. They did not start movements based
on their own ideology and agency but instead waited, seething, until their paranoia
became too much and they were forced into action by the weight of their own psyches.
In other words, Hofstadter did not discuss conservatives on their own terms but on liberal
terms, and at the height of McCarthyism. Especially during the witch hunts of the House
Un-American Activities Commission investigations, this was a biased view at the very
least, though it may have been difficult to see them as anything but. Additionally,
Hofstadter did not credit conservatives with any sort of ideological diversity as he falsely

4Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays (New York:
portrayed them as having one irrational, monolithic mindset.⁵

Thanks to Hofstadter's influence on the academy and the political stance of many of the earliest historians of conservatism, authors followed his descriptions for quite some time and tended to discuss conservatives as irrational, paranoid, and not to be taken intellectually seriously. One of the most important works that challenged Hofstadter's views and presented a rational, diverse view and definition of conservatism was George Nash's 1976 book *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*. Nash, a political conservative himself, discarded older arguments about the conservative mind and wrote a history of the right without the previous stigmas. First, Nash argued against previous ideas that all conservative intellectuals received their main education from political theorist Edmund Burke. In this way, instead of viewing conservatism as one body of identical thought, conservatives belonged in three distinct categories: libertarians, anti-communists, and traditionalists, or those who believed that individualism and limited government intervention, the expansion of free-market capitalism, and the stability of traditional values were the keys to a successful and virtuous society. Instead of being of one mindset, conservatives were individuals with different views about how the United States should be run, but there were similarities in their ideological perceptions. It was only in the years after World War II that the groups found ways to come together to form a viable movement. Brought together by the intellectual theories and writings of men such as William F. Buckley, Russell Kirk, and Milton Friedman, Americans who leaned to the political right came together under a common philosophy. Using contemporary periodicals such as the *National Review* and

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⁵Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, 66-141. There is a startling resemblance between the feminist wave metaphor, which historians challenge, and the idea of conservatives as political reactionaries, which has been more accepted within the historiography.
numerous interviews with the intellectuals themselves, Nash constructed a conservative
history based on personal agency by showing chronologically how the New Right formed
and rose into a formidable political structure. He also noted that conservatism's tripartite
nature made it difficult to fully define conservatism. If the blanket label “conservative”
served for so many different ideologies, how could conservatism be defined in totum?
While Nash's work was criticized heavily, it served to create a new discourse about
conservatism's definition and intellectual history which was more useful than Hofstadter's
exposition.⁶

Jerome L. Himmelstein followed the same path as Nash by arguing against the
assumption that conservatives were monolithic and anti-progressive in *To the Right: The
Transformation of American Conservatism*. Published in 1990, Himmelstein's work
described how the Right reconstructed its ideology and gained enough adherents to the
point where the movement became a formidable and victorious source of political power.
He argued that there was no monolithic conservatism but that numerous groups came
together to combat liberalism's successes and its adherents' views on progress. Using
political sociology in place of Nash's intellectuals and their theories, Himmelstein
identified three strands of conservative ideology: the New Religious Right (including
evangelical and fundamentalist Christians), corporate conservatism, and the mainstream
Republican Party. These three groups meshed their views in such a way that they gained
many adherents, even in the early years when they had little political power.

⁶Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 441-442. See also Burns, “In Retrospect,” 447-
462. She notes some of the more critical studies of American conservatism, most notably Allen Guttmann's
*The Conservative Tradition in America* and Ronald Lora's *Conservative Minds in America*. For criticism of
215.
Additionally, Himmelstein added to the historiography of the rise of the New Right as he viewed it as a coherent and continuous movement throughout the post-World War II political landscape and noted that, even at times when the conservatives were a marginal and marginalized group, they were still prevalent and gained adherents to the point where, later, they obtained political power on a large scale.7

Conservative historiography, especially works which attempt to describe the narrative history of conservatism as a dominant political philosophy, tends to marginalize or completely ignore women's participation. Nash's and Himmelstein's works barely mention women. Darren Dochuk, in his recent award-winning book From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism, is careful to note incidents of women's involvement, but their activism is not portrayed as autonomous. While the conservative women he analyzed had their own auxiliary groups and provided valuable services to male leaders, they did not act on their own or step outside the bounds of traditional womanhood. This dissertation seeks to challenge these dominant themes about the role of women in two ways. First, it will discuss conservative women as the subjects of activism and not just the objects of debate. Second, it will show them as autonomous actors, sometimes working with male allies but additionally struggling outside of the confines established by their male peers.8

This work follows the same historiographic vein as Rebecca E. Klatch's Women of the New Right, published in 1987. She analyzed and described female conservatives


and focused on the diversity among them. She argued that not all women who leaned to the political right held uniform political ideologies. She isolated two groups of conservative women: “social conservatives” and “laissez-faire conservatives.” Social conservative women believed that the United States needed to return to traditional American values, specifically separate gender roles and women's place in the home. Laissez-faire conservatives supported less government intervention and individual liberty, especially economically through free market capitalism. Even though these two groups of women had their differences, especially in the way they viewed the changes to gender roles brought about by second wave feminism, women's increased political involvement brought them together in the New Right. Klatch recognized that the importance of her study “[was] comparing women with each other to examine the differences which emerge among women of the right in order to move beyond the association of right-wing women solely with anti-feminist activity.” This dissertation supports Klatch's scholarship in pursuit of that goal.⁹

In addition, by the early 1970s, conservative Christian religious institutions, most notably from Evangelical and Fundamentalist denominations, began to participate in politics at a greater level and historians and other scholars added them into the definition of groups who fit within the political right. Randall Balmer argued that challenges and changes to gender roles pushed many evangelical and fundamentalist Christian groups to fight for their definitions of womanhood to be codified into law. Margaret Lamberts Bendroth further argued that many fundamentalist organizations rallied against feminism as they perceived that second-wavers pushed forward laws and social change that went

against their insistence on the importance of traditional womanhood. Since one of their debates centered on the proper role of women within the public sphere of politics, evangelicals and fundamentalists were especially interested in the Equal Rights Amendment. As they mixed their religious beliefs with political activism in the name of legislating their own morality, these churches and religious institutions necessarily became part of modern American conservatism and the political right. Recently, Dochuk's *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt* provided greater evidence for the inclusion of religious conservatism into definitions of the political right.¹⁰

So, what is conservatism? Like all of the various -isms, conservatism has a complicated definition. First, conservatives and political rightists both supported smaller government (though they argued over how small) and a lighter tax burden (though they argued over how light). Some of them supported traditional values, including Christian religious ideals, in response to the radicalization of the 1960s. Many were members of the Republican Party as it was more politically rightist than the Democrats. Some supported individual liberty and autonomous decision-making free from government intervention, such as the libertarians. Others argued that the government should legislate morality based on their definition of traditional values, such as Phyllis Schlafly and those evangelical and fundamentalist women within Concerned Women for America and their leader, Beverly LaHaye. Finally, and most importantly, some supported some or all aspects of second-wave feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment while others did not.

Most conservatives and rightists, including the women discussed in this dissertation, were

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a mix of these beliefs and practices, navigating identity boundaries to find which ones suited them best.

This dissertation also uses and defines the phrase “traditional womanhood” in a specific way. While the limits of womanhood in the United States were set during the early 1800s in the cult of domesticity, establishing that women were to be religiously pious, domestic, submissive, and sexually pure, they went through significant changes by the 1950s. While the Cold War ushered in a new emphasis on women’s domesticity and the importance of their roles as wives and mothers, this new womanhood was intrinsically tied to political activism. Even if only in the context of raising morally righteous capitalist children or embracing household consumerism, women’s political power was an important force. This marriage of domesticity, submission, and an interest in supporting the Cold War United States cemented the ideal of the nuclear family and women’s place within the home. To this end, “traditional womanhood” is used to signify the social construct of female domesticity, submission to male authority, and political involvement only when it is necessary to protect the security of the home and family from outside influence and harm.11

The complexity of conservatism, and women’s place within it, is often worked into conservative and rightist historiography, as the previous description of Klatch's scholarship indicates. Numerous other studies describe and analyze women's participation within the conservative movement as well as the political and religious right, though not all of them focus on ideological diversity and political autonomy. Politically, scholars tend to focus on women's activism within anti-communist

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organizations or in local, grass-roots activities. They also place a particular emphasis on women's political activism as an effect of their self-identification as mothers. One example is Mary C. Brennan's *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace: Conservative Women and the Crusade Against Communism* (2008). She argued that women's identities as mothers spurred conservative women to fight against communism as a measure to protect their families. They believed that communism set out to destroy the traditional family structure and the American way of life. While Brennan's insistence on women's political agency is important to the historiography, she describes conservative women as speaking with a singular voice. Her narrative portrays no disagreement and no debate over which position women should take in response to American communism. Within the vast majority of works on conservative women, the women themselves are portrayed as having a monolithic viewpoint which fell within the confines of traditional womanhood. While Klatch's female subjects held diverse viewpoints, Brennan's did not.\(^\text{12}\)

In addition to the historiography of conservatism, the historiography of the Equal Rights Amendment is also innately important to this study. Much has been written about the ERA, from narrative histories to analyses of liberal and leftist women's struggles for ratification, particularly of feminist women and usually written from a feminist perspective. This dissertation will participate in the ERA discourse by adding a wide range of conservative women's viewpoints and actions. There are no works currently

published which discuss the spectrum of conservative women's viewpoints and how those translated into action for or against the ERA. Only Donald Critchlow's *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade*, published in 2005, comes close. His book analyzed Schlafly's success in organization and leadership of the most prevalent anti-ERA activist group STOP ERA. While Critchlow centered women as the primary historical actors, he only discussed one group of women, Schlafly and her followers. The book is primarily a political biography of Schlafly's life and includes discussion of her activism in the Republican Party before her anti-ERA activism. This dissertation seeks to expand Critchlow's work by analyzing a fuller range of conservative women's efforts and viewpoints.\(^{13}\)

Feminist scholar Jane Mansbridge argued that conservatives, particularly the radical and religious Right, including men and women, were primarily responsible for the defeat of the ERA. She wrote in 1986 when there was little historiographic differentiation between ideological divisions within the conservative movement as a whole. More recent works on conservatism have laid the groundwork to argue that this may not have been the case. Rebecca Klatch's *Generation Divided*, published in 1996, argued that there were divisive opinions within the Right which informed how various conservatives reacted to the proposed amendment well before the ERA ratification period. Klatch additionally claimed that libertarians, normally considered to be rightists, actually were closer to radical leftists than conservative traditionalists when it came to viewpoints on women's equality and personal liberation. This dissertation's primary

addition to the historiographical discourse is that it sets out to expand on Klatch's original question: how did groups of conservative women react toward the ERA based on their different social and political backgrounds?\textsuperscript{14}

Organizationally, this study includes four chapters and a conclusion, all centered on the main conceptual framework of identity. Each chapter discusses a particular facet of political or social rightism or conservatism and the women who were politically active within them in the struggle over the Equal Rights Amendment. Women's self-definition is of primary interest, though examination is given to how socially-imposed restrictions on personhood are used in the construction of a woman's political identity and positions on various topics, particularly the ERA. Personal identities were not constructed in a void but were influenced and informed by the various communities women participated in. In this way, one of the major points of analysis will be how a person's various communities and groups helped inform political identity, how that identity constructed political ideology, and how that ideology translated into activism.

In order to argue that conservative women were not monolithic in their ideology or reactions to the Equal Rights Amendment, it is necessary to analyze multiple individuals and women's organizations. Utilizing feminist standpoint methodology, a number of groups have been selected to showcase and analyze the various reactions and positions conservative and rightist women took on the ERA. They were picked to display how different conservative political and social ideologies informed and challenged a woman's support—or lack thereof—for the proposed amendment. The specific groups of women mentioned below were chosen as they included large numbers of female voters

\textsuperscript{14} Mansbridge, \textit{Why We Lost the ERA}; Rebecca E. Klatch, \textit{A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
and activists and the individual members and organizations participated in the ratification struggle at the national level. Additionally, it is important to point out that membership in one community of women did not exclude participation from another group. Women could be a member of STOP ERA at the same time as they participated in a fundamentalist congregation. Identities were and are fluid, constantly being constructed and reconstructed by individuals and communities. Together, though, the groupings will show the breadth and depth of conservative and rightist women's thought and activism on the ERA.

The first two chapters work in tandem to showcase the split within the Republican Party and how it was related to and affected by changing definitions of womanhood. The first chapter discusses Phyllis Schlafly and her organization STOP ERA as the standard-bearer for women of the Republican Party's conservative branch. Also, as she was the most well-known anti-ERA advocate, she is and was impossible to ignore as historians and other scholars have argued for her centrality within successful opposition to the amendment. In all of her efforts to halt the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, Phyllis Schlafly continually referred to the importance of the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. Proponents of the amendment pointed out what they perceived to be Schlafly’s hypocrisy: while she valorized the activities and morality of home and hearth, she spent most of her time touring the country, away from her husband and children. Additionally, Schlafly had a long history of activism within the Republican Party and was a supporter and leader of the party’s movement toward the political right and conservatism. While there are a few notable exceptions, within academia Schlafly’s motivation is portrayed as less than pure, that she used the rhetoric of domesticity to
mask her true agenda of grasping personal political power. While feminists during the
1970s struggled for greater legal equality between the sexes through ratification of the
Equal Rights Amendment, Schlafly argued that men and women were inherently unequal,
though complimentary and necessary for the maintenance of family and society. This did
not mean, though, that women were forced into political impotence. On the contrary,
they had the duty as women to protect the home and family when it was threatened from
the outside. For Schlafly, feminist incursions and the growing presence of the federal
government into state and private matters constituted that threat, epitomized by the Equal
Rights Amendment. With her immense, grass-roots network of rightist women at her
side, Schlafly challenged and reconstructed views on traditional womanhood by showing
just how powerful wives and homemakers could be if they believed that their identities
were threatened.

The second chapter discusses the political activism of Betty Ford, primarily
during her leadership as First Lady from 1974 to 1977, as an example of moderate-
rightist Republican women. Ford was no traditional conservative. Though she was
practically forced into the position of First Lady and acted as a symbol of American
womanhood during a Republican term, Ford was not conservative on many positions,
including the ERA. She was not alone—many other Republican women supported the
ERA even though they were official members of the political Right. While there are
numerous biographies which discuss her support for the ERA, none of them examine it as
a political ideology or explore it as a reaction from a particular view of the definition of
womanhood. They simply describe it as an activity in Ford's life without questioning her
activism's greater meaning to conservatism. Ford spoke in adamant defense of the ERA,
even though as First Lady she was supposed to embody the most traditional viewpoints of American womanhood. Even though more conservative Republicans and the Ford administration attempted to silence her, Betty Ford continued to speak out, received praise from American women and the general public, and ushered in a new breed of First Lady. In her support of the Equal Rights Amendment, Ford challenged the idea that all Republicans were conservatives and that all rightist women had little political agency or personal autonomy.

The third chapter discusses evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women, most notably those involved in the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC), and Concerned Women for America (CWA). Some rightist Christian women, such as those within Beverly LaHaye's CWA and the prominent and politically powerful NAE, used the Bible as evidence for the importance of women's subordination to male authority and therefore were against the ERA. Other women, though, including those within biblical feminist groups such as the EWC, used the word of God to argue for women's necessary and inherent equality. While both sides within the debate used the same evidence, the Christian Bible, their divergent definitions of womanhood brought them to discordant conclusions. Even within Christian denominations usually conceived of as rightist or conservative, even using the same source for evidence, women held different viewpoints on the ERA based on their beliefs and definitions of womanhood.

The fourth chapter discusses libertarian women of the Association of Libertarian Feminists (ALF), a group whose political viewpoints closely resembled that of their male counterparts. This chapter follows the lead set out by Klatch in Generation Divided and
argues that while libertarian women were considered conservatives due to their anti-statism and anti-communism and had historic ties to the rise of the New Right and conservatism during the 1960s, they were much closer to liberals than traditionalists when it came to the Equal Rights Amendment. As believers in absolute liberty free from government strictures or aid, libertarian women supported the ERA as innately morally and politically correct. To this end, the ALF grappled with the question of how to support a federal amendment to the Constitution while still staying strong to their belief in the importance of minimizing the federal government, which they believed to be massive and intrusive. Additionally, this chapter questions whether the contemporary idea of the political spectrum as linear from right to left is entirely valid when libertarian women held radically rightist and leftist political viewpoints at the same time.

Finally, the conclusion discusses the aftermath of the ERA's defeat in 1982. It articulates reasons for the amendment's failure based on arguments immediately written after the defeat and scholarly works written years after the fact. It also discusses the present and future of the amendment, including the contemporary three-state strategy. Finally, tactics for possible future success will be discussed in the context of analyses from the previous chapters.

While all of the activists discussed were women and held diverse conservative and rightist ideologies, it is important to point out that they were not a diverse group of women. All of them were white, middle- to upper-class economically, and tended to be well-educated, many at or past the college level. These demographic similarities had important repercussions for the ways that they perceived and defined womanhood and women's political and legal statuses. It also meant that these women were bestowed with
privileges, some of which were unearned, that tend to be invisible if one does not think outside of themselves or have a base understanding of intersectionality. Some of these women, such as Betty Ford and the women of both the Evangelical Women's Caucus and the Association of Libertarian Feminists, recognized some of their privileges and sought to include women other than those within their particular demographics in their definitions of womanhood. Other women discussed, most notably Phyllis Schlafly, Beverly LaHaye, and the women of Concerned Women for America, were less self-reflexive and did not recognize how privilege affected their decisions, their activism, and their stands on the ERA. While this dissertation centers around discussions of womanhood, the issues of race and class are omnipresent behind all discussions throughout this work.

In her 2004 article “Doing the 'Right' Right,” Kim E. Nielsen argued that scholars have to pay much greater and more nuanced attention to conservative and rightist women. She called for greater analysis of the cause and effect relationship between right-wing religion and politics. Primarily, though, Nielsen asked scholars to remember that not all women of the past were the same. To assume all women held the same viewpoints is detrimental not just to historiography but to perceptions of womanhood in the modern nation. Just as liberal and conservative women do not hold the same political ideology, it is fallacious to continue the historiography on the assumption that all conservative women believed the same things and held the same political positions. Politically and socially conservative and rightist women were not monolithic. This dissertation is
therefore an important reconceptualization of conservative womanhood and how that translated into political philosophy and activism.\textsuperscript{15}

Chapter Two

“Women's Libbers Do Not Speak for Us:” Phyllis Schlafly and the Defense of Womanhood

Feminists despised few people as much as Phyllis Schlafly. As the president and founder of STOP ERA, the largest and most vocal anti-Equal Rights Amendment organization in the United States, Schlafly was the most well known leader and spokeswoman in the struggle against the ERA. While she was honored and respected by thousands of women who were her supporters at the grassroots, feminists who opposed Schlafly's activism condemned her. In a 1973 debate with Betty Friedan, feminist leader and founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW), held at the University of Illinois, Friedan responded to Schlafly's calm demeanor and anti-ERA rhetoric by declaring “I'd like to burn you at the stake!” Eleanor Smeal, president of NOW from 1977 through 1982, gave a rousing speech while attendants burned Schlafly in effigy after the ERA ratification period was extended in 1979. In April 1977, a pro-ERA activist threw an apple pie in Schlafly's face, scratching her cornea, in retribution for the pies she and her supporters baked and sent to state legislators as part of a plea to persuade them to vote against the proposed amendment. While women who sided with her views
celebrated her as the “sweetheart of the silent majority,” her opponents saw her as the ultimate traitor to her sex or, as Friedan put it, an “Aunt Tom.”

This obvious disdain has permeated the historiography of the struggle over ERA ratification as well as the consolidation of the New Right. Instead of viewing Schlafly's rhetoric and actions as political activism, valuable in its own right, historians Donald G. Matthews and Jane Sherron De Hart view her struggle against the amendment as a small part of Schlafly's “bid to become one of the most well-known women in America.”

Political analyst and former Republican activist Tanya Melich argued that Schlafly was a perverse mastermind, willing to break the bonds of womanhood and sisterhood she outwardly supported in order to help construct “the Republican misogynist strategy.”

Less biased authors argue that Schlafly's decision to support women's place within the private sphere of home and hearth by participating in the public, and historically male, sphere of political action was a case of “functional ambiguity,” or, at least, they view her activism as hypocritical or ironic. To date, only one author, historian Donald T. Critchlow, has presented Schlafly as a viable political actor without describing her as evil, reactionary, or deluded.

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2 Donald G. Matthews and Jane Sherron De Hart, Sex, Gender, and the Politics of the ERA: A State and the Nation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 53; Tanya Melich, The Republican War Against Women: An Insider's Report from Behind the Lines (New York: Bantam Books, 1998), 52, 85; Rebecca E. Klatch, A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1999), 267; Michelle M. Nickerson, Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 171. Nickerson notes the idea of “functional ambiguity” was first discussed by historian Nancy Cott and used it to show how Schlafly seemed to be able to participate in both the public and private sphere while pushing for women to have the
These analyses, save Critchlow's, are couched in a specific definition of womanhood, one that Schlafly did not share. While ERA supporters saw the proposed amendment as the next logical and necessary step toward women's full political emancipation and liberation from patriarchal social constructs, Schlafly saw it as the absolute destruction of traditional gender roles, particularly those related to the home, family, and women's place within it. Schlafly championed the anti-ERA movement as the only way to protect what she viewed as women's privileged position within American society. To Schlafly, acting out the role of a stay-at-home wife and mother was a blessing, not a curse, and she did not want to see that right taken away by the Equal Rights Amendment. As she was fond of saying, “Women were honored until the women's liberation movement came along and told them they were second-class citizens...I never felt second-class.” Schlafly's activism, rhetoric, and political leadership were centered on this very goal: helping women understand that being a full-time homemaker and living one's life within the private sphere was nothing to be ashamed of and was in no way inferior to investment in the public sphere of business and politics. Instead, it was something to be cherished and protected within the law and society at large.⁵

Throughout the ERA ratification period from 1972 to 1982, Schlafly fought hard to reinforce and protect a traditional view of womanhood. This viewpoint fully meshed with her conservative political ideology and strengthened her struggle against the Equal

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⁵ Quoted in Carroll, Famous in America, 251.
Rights Amendment. Drawing on her notoriety and prestige as an anti-communist crusader, Barry Goldwater supporter, grassroots activist, and Republican Party leader, Schlafly utilized her earlier activism in her pursuit to defeat the ERA. Speaking to thousands of conservative women across the country through her *Eagle Forum* newsletter and the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, she drew a direct connection between the proposed amendment and expansion of the federal government deeper into the peoples' private lives. As she viewed it, the danger of ERA ratification was that the federal government, pressured by a minority group of loud, angry, politically savvy feminists, would have greater power than ever before to legislate private relationships within the family structure. In the end, nothing was in a more precarious position than the wife, mother, and the definition of womanhood which went along with them. It was Schlafly's goal to make sure women maintained what she viewed as their position of privilege within the home and the nation at large through the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, and she succeeded.

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Phyllis Stewart was born in 1924 in St. Louis, Missouri. Her parents, Bruce and Dadie Stewart, were both college educated, Roman Catholic, and fiercely Republican. The Stewarts raised Phyllis and her sister Odile with an interesting mix of ideology about their womanhood and American citizenship. While the Stewarts conformed to the gender roles delineated by their faith and embedded those roles within their daughters' social formation, they also wanted them to grow up to be strong women who were of their own minds and capable of taking care of themselves. To this end, they made sure that Phyllis and Odile were educated and exposed to a wide range of cultural
activities. At the same time, they made certain the girls knew that family came first above anything else, and this included their expected future roles as wives and mothers. At an early age, therefore, Phyllis Schlafly learned that while womanhood did not mean weakness or powerlessness, it did mean deep commitment to the traditional family structure and a woman's place within it. Education and political opinions were important, but nothing was more important than the proper care and maintenance of the family.  

Schlafly revealed her views on womanhood through her engagement with political culture before the ERA ratification period. Her idea of proper womanhood and her politically conservative ideology were mutually reinforcing and constructive. At the same time, her previous political activism, including her 1952 run for Congress and for the presidency of the National Federation of Republican Women during the 1960s, had enabled her to organize a massive body of conservative women at the grassroots level across the country. Schlafly made effective use of this conservative, localized womanpower to defeat the ERA at the state level during the ratification process while she used her political celebrity status to concurrently battle it on a national scale. While historians mostly discuss her within the context of the Equal Rights Amendment and the debate over proper gender roles, her earliest political activism focused on mainstream conservative Cold War political ideology. In this vein, Schlafly's rise to leadership within the conservative women's movement began with her support of the anti-communist movement.  

From the outset of the Cold War, Phyllis Schlafly was a strong and vocal anti-communist. In this way, she was not different from the millions of other women and men

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5 Ibid., 37-162.
who supported anti-communist agendas during the Cold War and after. Anti-communist women wrote letters to government officials, distributed literature explaining the problems of communism and how to fight against them, and constructed various women's organizations where the sole purpose was to defeat the “red menace.” Historians have noted that female members were instrumental to the success of anti-communist rallies, fundraisers, and educational drives even though they were rarely in leadership positions. Victories at the federal and state level would have been impossible if not for the hard work and effort of the women at the grassroots, those who worked within their local communities to enact national change. Women were especially effective as activists because anti-communist rhetoric saw communism as not just an attack on government or the economy, but as a threat to the entire American way of life, including family structure. Anti-communists argued that if communism spread across the country, the nation's Judeo-Christian worldview would be wiped away clean, taking with it traditional ideas about the roles of wives and husbands and erasing the concept of the private nuclear family based on customary gender roles. For women who established much of their personal identities as wives and mothers, this idea was unthinkable and action against it was necessary.6

This activism begs the question of how female anti-communists, including Phyllis Schlafly, rationalized their participation in the political, public realm. If they were

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fighting to protect women's position within the home and the traditional family structure, how did they justify stepping outside of it and becoming political activists? Many of Schlafly's critics, both before and after the ratification struggle, have used these questions to point out what they perceive as hypocrisy, and oftentimes with good cause. Was it not inherently fallacious to attempt to politically cement women's traditional roles and place within the home while stumping across the country as a political activist, leaving her family behind? Schlafly denied these claims in the ways activists had done for decades. In essence, she and other anti-ERA advocates relied on traditional definitions of womanhood. First, they argued that, as women, they were inherently and biologically more selfless and moral. As conservative intellectual and author Russell Kirk argued in *The Intelligent Women's Guide to Conservatism*, women were natural conservatives, more spiritual and committed to building a strong, loving society. The women he wrote about agreed. While men might voice anti-communist rhetoric as a political tactic or for personal gain (as Joseph McCarthy did), women did it for the sake of others, not for themselves. Basically, women acted as anti-communist activists to protect their families. They recognized that their children were socialized not just by parents but also by schools, churches, and other community institutions. In this way, women saw the community at large, their local towns and cities, as an extension of their families. Since they believed a mother's primary duty was to protect her children and family, it was logical to argue that women had the prerogative to protect the community as well. In this way, historian Michelle M. Nickerson theorizes that anti-communist women embraced “political work as an extension of their household duties.” These duties were also thought of as temporary. Once communism was gone from the United States and their
children and families were safe, women argued they would happily go back home, leaving the public sphere and the world of politics behind.\(^7\)

Phyllis Schlafly participated in this rhetoric. During the 1950s she noted that while a woman's place was in the home and the private sphere, it was her right and duty to step out of that private sphere when it needed protecting. She believed that the threat posed by communism was so dire that “the most important national problem is the survival of American freedom and independence in the face of the Communist threat.” Schlafly's hatred of communism was not only caused by a perceived threat to her family and her role as wife and mother. She combined her anti-communist views with a virulent anti-statism which she learned from her father at an early age, thanks to his dislike of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Having lost his job in 1930 after the 1929 stock market crash, Bruce Stewart had a hard time finding work, even with Roosevelt's many job-creation policies, and rallied against what he considered the President's insistence on creating a welfare state where people survived on government dole instead of the rugged individualism that he argued was an essential element of American identity. Schlafly's mother, Dadie Stewart, was left as the main breadwinner for the family. While both husband and wife understood that Dadie's employment was an economic necessity, they lamented their reversed gender roles as well and insisted that the New Deal challenged

\(^7\) Russell Kirk, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Conservatism* (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1957); Brennan, *Wives, Mothers, and the Red Menace*, 7-10; Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 2-3; Michelle N. Nickerson, “Moral Mothers and Goldwater Girls,” in *The Conservative Sixties*, eds. David Farber and Jeff Roche (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 52; Donald T. Critchlow, “Conservatism Reconsidered: Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism,” in *The Conservative Sixties*, eds. David Farber and Jeff Roche (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 111. Other historians have documented the rise of “municipal housekeeping,” of viewing the city, state, and country as extensions of the family and therefore part of woman's purview. This became especially historically relevant after the Nineteenth Amendment as more women became politically active as voters and as government officials. Many studies of municipal housekeeping are localized, specific to cities or regions, and focus on individuals or single organizations. For an example, see Tiffany Lewis, “Municipal Housekeeping in the American West: Bertha Knight Landes's Entrance into Politics,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 465-491.
the free enterprise capitalist system. For Schlafly, who consistently tied her views on womanhood with her political conservatism, growing up within a socially and politically conservative household informed her later views on the importance of anti-communism. In her mind, communism did not just challenge the traditional family structure. If allowed to advance unheeded, it could also strengthen the New Deal precedent of making the federal government a greater presence in private lives and state-level issues. For Phyllis Schlafly, who considered herself a conservative Republican, this was utterly unacceptable and had to be opposed.⁸

Phyllis Schlafly's greatest contribution to the anti-communist movement and the 1960s schism of the moderate and conservative political right was authoring and publishing the book *A Choice Not an Echo*, which historians argue prompted many citizens to support conservative Barry Goldwater as the 1964 Republican presidential nominee. In her book, Schlafly described a massive conspiracy, at all levels of the government, to remove conservative influences from American politics. Thanks to a group of government and business interests Schlafly termed the “kingmakers,” the Republican Party, under the sway of its Eastern, more moderate branch, did everything it could to remove conservatism from the political right. She argued against “Rockefeller Republicanism,” a push made by moderate Republicans such as Nelson Rockefeller to become a party whose ideology was closer to the middle of the political spectrum than the conservative right. She also theorized that the federal government, in which Republicans played a crucial role, accepted or was at least ambivalent toward a “hidden policy of perpetuating the Red empire in order to perpetuate the high level of Federal

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spending and control.” In essence, the kingmakers were willing to turn their backs on conservative Republicans and their constituents if it would give them a greater hold on political and economic power. This malicious, behind-closed-door policy could only be stopped if conservatives throughout the country stood up and fought back. In Schlafly's opinion, the best way to do this was to push for Senator Barry Goldwater as the Republican presidential nominee. This, and only this, would stop the kingmakers' ascent to power and put the reins of control back in the hands of the people, where it belonged.⁹

Phyllis Schlafly's book was an amazing success. As Donald Critchlow notes, the book, published in February 1964, sold 2.2 million copies and went through thirteen printings by August, an impressive feat for a work of non-fiction. Conservatives across the country read it and began a discourse about the possibility and problem of a Republican Party controlled by Eastern, liberal interests. Conservative organizations sprouted up in every locale, most notably in the South and West, and were predominantly populated by white, middle- to upper-class members. These organizations started “Draft Goldwater” campaigns and, in 1964, pushed Barry Goldwater into the position of presidential nominee for the Republican Party. Historians such as Critchlow have credited Schlafly's book with aiding in Goldwater's successful nomination campaign. Though Schlafly had been a long time participant in Republican women's groups at the state and national levels, A Choice Not an Echo made her a celebrity in the eyes of conservative women across the country. In this way, its publication and wide distribution gave her enough readers and supporters to begin publishing the Phyllis Schlafly Report in August of 1967, providing her with direct access to like-minded women, presenting them with a conservative viewpoint and an avenue toward greater political education and

⁹ Schlafly, A Choice Not an Echo, 76-115.
activism. Later, the *Phyllis Schlafly Report* helped Schlafly forge a grassroots following that greatly aided her pursuit to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment.\(^\text{10}\)

In the years between publication of *A Choice Not an Echo* and the beginning of the Equal Rights Amendment ratification struggle in 1972, Phyllis Schlafly strengthened her connection to her grassroots following through various leadership positions within state and federal Republican parties. She served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention, as president of the Illinois Federation of Republican Women, and as the vice-president of the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW). Schlafly ran for President of the NFRW in 1967 but lost the highly controversial election. Though she had supporters, her far-right political opinions made other leaders within the organization worry that, under her leadership, the NFRW would lose its moderate-conservative ideology and membership. In a political and social context where the civil rights, women's, and anti-Vietnam movements were vocal, visible, and politically powerful, her opponent in the NFRW presidential race, Gladys O'Donnell, argued that Schlafly's “extremism” would alienate more moderate women from becoming members or maintaining their membership. Though many NFRW members supported Schlafly and her conservative politics, she eventually lost what she and her advocates considered to be an unfair election which robbed her of her deserved leadership position. This conflict signaled to Schlafly that her theory about the kingmakers was indeed fact. Motivated to counter the Republican Party's moderation, she continued to work toward greater conservatism at all levels of government, voicing her opinions in the *Phyllis Schlafly*...

\(^{10}\) Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 109-161. Though it seems to be coincidental, one has to question whether Schlafly's *A Choice Not an Echo* served as a counter to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963.
Report. The construction of a vast network of women's organizations that supported Schlafly and her conservative political leanings and the popularity of the Report were important facets in establishing a grassroots political movement, which served as an essential tool during her battle to stop the Equal Rights Amendment.\(^\text{11}\)

Prior to the beginning of the ratification process, Phyllis Schlafly was not particularly interested in gender politics. Though her work as an anti-communist, conservative political actor included the idea that women needed to protect their homes and families from communism and government encroachment, she had little interest in second-wave feminism or the women's liberation movement. As she later recalled, in December 1971 she was asked by an unnamed organization to participate in a debate on the Equal Rights Amendment. She admitted to having little knowledge about the amendment and indicated her preference to speak on a topic she was more comfortable with, such as national defense. The debate organizers insisted and sent over materials to help her prepare. Reading this information, diligently putting her mind to it for the first time, she realized she was greatly against the amendment. By September 1972 Schlafly had organized STOP ERA, an acronym for Stop Taking Our Privileges, and became its president and premier spokeswoman. During the entirety of the ERA ratification period from 1972 to 1982, STOP ERA was the largest, most vocal, and most prolific anti-ERA organization in the country.\(^\text{12}\)

Phyllis Schlafly and the women in STOP ERA used many different tactics to persuade state legislatures and the American public that the Equal Rights Amendment

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should not become part of the US Constitution, and they used them continually throughout the ratification period. They wrote letters to legislators at both the state and federal level, created numerous petitions that were sent to state legislatures where the ERA was up for ratification, and participated in speeches, debates, and conferences across the country. Schlafly also made use of television to present her arguments and opinions, appearing on numerous nationally broadcasted programs such as William J. Buckley, Jr.'s *Firing Line*. For all intents and purposes, their activities were little different from those women used for generations. With Phyllis Schlafly at their helm, the women of STOP ERA stuck with a singular argument throughout the entire ratification period: the ERA was not just bad for the nation, it was bad for women. As Schlafly posited over and over again, the ERA gave women no new rights or protections legally, politically, or socially. Instead, if the Equal Rights Amendment was ratified, women would have a large amount of new responsibilities that would greatly challenge their positions as wives, mothers, and as women in general. She also argued that the amendment would challenge the primacy of the male breadwinner which would, in turn, undermine the position of the homemaker. If the amendment was added to the Constitution, the entire American family structure would change as the federal government would have greater ability than ever before to legislate private matters within the family and the home.\(^\text{13}\)

What made Phyllis Schlafly's rhetoric such a success, therefore, was her position that the Equal Rights Amendment would, in one fell swoop, destroy womanhood as the country knew it. Combining her anti-statism and distaste for government encroachment

with her interest in maintaining traditional gender roles and behaviors, Schlafly's argument was a clarion call to conservative women across the country. Thanks to the grassroots organizations she helped to found and support during her battles against communism, conservative women, particularly those with a history of anti-communist ideology and activism, educated themselves about the ERA and found it lacking. One of the primary ways they learned about the amendment was through reading the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, a monthly newsletter sent out to subscribing members as well as to legislators and government officials, whether they wanted it or not. Through the *Report*, Schlafly reached people who she had previously connected to during the anti-communist and anti-statist movements. These people, who may have known little about the amendment or were apathetic toward it, as she previously had been, were convinced of the logic of her views and joined her struggle against the ERA, forming STOP ERA branches in even the smallest locales, using the tools and literature Schlafly gave them to become fierce organizers and debaters.\(^{14}\)

The main reason Phyllis Schlafly's rhetoric was so powerful, and so successful, was because she presented herself as a traditional wife, mother, and woman. As historian Karin J. Billions points out, Phyllis Schlafly relied on her family position to construct herself as “a symbolic image of women...as the archetype of the Great Mother.” It was no secret that Schlafly was heavily invested in her family. Married to Fred Schlafly, a prominent lawyer and ERA opponent himself, Phyllis Schlafly raised six children, all of whom went on to have successful careers. Fred was supportive of her political activism. Phyllis often happily quipped that he consented to her being out of the home to make sure

that it was protected from the ERA, challenging criticism that her political activism was hypocritical to the traditional definition of womanhood she fought to maintain in the law. As feminists across the country decried marriage and child-rearing as slavery and patriarchal bondage, Schlafly seemed to be the epitome of traditional womanhood. Discussing the feminist anger at marriage and their belief in patriarchal oppression, Schlafly declared “why, if these women's libbers were nice to their husbands, their husbands would let them do what they want to do, too. They just don't want to be nice.” In the days during Florida's ratification debates in 1975, Schlafly, in Tallahassee, told reporters that “supporters of the ERA are either 'naïve women who identify it with equal pay for equal work' or members of 'a very radical, women's liberation group' favoring lesbianism and abortion on demand.” To those people who were anti-feminist or fearful of the changes they thought the second wave feminist movement would bring, Phyllis Schlafly seemed like a godsend, the very definition of a perfect, traditional woman and the perfect leader for their cause.

The first time Schlafly made her position on the amendment nationally known was in the February 1972 issue of the Phyllis Schlafly Report titled “What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women,” which set the stage for STOP ERA's rhetoric for the entirety of the ratification period. While she expanded on these ideas between 1972 and the defeat of the amendment in 1982, she stuck to them, her message remarkably unchanged.

Schlafly began with the premise that American women were the most privileged group of people in the modern world, due to a number of factors. First, the United States placed the family unit as its most important social group, enshrining the idea of the working father and the supportive, usually stay-at-home mother and wife. Second, women were accorded “special respect” in American society. This notion of chivalry and protection was so important that it was codified into law. Finally, thanks to free market capitalism and limited government economic intervention, women's domestic labor was easier than ever before. Inventors had created tools, such as dishwashers, vacuums, and laundry machines which made housework easier and quicker, leaving women with plenty of free time to explore outside interests and passions. Discounting feminists claims of housewife oppression and the drudgery of housework, Schlafly argued that “the truth is that American women never had it so good.” Schlafly further claimed that, if the ERA was ratified, women would lose all of these privileges on which they relied to retain their position as wives and mothers. In turn, they would be forced to accept a multitude of new responsibilities and receive no rights in return. Feminists knew this to be true, she argued, and declared that “the women's libbers are radicals who are waging a total assault on the family, on marriage, and on children.” In her view, the majority of American women, those who did not consider themselves to be feminists or women's libbers, did not want these changes—they were happy as housewives and mothers and wanted to stay that way. In a call to arms to her supporters and a challenge to feminist ideas of sisterhood, Phyllis Schlafly boldly proclaimed “women's libbers do not speak for us.” She asked her readers to call or write to any and all government officials that they could and demand that they vote no on the Equal Rights Amendment.¹⁶

¹⁶ Phyllis Schlafly, “What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?”, The Phyllis Schlafly Report
As Schlafly biographer Carol Felsenthal points out, feminists derided the views espoused by this first anti-ERA issue of the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, noting it “became a collector’s item among feminists—like the first issue of *Playboy*.” They could laugh at it as much as they wanted, but it did not go away. Government officials, especially those within the legislative branch, read it and, much to the feminists’ horror, agreed with it. It even affected their votes. The change in state ratifications did not come immediately, but once the change did come it brought the pace of ratification to a near standstill. Once the amendment was sent to the states for ratification, legislatures had raced to be the first to agree to add it to the Constitution. By the end of 1972, twenty-two states ratified the ERA with only thirty-eight necessary to make it the law of the land. Eight more states ratified by the end of 1973, bringing the number to thirty. Feminists were ecstatic, believing success was inevitable—after all, only eight more states needed to ratify for the Equal Rights Amendment to become the Twenty-Seventh Amendment. Once the ratification pace slowed, though, and only Montana ratified in 1974, feminists and other ERA proponents began to worry and take the anti-ERA movement and Phyllis Schlafly seriously.  

What was certain was that Phyllis Schlafly and the grassroots women who supported her were serious, very serious indeed. They did not want to see their definition of womanhood, as well as its connection to the family and the nation, fade away because of

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the ERA. This begs the question of what they really thought would happen if the ERA was ratified. What were the privileges that they thought they would lose? What responsibilities did they think would be forced upon them? Phyllis Schlafly and the women of STOP ERA were only too glad to spread the answers to these questions to anyone that would listen, most notably through the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*. Additionally, Schlafly's 1977 book *The Power of the Positive Woman*, which brought together the most important arguments made in the *Report*, quotes many of the articles within the newsletter verbatim. Their answers constructed a very specific definition of womanhood and its place in American society, one that was diametrically different from that put forth by feminists and Equal Rights Amendment supporters.

STOP ERA and Phyllis Schlafly's argument against the Equal Rights Amendment can be broken down into five parts. First, the ERA's fundamental flaw was that it ignored real, biologically determined, inalienable differences between women and men. Second, the amendment was unnecessary as there were already laws in place to give women legal and political equality with men and the amendment, therefore, would give women no more rights that had not already been granted to them previously. Third, the ERA removed important privileges from women and, to a lesser extent, from men. Fourth, former privileges were replaced with new responsibilities. Together, removing privileges while demanding new responsibilities would put the American family structure in dire harm. Finally, the Equal Rights Amendment would serve as the greatest expansion of federal power the nation had ever seen as the federal government would be given the ability to interfere in the family's decision-making process. It would also serve as a legal precedent to explore other gendered political debates, including abortion and
homosexual rights. Conservatives like Schlafly were horrified that equal rights for women would mean unlimited on-demand abortion and the establishment of homosexual marital rights. In the end, Schlafly and the women of STOP ERA argued that feminists were intent on using the Equal Rights Amendment as a means to destroy the family structure by systematically attacking traditional views of womanhood, the very definition of womanhood Schlafly and her cohorts ascribed to and held dear.

There were problems with Schlafly's logic and opinions, just as all arguments are in some way fallacious or discordant. Critiques of her arguments fall into two general categories. First, Schlafly tended to be an essentialist. The opinions she presented in the *Phyllis Schlafly Report* depended on a traditional vision of womanhood which she argued all women should strive to fit within and should be backed up by law. In this view there were no exceptions as she did not seem to recognize women's diversity. As educated, knowledgeable, and well-read as Schlafly was, it is hard to imagine that she did not understand that not all women could possibly fit within the definition of womanhood she prescribed. Schlafly's vision of acceptable gender roles was inextricably bound to her whiteness, Roman Catholicism, and upper-class economic status. While there is no archival or documentary evidence that she was purely interested in political power, one cannot ignore the undisclosed biases written into the *Report*. At the same time, though, Schlafly argued for the definition of womanhood she believed should be embraced by all women, regardless of racial, religious, or class identity. This goal would be unachievable, she perceived, if traditional womanhood, as she defined it, was challenged in any way, specifically by the Equal Rights Amendment. Phyllis Schlafly defined and argued womanhood in an essentialist way, but that was because she believed that
womanhood should be essential.

Second, Schlafly did not report on contextual change if it did not fit her argument. One of STOP ERA's strengths that gained it followers across the country was that the organization settled on a particular argument and did not deviate from it. Problematically, the legal and political statuses of women in the United States did deviate throughout the ERA ratification period. While Schlafly made use of changes that benefited her arguments, like those within the abortion rights debate, such as Roe v. Wade, which conservative women were generally against, she ignored changes which improved the lives of women across the country, or at least chose not to document them within the Report. Schlafly was no different from debaters and rhetoricians across the country and throughout time as few people openly admit how their argument is flawed or becomes flawed as contexts change. Still, there were numerous instances where women's improved situations were not mentioned and they could have been. While these omissions leave her open to valid criticism from her opponents, they served her end goal of defeating the Equal Rights Amendment.

In Phyllis Schlafly's view, it would have been a mistake for women to become legally and politically equal with men because they were not the same as men, and this difference was important. Difference between the sexes, though, did not lead to male superiority and female inferiority. Instead, women and men worked together, utilizing their separate and distinct biological and psychological talents and natures to form a coherent, healthy, and important whole: the family, which structured American society. Therefore, while there were important differences between women and men, those differences were necessary and equally crucial and valuable in constructing society's
basic social unit. As Schlafly noted in *The Power of the Positive Woman*, “where man is discursive, logical, abstract, or philosophical, woman tends to be emotional, personal, practical, or mystical.” In this way, women and men complemented each other, working together like yin and yang. These qualities, decided by biology and reinforced by the family's needs, were unalterable. This did not mean, though, that women were forced into the role of a wife and homemaker if they did not wish to be. As Schlafly pointed out in a 1977 interview with Tom Brokaw, women were different from men, but they could still have a home and family, a career, or a combination of the two, whatever they wished. To feminists, though, who argued that women's qualities were forced upon them by society, Schlafly turned a deaf ear, arguing that they needed “to take up their argument with God.”18

Schlafly openly acknowledged that, for centuries, women had been viewed as the inferior sex. But, she argued, American women in the 1970s had the same legal and political opportunities as men. She herself was a case in point. While serving as a wife and raising six children, she organized or led Republican women's groups and special interest groups, involving herself in the political realm. She was also highly educated, having learned and trained at Radcliffe, Washington University, and the Harvard Law School. Never known for being overly modest, and at the same time ignoring her own racial and economic privileges, Schlafly showcased her education in the public forum as an example of the opportunities open to women and what they could achieve while still being active within the family structure. This type of rhetoric served as an example of

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what her opponents viewed as her ideological hypocrisy, that Schlafly argued that women's most important roles were as wives and mothers in the home but could be political actors as well. What these critics did not fully grasp was that Schlafly believed her activism was an extension of her familial roles and to her, at least ostensibly, her family always came first. When she conflated the private nuclear family with the family of the community at large, she gave herself a logical outlet to participate in political activism while still maintaining and supporting a traditional definition of womanhood.\textsuperscript{19}

These opportunities were open to women due to previous federal legislation. Numerous issues of the \textit{Phyllis Schlafly Report} were devoted to gender-related legal precedents in order to show that the ERA was not only wrong but unnecessary. In a special \textit{Report} written by anti-ERA advocate, former House Un-American Activities leader, and federal senator from North Carolina Sam Ervin, Jr., the congressman notes various times at which the Supreme Court had studied such important legal pieces as the due process clauses within the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments and ruled they applied to women as well. Schlafly also paid particular attention to possible changes in women's employment, one of the areas feminists and pro-ERA supporters argued that women needed enforced equality due to high levels of discrimination in hiring and within the workplace. In response, Schlafly argued that women would see no new rights in the field of employment because the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 already gave women all the rights they needed to be equal. As she noted, the EEOA “prohibits all sex discrimination in hiring, pay, and promotion,” and promised women all of the tools necessary to be successful on par with men. If women were still hired, treated, and

\textsuperscript{19} Critchlow, \textit{Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism}, 239-240. Schlafly also noted her education and credentials at the end of every issue of the \textit{Phyllis Schlafly Report}. 
promoted unequally within the workplace, the government needed to pay more attention to enforcing the laws already in place, not create a brand new amendment to right wrongs which should have been done away with by previous legislation. She made this argument explicitly clear in a 1975 debate in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, when she reminded her audience and opponent that ending gender discrimination was one of the main goals of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.\textsuperscript{20}

While this view of the Equal Rights Amendment as unnecessary was important, it was not Schlafly’s main line of argument throughout the ratification period. Since pro-ERA analysts and activists spent much of their time and effort focused on the supposed benefits that the amendment would bring to women, Schlafly countered their view by describing the many privileges women had that the ERA would take away from them. These privileges centered on what she and the women of STOP ERA viewed as the most important position a person could hold within American society: the homemaker. Schlafly showed how the ERA would legally dismantle the stay-at-home wife and mother, leaving her incapable of fulfilling the role the nation held so dear. As she argued throughout the ratification period, if the ERA was enacted it would mean the end of the traditional stay-at-home wife and mother. While Schlafly was aware of the rising number of single mothers and two-income households, she saw these situations as symptoms of an ill society which would only be made sicker by the Equal Rights Amendment. As she argued, and as her supporters believed, only a return to traditional gender roles,

regardless of economic necessity, would heal the nation.

Basically, in Schlafly and STOP ERA's view, the Equal Rights Amendment would make it legally and economically impossible for a family to provide for a homemaker. Her needs were met by a husband and father who paid for the privilege of having a stay-at-home wife and mother through his employment and labor in the outside world. Schlafly argued that, with the ERA in place, this traditional economic family structure would be destroyed. As evidence for her argument, Schlafly used current state laws to show how homemakers were economically protected, laws she claimed would be pronounced invalid and unconstitutional if the ERA was enacted. For example, she cited a California state law that “a husband failing to support and maintain his wife or children may be sentenced to imprisonment in the penitentiary” which would have to be stricken from the law of the amendment was ratified. One of the reasons Schlafly's rhetoric was so powerful was that she served as a translator, paraphrasing and explaining the legalese of state laws so they could be understood by her supporters who did not have her training or background. She also presented the views of those she deemed to be authorities on the law, such as college professors, lawyers, and state and federal legislators to support her own opinions, adding further credence to her arguments. In this way, after educating her readership in the law and supporting her views with evidence from authorities, she was certain they would agree with her logic that the ERA would take away all of the privileges of womanhood.  

Phyllis Schlafly presented her argument that the ERA would take away the legal ability for women to stay at home, unemployed in the public arena if they chose, in a

number of different ways. First, she argued that, with the Equal Rights Amendment in place, the husband would no longer be legally obligated to economically provide for his wife. As she noted in *The Power of the Positive Woman*, “the moral, social and legal evil of ERA is that it proclaims as a constitutional mandate that the husband no longer has the primary duty to support his wife and children.” She pointed out in the *Report* published in August of 1973 that all fifty states had some kind of law which demanded that husbands provide for their wives, especially once children were born and had to be raised within the home. She printed the laws from all fifty states verbatim, one after the other, to prove her point that such laws were on the books. For example, New Hampshire's legal code included a provision that if a husband “neglects to maintain his wife or children, or neglects his employment or misspends his earnings so as not to provide for the support of his wife or children, [he] may be imprisoned or fined.” If the ERA was enacted, all state laws such as this would have to change, and they would not change to benefit women who chose to stay at home. Schlafly presented this argument in a number of different venues, including in a speech in Manhattan at the 1973 annual meeting of the New York Conservative Society. In her view, in its pursuit of gender equality, “the Equal Rights Amendment will mandate a doctrinaire legal equality between the sexes, and will make unconstitutional any laws which impose an obligation on one sex that it does not impose on the other.” In Schlafly's view, since state laws demanded that the husband provide for the wife and put no likewise obligation on the woman, all fifty state laws would become invalid. This would mean that husbands would have no legal duty to economically provide for their wives to stay at home with their children. Responding to feminist arguments that husbands would still provide for their wives even if they were not
legally obligated and would do so out of love for their families, Schlafly conceded that some husbands would continue to support their wives even if they did not have to do so by law. But, she argued, high divorce rates showed that not all husbands loved their wives, but were forced to support them because they had agreed to the marriage contract. As she forcefully noted, “ERA would proclaim to all the world that the marriage contract no longer includes the obligation of a husband to support his wife. This would take away the most basic and precious legal right every wife now enjoys.” If the country ratified the Equal Rights Amendment and wives were no longer legally protected from having to work outside of the home for their economic survival, the privileges of and right to be a homemaker would be wiped away.22

It was not just Phyllis Schlafly who believed that homemakers' economic rights would be taken away by the Equal Rights Amendment. Legal scholars and authorities also believed that it was a grave possibility and Schlafly supported her argument by publishing their words and opinions within the Report, relying on their expertise to bolster her own. Professor Paul Freund of the Harvard Law School argued that wives would lose their right to economic support, especially if “husbands procure judicial decisions in its name [the ERA] relieving them of the duty of support because an equal duty is not imposed on their wives.” This did not mean that all husbands would choose not to support their wives, but that wives would no longer have the legal right to marital economic support. Philip B. Kurland of the University of Chicago Law School went a step further, arguing that the ERA was a feminist attempt to destroy the role of the

homemaker and the nuclear family structure. Kurland discussed the Hayden modification, a stipulation attached to the Equal Rights Amendment during the congressional discussions before it went to the states for ratification, which proclaimed that female legal privileges would remain intact. Feminists were greatly dismayed by this rider and, in the end, had it removed from the amendment sent to the states. Kurland theorized that the modification's removal “was probably not, however, inadvertent; it was calculated,” a move by radical feminists to get rid of traditional womanhood and replace it with legally mandated gender equality. The best way to do this would be to remove the economic privileges of womanhood and wives, the economic right and ability to stay at home.\textsuperscript{23}

Even if husbands chose to continue to economically provide for their wives after the ERA was enacted, Schlafly argued that it would be more difficult for them to do so. As she pointed out time and again, state and federal laws would have to be stripped clean of any indications of gender, making men and women legally equal before the law. Another privilege that would be taken away from wives, and would prove weighty on their husbands' pocketbooks, were differences in insurance rates. Discussing automobile insurance rates in 1979, Schlafly argued that they would be another one of the many areas of American life which would change under the Equal Rights Amendment. Women, who tended to be safer drivers and caused fewer accidents than man, were privileged with lower insurance rates as a result. Since insurance companies were governed by state law, if the ERA was ratified state and federal courts might decide that all insurance rate

differences based on sex would have to be done away with. This would mean that women would have to pay considerably more than their due share and men considerably less. As Schlafly argued, “under ERA both sexes would have to pay the same rate, which means that young men would pay 8 percent less, but young women would pay 29 percent more.” In addition, Schlafly posited that if courts decided to construe the use of the word “sex” within ERA as a notation of marital status as well as gender, as some feminists argued was necessary, “rates on married males under age 25 would go up 68 percent while the rates on unmarried males under 25 would go down 9 percent.” In Schlafly's mind, these unfair insurance rates would create another economic burden on married men who economically supported their wives, making it less likely that they would be able to stay at home with their children.24

Additionally, and more troubling, husbands and wives would face further economic burden from changes that the Equal Rights Amendment would bring to Social Security (SS). Without the ERA, wives received SS benefits based on their husbands' earnings even if they never worked outside of the home for wages themselves. In Schlafly's view, this special treatment was due to women in recognition of their service within the home and its economic value, even if it was not rewarded with a paycheck. If men were no longer legally responsible to economically provide for their wives through their labor, Schlafly argued, it logically followed that wives would not receive Social Security benefits from their husbands' earnings after he died. How then, she asked, would widowed women survive once their husbands were gone? Schlafly's critique grew even stronger in 1979 when a proposed tax was debated in the U.S. Department of

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Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). In order to equalize the burden of paying into Social Security between women who worked and women who stayed at home, members of HEW proposed that homemakers should either only receive $100 a month in SS benefits when they were old enough to receive them or should pay a special tax of $1000 a year while their husbands were still economically productive. To Phyllis Schlafly, the intended results of such a policy were clear: feminists wanted to force women out of the home by making it economically infeasible for them to remain within it. As she argued, a woman would need to work outside of the home just to make up for the money lost by the proposed SS tax and feminists would be one step closer to achieving their goal of placing all women in the workforce, though that was never a feminist goal. Schlafly made her point clear while testifying before the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee in 1981 when she argued that “a few aggressive groups of women, with good jobs plus the ability to speak and write, have ganged up to ask Congress to take away the dependent wife's and widow's benefits … to punish the dependent wife and the traditional family.” In other words, feminists, through the ERA, sought to rid the country of the role of traditional woman by infringing upon the family's wallet.25

But, in Schlafly's view, proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment wanted to do more to the idea of traditional womanhood than remove it from the home and family. She argued that the ERA would legally equate men and women, removing the right for women to be treated like women and, instead, treating them just like men. This would affect more than the home and family and more than just married women. It would have

a significant and negative impact on single and working women as well. One of the most important areas Schlafly believed that the ERA would remove women's privileges was in the workplace, an area of life which involved women regardless of marital status. As has already been noted, Schlafly argued that women were already legally equal when it came to employment due to the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act, though Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act did much the same. There was nothing more the Equal Rights Amendment could do to make women more equal, even though feminists and ERA proponents often claimed the amendment would give women many more rights within the workplace, such as equal pay or greater employment opportunities. Schlafly, who stated proponents either made these statements in error or were lying, argued that the ERA could only take away the privileges women already had. In other words, all of the protective legislation that safeguarded women in the workplace would be unconstitutional. While many pieces of female protective legislation were repealed or declared unconstitutional during the twentieth century, they were not altogether stripped from state and federal legislation. Their previous removal was one of the reasons Schlafly discussed them. In her view, the Equal Rights Amendment would serve as the killing blow to any laws which protected women in the workplace which were still on the books.26

ERA proponents used two arguments when discussing the amendment's probable effects on women in the workplace. First, they argued that female privileges were not privileges at all. Instead, they limited women's opportunities for certain jobs and promotions and denied them social equality with their male peers by legislating

inequality. Second, some proponents believed that protective legislation that dealt specifically with women would extend to all workers if the ERA was ratified. Men would receive the same benefits of shorter working hours, less strenuous jobs, and longer or more frequent breaks. Schlafly argued that both of these views were incorrect. Instead, she theorized that women would lose all of their privileges while gaining no benefits, that instead of extending protection to all workers, women would lose the privileges they had. Protective legislation included “such provisions as protecting women from being compelled to work too many hours a day or week or at night, the weight-lifting restrictions, provisions which mandate rest areas, rest periods, protective equipment or a chair for a woman who stands on her feet all day,” and so on. In this way, Schlafly claimed that women would no longer be treated like women in the workplace, that employers would be forced to treat them like men, both emotionally and physically. Since Schlafly believed that men and women were emotionally and physically different, in her view it was wrong to ask women to lift the same amount as men, work the same dirty or dangerous jobs, or expect women to do the same type of labor without rest or relief. Schlafly noted that “it comes with exceedingly poor grace for a woman who sits at a comfortable desk to demand legislation which will deprive a woman who stands on her feet all day of the right to have a chair.” Arguments like these were what propelled the AFL-CIO, the largest labor union in the country, to oppose the ERA until 1973, though Schlafly showed the one-sidedness of her argument by never publishing the union's rationale for its about-face to supporting the amendment. Echoing Phyllis Schlafly's arguments and published in the Report, Naomi McDaniel, on behalf of the organization Women of Industry, Inc., wrote “we Women in Industry know better than anyone else
that we are simply not physically equal to men...for these reasons, and others too numerous to mention here, Women in Industry strongly opposes ERA.”

Schlafly argued that women would also lose many little privileges within the workplace. Though they were not as direly important as working hours or conditions, women were given privileges that made them feel like women, which reminded working women of their womanhood and the chivalry of their men and country. One of these, which Phyllis Schlafly reported on, was taxi fare for female workers. Discussing the Bank of America in California, where a state Equal Rights Amendment was in place, Schlafly described how the bank decided to stop giving money for cab fare for a safe ride home to female workers who worked after dark. After all, male workers did not receive money. Though not as looming as having to work mandated overtime, Schlafly declared that this was “just another example of how woman are the losers when forced to step down to equality.” A second example, and possibly the most infamous of Schlafly’s arguments, was unisex bathrooms. Schlafly argued that men and women would either have to share a bathroom, destroying any sense of female modesty, or else men and women's bathrooms would have to be the same, with no amenities different in either. Noting feminists often made fun of this argument, Schlafly underscored what she saw as its importance by pointing out that women in factories saw the women's restroom as a place of comfort and relaxation, often because it had a couch. Little things, like taxi fares

and women's restrooms, “guarantee her right to be treated like a woman—and she likes it that way.”

As Phyllis Schlafly pointed out, most of the examples of privileges being removed that she discussed were only possibilities, forecasts of what the post-ERA United States might look like. As with all federal laws and amendments, it was likely that the Equal Rights Amendment would be adjudicated in the Supreme Court for years after its ratification, so no one could know what would happen with certainty. Even women's rights activists were concerned over the possible ramifications to state laws. Still, Schlafly searched for evidence to support her predictions and found it within the states which had earlier placed an Equal Rights Amendment within their state constitutions or had set up task forces to research what effect the ERA would have on their state's laws. Numerous issues of The Phyllis Schlafly Report were devoted to the effects of state ERAs on state law and how those changes negatively impacted women, the family structure, and traditional definitions of womanhood. Maryland voters approved a new amendment to their constitution in November of 1972 with the same wording as the federal ERA and this served as Phyllis Schlafly's first example of the possible effects to the country as a whole. Before the Maryland amendment passed, there were 227 state laws that would, at the very least, have to be reworded to remove gendered nouns. What came as a shock to both supporters and critics of the amendment were some of the laws that would have to be changed in substance as well as style. Maryland Senate

28 Phyllis Schlafly, “Women in Industry Oppose Equal Rights Amendment,” The Phyllis Schlafly Report (July 1973), SHSM; Phyllis Schlafly, “ERA Backfires at Bank of America,” The Phyllis Schlafly Report (January 1973), SHSM. ERA supporters and feminist authors still hold Schlafly's comments on unisex bathroom in laughable contempt. They also place much too much emphasis on it. Though it was one of Schlafly's arguments against the ERA, it was minor compared to those that have been discussed so far.
bills were announced which would hold a wife liable for alimony to her husband in cases of divorce, make it easier for husbands to demand child custody and child support payments, and would integrate male and female prisoners in common penitentiaries. Additionally, all of Schlafly's fears about wife support were found to be true as Maryland's law concerning a husband's duty to economically support his wife was considered invalid. Published in The Phyllis Schlafly Report, Maryland's problems with the Equal Rights Amendment and its effects on gender roles served to substantiate Schlafly's claims at the national level.29

Maryland was only the first example Phyllis Schlafly presented to her readers. During a study of how the Equal Rights Amendment would affect their state laws, Arkansas researchers found a plethora of laws that would need to be changed. These included laws that detailed wife support, a wife's rights to alimony and child custody, a woman's choice whether or not to serve on a jury, and the removal of all workplace protective legislation. In the case of Colorado's state ERA, wife support was found unconstitutional by the state's Supreme Court in the case of Colorado v. Elliott. In Colorado, a husband was no longer legally responsible for the economic support of his wife if she chose to remain in the home. Instead, she was responsible for providing half of the family's income. Virginia's ERA task force members condemned the amendment, arguing that wife support and employment protection would be invalidated and that, additionally, sexual crimes such as rape would have to be rewritten to include gender-neutral wording or done away with entirely. They so disliked the amendment that the state legislature rejected the federal ERA. Ohio's task force stated much the same, with

the addition that, in order to allow women full opportunity in the outside world, the state would need to set up government childcare centers using taxpayer dollars. This was a horrifying conclusion for women who wished to oversee each step in their child's development, though Schlafly later ignored the contextual change which occurred when Ohio ratified the ERA and chose not to set up childcare centers as a consequence. In each case, Schlafly provided her analysis and summary of the state actions in question. She also quoted laws, proposed legal changes, and testimony so her readers could make judgments for themselves.30

For those who followed Schlafly's logic and rhetoric, these examples of states and their respective ERAs were writing on the wall, showing just how negatively life would change for families and individuals who believed and supported traditional definitions of womanhood and family. If nothing else, state investigations into the ERA showed just how many facets of American life would change if gendered wording and ideology were removed from the law. Phyllis Schlafly's discussion of the loss of female privilege within state and federal law proved to many of her readers and supporters that the Equal Rights Amendment was of no benefit to them. As wives, mothers, homemakers, and women, they would lose their privileges within marriage, divorce, employment, and economic maintenance of the family in general. Following Schlafly's rhetoric, they would receive nothing in return, except for the knowledge that they were now equal with men.

But the most damning argument over the Equal Rights Amendment had nothing to do with losing privileges and everything to do with new responsibilities. If the ERA was passed, for the first time ever, women would be conscripted into the armed forces—they would be responsible to the draft. Phyllis Schlafly argued this point more loudly and vocally than any other. From 1972 to 1982, sixteen issues of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* dealt specifically with the draft while numerous others mentioned the issue in passing. Many historians now argue that the draft, more than any other issue, was the downfall of the Equal Rights Amendment. Even after the Vietnam War draft ended, the memory was still fresh within the public mind and was later brought back up when President Jimmy Carter called for a gender-neutral draft in 1980. For the generations who lived through the draft, anything that expanded the population open to conscription was circumspect and worthy of suspicion.\(^{31}\)

Schafly outlined her main arguments against women in the draft in the May 1973 issue of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*. She pointed out that ERA proponents spent little time discussing the draft as even leaders within the pro-ERA movement knew that the amendment would, without a doubt, force women to participate in selective service. In fact, before the amendment went to the states for ratification, numerous federal legislators had tried to put a rider on the bill saying that, even if the ERA was ratified, women would be exempt from forced participation in the armed forces. The most prolific was Sam Ervin (D-NC) who put forward nine separate amendments to the ERA, all of which failed. The one that received the most debate on the floor, though, called for women to

have equal rights except for the privilege of being exempted from the draft. With the Ervin rider left out, there was no question about it. If the ERA was ratified, women would be subject to the draft equally with men.32

In Schlafly's opinion, the reason feminists and ERA proponents hid from the draft issue was that they knew a large proportion of women, feminist and not, would be aghast at having to enroll in selective services. If the amendment was ratified and made national law, women, including wives, mothers, and daughters, would be drafted equally with men. For Schlafly, this was morally wrong. Women needed to be protected from the horrors and bloodshed of war. This argument was particularly powerful to a nation still embroiled in the Vietnam War and was witness to its violence every day on the nightly news. The largest problem, though, was that no one quite knew how having women involved in the draft would actually affect women and the family. As Schlafly pointed out in the Report, no one argued that all women would be drafted, just as not all men were drafted. The sticking point was that, without the judicial review which would inevitably follow ratification, no one knew just how many women would be drafted, who they would be, what the proportion would be between male and female draftees, and whether a woman's familial role would be taken into account. The Equal Rights Amendment demanded that women be drafted but provided no stipulations, no plan, no qualifications or reservations. Thanks to the simplicity of Section One, all anyone could be certain of was that women would be forced into the armed services.33


In answer to this uncertainty, ERA proponents argued that having women in the draft pool would not be nearly as painful as expected. There were exemptions to the draft in the past which were given to men and would, likewise, be applied to women. If women were physically incapable of lifting a certain weight or performing certain tasks, they would not be drafted. If they had a physical or mental disability which precluded them from service, they would not be drafted. For some wars, fathers were exempt and, in some future war, mothers could be exempted as well. While these arguments mollified ERA supporters and possibly some opponents, they did nothing to calm Schlafly's ire. All of these “what if” possibilities only proved to her that the ERA would give women a new responsibility to the draft and that no one knew what that would mean for the future of the country, society, and the individual family unit. Until the amendment was ratified and adjudicated on, all anyone could present was theory and hearsay, and, in Schlafly's mind, that was another reason why the ERA needed to be rejected. Focusing on the consequences of ratification, both intended and unintended, she noted that Virginia chose not to ratify the amendment because of how it would affect draft registration. The task force which studied the amendment's effects on state legislation argued that pregnant women might have to serve in the army and be forced into combat duty. As Schlafly noted, feminists could argue all they wanted for women to be drafted, even put in combat positions, in pursuit of legal equality and opportunity. She claimed, though, that many of these women, more liberal and anti-war in their personal ideology, would gain conscientious objector status. This hypocrisy, to fight for equal draft registration while refusing to participate in it, was plain to see, at least for those who supported Schlafly and her viewpoints. As she stated, “it is absolutely ridiculous to force all women to conform
to the demands of the militant women radicals who themselves have not the slightest intention of ever serving in the military.” Sentiments like these helped persuade her readership that the women who fought for the ERA did not fight for all women, only those who subscribed to feminist visions of womanhood. For those who believed that women needed and deserved protection and should have no place in the armed forces, Phyllis Schlafly's argument made more sense or at least was more persuasive. After all, it protected traditional definitions of womanhood, the type they believed feminists were trying to destroy.34

Schlafly's use of anti-draft rhetoric in argumentation against the Equal Rights Amendment grew more heated after 1979, when the amendment was given a three year ratification extension. She relied on two tactics to make her case even stronger, both of them prevalent within The Phyllis Schlafly Report. First, she relied on expert opinions, printing them almost verbatim, much as she had done in her descriptions of how the amendment would mean a loss of privileges for women. Second, Schlafly published testimony presented before Congress and various House and Senate committees. This testimony, given by her as well as experts in the field, allowed her readers to analyze the speeches for themselves and, with Schlafly's guidance, make their own decision. In essence, Schlafly did not simply use her Report as a soapbox for unprovable, illogical arguments. She used it as a place to present her evidence and spell out her argument in great detail. Using her authority as a conservative female leader and legal scholar and relying on others' expertise, Schlafly showed that the draft would have grave

consequences not just for women, but for the family and American society in general.

The words of House and Senate members as well as officers within the armed forces graced the pages of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*. The most prolific of these authorities was Brigadier General Andrew J. Gatsis, a retired leader of the army and veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. As early as 1978, Gatsis argued that the Pentagon, pushed by radical feminists, was filling infantry ranks with women and causing great harm to both society and the army. In his view, putting women in the army would destroy American defense capabilities. First, echoing Schlafly's earlier comments, he argued that women were physically weaker than men and, in order to place more women within the army, standards had to be lowered. This meant that the fighting force was weaker than it was before women were included. Following this argument, since units with women were physically weaker, this meant that men in their units had to pick up the load female soldiers could not handle. As Gatsis noted, “units are having their combat readiness eroded by women soldiers not pulling their share of the load.” In addition, women who became pregnant while serving their country needed special treatment, including food and medical attention, which made them unable to get up and go wherever they were needed at a moment's notice. While Gatsis conceded that some women would be given draft exemptions due to their physical capabilities and parental status, he pointed out that exemptions were not the rule—they were not uniformly given. Using his years of experience and his authority as a military leader, Gatsis argued that, pragmatically, female troops could only be a liability, no matter if feminists wished for equality.ighting force was weaker than it was before women were included. Following this argument, since units with women were physically weaker, this meant that men in their units had to pick up the load female soldiers could not handle. As Gatsis noted, “units are having their combat readiness eroded by women soldiers not pulling their share of the load.” In addition, women who became pregnant while serving their country needed special treatment, including food and medical attention, which made them unable to get up and go wherever they were needed at a moment's notice. While Gatsis conceded that some women would be given draft exemptions due to their physical capabilities and parental status, he pointed out that exemptions were not the rule—they were not uniformly given. Using his years of experience and his authority as a military leader, Gatsis argued that, pragmatically, female troops could only be a liability, no matter if feminists wished for equality.35

Gatsis was not the only expert who provided evidence against women being involved in the draft. William Rusher, conservative political ideologue, relying on traditional views on motherhood, scoffed at the idea of women in combat. He noted that fathers were called to duty in World War II and was disturbed by the notion that mothers would be removed from the home and away from their children to participate in the bloody horrors of warfare. Rabbi Herman N. Neuberger argued that women drafted into combat positions would destabilize the country's family structure, claiming “that the inclusion of women in the Selective Service System would irreparably subvert the family unit in America, which is already battered and in grave danger.” General William Westmoreland, the commander of U.S. Forces during the Vietnam War, echoed Gatsis’s statement by arguing that army effectiveness and defensive readiness would be significantly lowered. Finally, and most powerfully, Brigadier General Elizabeth P. Hoisington, the former director of the Women's Army Corp, argued that no women, even the ones who believed in gender equality within the armed forces, would want to be part of the draft if they really knew what war was like. Though she had never experienced combat duty, she described it in bloody detail, noting “heads are blown off; arms and legs are maimed; suffering is so intolerable it affects men for years. It is bad enough that our men have to endure this. But do we want our young women to suffer it too?” For those who read The Phyllis Schlafly Report, the answer was most likely “no,” and gave them further incentive to reject the Equal Rights Amendment.³⁶

Finally, Phyllis Schlafly provided her own analysis of the effect of making women eligible for the draft. Out of all of the experts and their testimony that she provided, her version of the argument relied most on essentialist and traditional views of womanhood, including women's physical weakness and the need to protect mothers, daughters, and wives from the violence of war. During the final stage of the amendment ratification process, Schlafly used her Report as a place to publish the numerous times she went before Congress to deliver testimony against female participation in the draft.

First, Schlafly argued that women had a right to be women and to be protected against the masculinizing effects of service in the armed forces. In fact, feminine women, those who lived within the traditional bounds of womanhood, were beneficial to society as they maintained the homestead, raised children to be virtuous citizens, and stood as a bulwark against social and moral degradation. While feminists and historians have argued that women, as citizens of the United States, had to take on the full responsibilities of citizenship, such as the draft, as well as receive equal rights, Schlafly believed that women's position in the home was more useful, as well as more moral, than their possible position behind a gun. Speaking before the House Armed Services Committee, Schlafly besought the crowd, asking “has our nation sunk so low that we are willing to send our daughters into battle? Is chivalry completely dead? Breathes there a man with soul so dead that he will not rise up and defend his wife, his sweetheart, his mother and his daughter, against those who want to wound or capture them, whoever they may be?” In essence, Schlafly asked, was there no one left who believed in the value of traditional womanhood and would protect it for the general good of society?37

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It turned out that there were some who would rise to the challenge of protecting women from the draft and possible combat duty. On June 25, 1981, the Supreme Court decided the case *Rostker v. Goldberg*, determining that it was constitutional to force only men to sign up for selective service and not women. In January 1980, President Jimmy Carter had called for the reinstatement of draft registration and tried to push for women to be included as well as men. He opened up a judicial firestorm that challenged the Equal Rights Amendment ratification struggle and strengthened the support given to Schlafly's anti-draft position. Six months later, she printed the opinions of sixteen young women, all of whom were against the draft and who had filed an injunction to allow their testimony to be heard before the Supreme Court. Closely in line with Schlafly's reasoning, they argued that it was important for women to stay home and take care of their children and that they would not be helpful or proficient in combat duty. Paradoxically, the women argued that they could be sexually abused by male colleagues in army encampments while at the same time contending that men had a natural inclination to protect women, which could leave them unable to focus on the enemy during combat situations. The Supreme Court validated their arguments, deciding six to three that preventing women from participating in the draft was constitutional, unless federal law (like the Equal Rights Amendment) demanded otherwise. Schlafly used this case and the judges' opinions to her advantage, thanking God that the court decided the way it did and that the ERA was not in place to block the decision. Traditional

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womanhood continued to be protected from the draft, combat duty, and the loss of femininity which was perceived to follow.\(^{38}\)

The fifth and final part of Schlafly's argument against the ERA was the one which had the least to do with women and everything to do with the rise of the conservative right. The amendment's second section stated that “the Congress shall have the right to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.” For Schlafly and others with conservative or rightist political sentiments, this was an immense problem. While on first glance the text might seem innocuous, Schlafly saw it as the auspices of the greatest expansion of federal power during the twentieth century. Instead of keeping the power to decide the matter within the states where it had always been held, Section Two of the Equal Rights Amendment would give the federal government the power to legislate on all matters concerning gender within the law. Conservatives such as Schlafly, who saw federal expansion during the New Deal and the liberalized 1960s as problematic at best, socialist or communistic at worst, had even greater reason to fight against the proposed amendment. Through her strident criticism against Section Two, Phyllis Schlafly pulled the debate against the Equal Rights Amendment into the realm of conservative politics and ideology. Those on the right who could have cared little for women's issues were brought into the discussion through her argument that the amendment would give the government greater legislative jurisdiction into state matters and people's private lives. Since these discussions occurred within the context of the civil

rights movements, especially the debates over interracial busing, they were couched within the racism inherent in the invisibility of white privilege and were especially powerful in the South and the West. In addition to readers and supporters who were interested in racial issues, Schlafly's adherents grew exponentially as she tied conservative political ideology to her definition of traditional womanhood. As she argued, further government expansion could only be stopped if the ERA was rejected and if the people demanded state legislators protect the vestiges and privileges of womanhood which were currently part of state law from the intruding grasp of Big Brother federal government. In this way, Phyllis Schlafly helped to solidify traditional womanhood's place as a central tenet within conservative ideology.\(^\text{39}\)

Phyllis Schlafly began her assault against Section Two in *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* published in May of 1973 and continued her argument until the amendment was defeated in 1982. Three full issues of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* were centered wholly on Section Two and the federal support given to the feminists who supported the Equal Rights Amendment. She first noted that seven other constitutional amendments have a clause in them quite like Section Two, including all of the amendments which gave suffrage rights to citizens who had not had them before. In all cases, the new amendments took substantial power away from the states and placed it in the hands of the federal government. It was not blind fear of federal control that had Schlafly aghast. Instead, as Schlafly studied the subject, she came to the conclusion that the federal government supported the Equal Rights Amendment for their own gain. Much like her

charge against the “kingmakers” she wrote of in A Choice Not an Echo, Schlafly posited that they approved of Section Two because they understood it would greatly enhance their legislative and governmental jurisdiction and power. Schlafly found evidence to support her point in two ways. First, federal political figures were active in pursuit of the amendment's ratification, which for Schlafly showed that they were aware of the new power which would be theirs if the amendment was added to the Constitution. Second, federal tax dollars were spent on feminist and pro-ERA events and lobbying, most notably the International Women's Year conventions. Together, these two methods of federal Equal Rights Amendment support showed that the federal government was interested in expanding its power, taking that power away from the states and the constituents their legislatures spoke for.\(^{40}\)

From the beginning of the ratification process, people in high office within the federal government pushed for amendment ratification. Both President Gerald Ford and First Lady Betty Ford supported the ERA and were vocal about their interest in having it ratified. The crux of the problem for Schlafly was not that they were ERA proponents, though she was not happy with their political views. Instead, Schlafly was outraged that they, particularly Betty Ford, used their political power to lobby for the amendment, exploiting their executive privilege and positions to interfere with the ratification process when it was a matter that should have been decided by state legislatures, not the federal government. While Betty Ford's opinions of and involvement in the Equal Rights

Amendment debate are discussed in the following chapter, it is important to note that Phyllis Schlafly made it clear she did not appreciate Betty Ford's and the Ford administration's efforts in butting into what she argued should be decided by the states. She railed against every letter the Ford administration sent to constituents and state legislators in support of the amendment, including one mailed by Patricia H. Lindh, Special Assistant to the Counsellor for Women's Programs, which claimed that the ERA would not harm the personal liberties of girls and women. Schlafly disagreed, asking the administration to prove its comments. From 1977 to 1981, First Lady Rosalynn Carter did much the same thing during her husband's presidency by attending numerous pro-ERA events and using her First Ladyship as a platform for feminist change and the expansion of federal power. In fact, Schlafly commented that Rosalynn was so powerful that Jimmy Carter listened to everything and anything that she said, including supporting feminist political goals such as the Equal Rights Amendment. In this way, she believed that both Betty Ford and Rosalynn Carter used their executive positions and privileges to participate in a legal debate which was purely a state matter. In Schlafly's mind, this showed that the federal government was intent on expanding its power and jurisdiction into matters of the home and family.41

Phyllis Schlafly also objected to the large amount of federal funding given to pro-ERA and feminist lobbying endeavors, most notably the 1977 International Women's Year (IWY) convention held in Houston. Under the sponsorship of Bella Abzug, Democratic Representative of New York, those planning the IWY proposed a bill

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authorizing large amounts of money from federal tax coffers to hold the event. Schlafly wrote in the *Phyllis Schlafly Report* that they asked for $10 million and had already received hundreds of thousands of dollars from federal offices such as the State Department, the Transportation Department, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In the end, Congress authorized $5 million in taxpayer funds for the event. Planning committee members were in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment and, within the *Report*, are quoted as noting that they would “do all in [their] capacity to see that the Equal Rights Amendment is ratified at the earliest possible moment.” To Schlafly, the group was a federally funded, pro-ERA feminist organization that refused to give any time at all during the IWY to speakers or activists who were against the amendment. It was inherently biased and had the full support of the federal government. In response to what she considered a gross inequity against women such as herself, who valued traditional womanhood as she defined it and wished to see it protected, Schlafly and other female members of the Eagle Forum and STOP ERA organized the Pro-Family Rally, held at the same time and place as the IWY convention. Twenty thousand people attended the rally, decrying the ERA and the federal government who supported it. For these women, the IWY and its opposing Pro-Family Rally proved many things. Most importantly, it proved to them that the federal government did not support them and did not have their interests at heart. If the ERA was ratified with Section Two intact, the situation would only become worse as state governments would lose the prerogative to legislate based on their constituents' wishes and beliefs.\(^{42}\)

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For Schlafly, it was clear that the federal government had a vested interest in ERA's successful ratification as it would be granted vast new political power. Like the kingmakers Schlafly discussed in *A Choice Not an Echo*, government officials set pro-ERA supporters up for success and the traditional definition of womanhood for failure. That, though, was just the tip of the iceberg. Just as she had earlier claimed that no one would know the amendment's definite effects until the Supreme Court adjudicated it, no one could know how far the federal government would go in its, she argued, misguided or malicious attempt to bring equality to women. The question she asked was, once women became legally equal to men, then what? Where would it stop? Using the common rhetorical metaphor and logical fallacy of the “slippery slope,” Schlafly argued that the federal government, under pressure from radical feminists, would challenge many other aspects of life and law traditional conservatives held dear. She focused most on two controversial issues: abortion and homosexuality. These two issues, more than any others, brought conservatives, even those ambivalent toward women's issues and the ERA, into the fold of the debate.

Traditional views of womanhood and the anti-abortion or pro-life movements have been tied together historically. As sociologist Kristin Luker notes, “the abortion debate is so passionate and hard-fought because it is a referendum on the place and meaning of motherhood.” Since traditionally socially conservative women are often mothers or at least value the role and protection of mothers, the loss of motherhood through abortion is seen as detrimental to their traditional definition of womanhood. This was no different for Phyllis Schlafly, who was a vocal anti-abortion advocate. She saw, within ERA, the chance that feminists could push for abortion rights greater than those
decided in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Schlafly argued that feminists saw one of the greatest inequalities in their lives to be the fact that women could get pregnant and men could not. As her logic followed, if women became equal to men through the ERA, and men had the right not to be pregnant, then women would have to be given that same right. As Schlafly saw it, that meant abortion-on-demand, which was morally evil to many within socially conservative circles. Through a discussion about the possible social effects of the Equal Rights Amendment, Schlafly claimed in 1975 that “the abortionists are confidently expecting that ERA will 'constitutionalize' this decision *[Roe]* and make it impossible to overturn.” While proponents of the amendment said little about possible or perceived connections between the amendment and strengthening abortion rights, Schlafly saw the two as intricately tied together. In this way, Schlafly brought the ERA into the greater debate over proper social mores and rights. At the same time, she drew a direct line between anti-ERA activists and anti-abortion activists, even though the line was based on fallacious logic, and raised her movement's membership and support levels.43

Schlafly made the same type of connections with those who fought against or voiced moral concerns about equal rights for homosexuals. She, and traditional social conservatives like her, especially those who were Roman Catholic, fought against same-sex marriage and other rights as they believed that homosexuals would destroy the

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nuclear family structure and its central place within American society. There was no mention of homosexuality within the ERA, and Schlafly never claimed that there was. But, as she pointed out time and again, one of the main problems with the amendment was its brevity, its complicated simplicity. If all people became equal and held equal rights, regardless of sex, then homosexuals would receive these rights as well. Schlafly noted that one of the main ways state laws would be changed to fit the ERA, if ratified, was that gendered language would be replaced with gender-neutral language. As she put it “male” and “female” would be replaced by “person.” As she wrote in the Report, “thus, a law that defines a marriage as a union of a man and a woman would have to be amended to replace those words with 'person.' A 'marriage' between a 'person' and a 'person' is not the same thing at all as a marriage between a man and a woman.” This view that the ERA would provide greater rights to homosexuals, and that ERA supporters wished this to be so, was strengthened through Phyllis Schlafly's faulty and bigoted perceptions of feminists themselves. Throughout her discussion of the 1977 International Women's Year convention, Schlafly noted many times that the discussants, leaders, and organizers were lesbian or had lesbian sympathies. There were also panels at the convention that discussed lesbianism and how to fight for greater rights for female homosexuals. For Schlafly and those like her, who believed homosexuality was not only sinful but was antithetical to their way of life and their socially conservative beliefs, this was damning evidence. The supposed connection between the Equal Rights Amendment and homosexual rights strengthened the appeal of Schlafly's argument within the circle of her followers. Donald Critchlow has argued that connections between issues such as homosexuality and abortion and the ERA allowed Schlafly to show that the amendment
could have numerous unforeseen consequences. While this is important, what was more valuable was the vast network of individuals, activists, and organizations these connections allowed Schlafly to forge. Instead of being limited to those people who were against the ERA, Schlafly had access to social conservatives at large, thanks to the idea that amendment would challenge more than just womanhood. It could possibly challenge the American way of life.\footnote{Phyllis Schlafly, “ERA and Homosexual 'Marriages','” \textit{The Phyllis Schlafly Report} (September 1974), SHSM; Phyllis Schlafly, “What Really Happened in Houston,” \textit{The Phyllis Schlafly Report} (December 1977), SHSM; Critchlow, \textit{Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism}, 225. While this dissertation author recognizes the discourse over proper terminology concerning homosexuality, this chapter uses the word “homosexual” as it is the term that Schlafly used.}

The vast network she forged allowed her to be victorious in her quest to destroy the Equal Rights Amendment. On June 30, 1982, the ERA failed to be ratified, falling short by three states. Feminists, political pundits, and ERA supporters blamed Phyllis Schlafly, and with good cause. She had spent ten years of her time and effort fighting for the supremacy of her definition of womanhood, of a woman who could stay in the home, raise children, and take care of her family without government intervention. She did this by providing her adherents, supporters, and readers of \textit{The Phyllis Schlafly Report} with a logical argument that did not change over the course of the ratification campaign, even though supporting information was added over time. Schlafly preached to the proverbial choir as most of her readers agreed that men and women were inherently different and that no amount of legislation would make them equal. She pointed out laws and organizations that were already in place which were meant to provide women with equal opportunity, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She showed that women would lose vast amounts of privileges, such as the right to be an economically
secure stay-at-home at home mom. These lost privileges would be replaced with brand new responsibilities, most notably the draft. Finally, she argued that the ERA had grave repercussions outside of definitions of womanhood, including a vast federal grab for power, strengthened abortion rights, and homosexual marriage. Speaking up as a social conservative, Phyllis Schlafly was the champion for traditional definitions of womanhood, for a woman's special, privileged, and protected place within the nuclear family and American society as a whole. At the same time, she spoke from a particular standpoint, one clouded with white, heterosexual, and economic privileges. Feminists and pro-ERA advocates might have blamed her for their defeat, but those who proscribed to the traditional, socially conservative definition of womanhood thanked her.

While Phyllis Schlafly served as the leader of women on the far right of the Republican Party, Betty Ford was a symbol for moderate-rightist Republican women. While Schlafly and Ford participated in the same party and held similar identities as wives and mothers, they held different definitions of womanhood. While Schlafly supported traditional womanhood, the First Lady embraced and supported a woman's right to choose her own life path. This view led Ford to support the Equal Rights Amendment and catalyzed her as a controversial political figure throughout her husband's presidency.
Chapter Three

“Being Ladylike Does Not Require Silence:” Betty Ford, the Republican Party, and the Equal Rights Amendment

On November 19, 1975, Gerald Ford received one of the most momentous phone calls of his political life. Ronald Reagan, having only recently stepped down from the governorship of California after two terms, informed the incumbent president that he was going to be a candidate for the 1976 Republican presidential nomination. The announcement was practically unheard of historically—few incumbent presidents had their re-election challenged by members of their own party. Ford was understandably disappointed and recounted in his memoirs that he believed Reagan's bid would not just be problematic for his re-election but for the Republican Party as well. As Ford recalls, “I think he really believed that his candidacy wouldn't be divisive, but I knew he was wrong. How can you challenge an incumbent President of your own party and not be divisive?”¹

Reagan's decision was divisive, but the Republican Party had already shown signs of disunity before November of 1975. Reagan believed the GOP was straying away from its traditional principles, traveling too far down the middle of the political road and

¹Gerald R. Ford, A Time to Heal (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 333. The last incumbent president to face an intraparty primary challenge was William Howard Taft in 1912. See also Craig Shirley, Reagan's Revolution: The Untold Story that Started It All (Nashville: Nelson Current, 2005), 87-97.
breaching the border into liberalism. He articulated his views most clearly in his 1976 campaign address entitled “To Restore America.” The speech detailed policy positions which have become the mantras of conservative Republicanism: lower taxes, a balanced budget, strong national defense, and smaller government at home. Reagan ended the speech by presenting an anecdote of when a little girl asked him why he wanted to be president and he felt he did not answer her very well. Taking the time to answer her question, Reagan declared

I would like to be president, because I would like to see this country become once again a country where a little six-year old girl can grow up knowing the same freedom that I knew when I was six years old, growing up in America. If this is the America you want for yourself and your children; if you want to restore government not only of and for but by the people; to see the American spirit unleashed once again. To make this land a shining, golden hope God intended it to be, I’d like to hear from you.2

In his view, America was not the same place it was fifty or sixty years ago, and part of the problem was the moderate rightist policies of Gerald Ford. For his part, Ford believed himself to be not just a Republican and a rightist but a conservative. As he argued, “Conservatism has always meant more to me than simply sticking up for private property and free enterprise. It has also meant defending our heritage and preserving our values.” Ford, too, wanted an America where a six-year old girl could grow up in freedom. But even though they shared the same goal, Ford understood that he and Reagan had quite different ideas for how to achieve the end result. He knew he was considered a middle-of-the-road Republican, conservative on economic policy while

more moderate with social issues. Reagan's conservative social policies, on the other hand, served as one of his greatest wellsprings of political power.³

Ford recalled that he did not see the challenge coming, though he believed he should have. Conservative Republicans were upset over many of his decisions, both foreign and domestic. They were also deeply angered over the activities of Ford's wife, First Lady Betty Ford. Remembered for her candor and bravery in speaking her mind, Betty Ford caused numerous tumults within the Republican party because some of her views were considered less than conservative. In fact, Gerald Ford believed that Betty's views were one of the main reasons Reagan challenged him for the presidential nomination. During an August of 1975 interview for the television program 60 Minutes, Betty Ford told reporter Morley Safer that she supported Roe v. Wade, would not be surprised if her children had tried marijuana, and would support her daughter Susan if she had premarital sex. While Ford chose not to try to limit his wife's speech, at least at that point in time, conservatives were outraged that their party's First Lady not only held such opinions but voiced them openly. Betty Ford's vocal views, therefore, pushed Reagan to question Ford's position as president.⁴

Historians have agreed that Betty Ford's 60 Minutes interview was a catalyzing moment for the Republican Party during Gerald Ford's presidency. Political scholar MaryAnne Borelli theorizes that Betty's viewpoints gained her husband's administration more critics than supporters. Craig Shirley even argues that the First Lady's comments

³ Ford, A Time to Heal, 264; Yanek Mieczkowski, Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 307, 413 n. 11.

drove voters away from her husband and “into Reagan's...eager arms.” Scholars have missed, though, that the interview was merely the straw that broke the camel's back. Betty's candor raised the ire of many a conservative Republican well before the television program aired. While the First Lady's support for breast cancer awareness brought her great support, her views on the Equal Rights Amendment brought a swell of conservative condemnation. *60 Minutes* might have been the clincher, but conservatives initially questioned Betty and her female leadership because of her support for the ERA during her husband's presidency from 1974 to 1976. In her own memoirs, Betty Ford recalled that the East Wing of the White House received thousands of letters in 1974 and early 1975, well before the infamous broadcast, many of them questioning “how could a woman like me be the wife of the President of the United States?”

Comments like this question not just Betty Ford's viewpoints but also her femininity and womanhood. Critics argued that the First Lady stepped out of the traditional bounds of her position and her gender. Betty served as a fulcrum for debates about the delineation of power of the office of First Lady as well as the proper activities and behavior for women. In this way, her pro-ERA activism challenged traditional views on the First Ladyship and womanhood. There was a wide ideological rift between those people who supported her and those who did not. This divide, in turn, served as fuel for the fire of a greater debate over the future of the Republican Party and the political right. If Phyllis Schlafly served as an example of conservative rightist womanhood, the First Lady embodied her counterpart. As a moderate rightist Republican, Betty Ford hoped to turn the party away from the traditional gender roles Schlafly espoused and toward

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greater gender equality under the law. Therefore, she did not just catalyze debates over the ERA and the legal position of women. She challenged the ideology of womanhood in general, altering the role of First Lady as well as the level of conservatism within the Republican Party. In essence, Betty Ford defined womanhood for herself, utilizing her agency to mix rightist aspects of her ideology while supporting women's rights, without deeming herself a feminist.

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The role and office of First Lady have never been set in stone. The United States Constitution, which provides the official powers and role of the President, does not codify any similar position for the leader's partner, and, to date, this partner has been exclusively female. With no strict delineation of their duties, First Ladies have had to rely on precedent more than anything else in defining what their capacity is within the government and its bureaucracy. In fact, the only official recognition of her importance and political role is that she receives a government pension upon retirement just like any other administrative employee. In this way, the First Ladyship is historical and contextual as each First Lady takes on the role in a different way but is analyzed and judged by her predecessor's actions. While there are various social and political customs, there are no hard and fast rules.6

Scholars agree on one thing, though—the First Lady wields a large amount of power. In fact, during most of American history it was one of the few avenues open for women who wanted any sort of political power. Over time, the East Wing of the White House has evolved into a massive bureaucratic structure utilizing a large staff and budget.

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The first lady has this at her disposal for any side projects she might wish to take on, as well as any political endeavors. She also has the ear of the most important man on the American political scene: the president. Scholars have defined this as “pillow talk” as first ladies are, typically and perceivedly, the first person the president sees when they wake up and the last they speak to before they go to sleep. The intimacy of the marital bedroom gives the first lady special access to the president's time, as well as his attention. Due to this, her power, both personal and political, tends to be greater if her relationship with the president is close and loving.7

What troubles some is that, as First Lady scholar Robert P. Watson notes, “the first lady is 'elected' by only one person: the president.” Since the position is extra-constitutional, the president's wife does not receive her power from the people as with others who hold a government position. Feminist author and activist Germaine Greer has argued that the practice of an unelected First Lady who wields a high level of political clout is a hypocritical stance for a democratic nation to take. She notes her belief that “it can no longer be acceptable that a person should achieve high visibility, influence and even a degree of executive power simply because she shares a bed (or is thought to share a bed) with a head of state.” In a democratic nation such as the United States, it can be argued that giving any person political power due to her or his familial or marital ties is a fallacy of political philosophy. In fact, to prevent nepotism, the Federal Anti-Nepotism Statute of 1967, commonly known as the “Bobby Kennedy Rule,” was enacted, declaring

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that no immediate family members can be appointed to a federal government position. This same logic or law does not apply to the President's wife.8

But the problems with the tenuous ties between an unelected government position and political power are much greater than a hypocritical philosophical stance. Due to the fact that the people never voted for her service, every move the first lady makes is open to public criticism, sometimes outright condemnation. There were and are official and unofficial limits to her power, limits that she is made aware of if she steps outside of the traditional bounds of her office. As John B. Roberts points out, first ladies have learned that if they want to avoid criticism, they had better stick to ceremonial duties and speak up for noncontroversial social causes. First Ladies who did not take this advice, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Betty Ford, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, had criticism heaped upon them by their opponents, who were usually also their husbands' opponents. Critics argued that her power was illegitimate because it did not come from the people and that, therefore, she should have no power at all. Negative reactions often bound the hands of many First Ladies, leaving them without political recourse in order to protect the office of First Lady as well as their husbands' careers. It has also led historians to minimize the First Lady's contributions within her husband's administration and to their overall presidential success.9

Additionally, the unelected nature of the First Ladyship also places her in a difficult position in that she is viewed through a lens heavily weighted with traditional

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gender ideology. Specifically, a First Lady's womanhood has nearly always been brought into question. The relationship between the President and the First Lady has historically evolved to the point where they are thought of as the First Couple. They have become more than just the head of the executive branch of government—they are the nation's marital icon as well. This iconography, though, is not one of two partners coming into a marriage as equals. Instead, the presidential marriage is rife with traditional gender ideology, serving as a symbol for contemporary and historical visions of American femininity and masculinity. This division between husband and wife also serves as a notice to the First Lady that, oftentimes, the limitations of her power are based on her unelected position as well as the fact that she is a woman.\(^\text{10}\)

Scholars who study the American presidency argue that it is the epitome of masculine power, particularly since it is constructed within the male sphere of politics. The president is more than just a figure who stands as the chief executive of the United States. As Robert P. Watson notes, he “must reinforce the socially preferred notions of masculinity, fatherhood, and family patriarch.” His wife, therefore, must stand for all that he does not. She must be the figurehead and national symbol of femininity, mother, and matriarch, though never overstepping her husband's rule. While the traditional gender roles in this description of the First Couple are stark and clear, they take on special importance when colored by the political nature of their marriage and relationship. Though women were historically supposed to act out their sexual scripts in the private sphere of the home and family, the First Lady is forced to do so with the entire nation, and sometimes the world, watching. She becomes a symbol of traditional

\(^\text{10}\) Troy, Affairs of State, 17.
womanhood, stripped of any feminist impulses or notions of agency, and relegated to the background.\footnote{Watson, \textit{The Presidents' Wives}, 47-48, 73.}

First Ladies, therefore, must be careful as to what causes they take up and how they go about their activism and support. It has been acceptable historically for them to champion women's causes and issues, particularly in the fields of health care and the family. Other, more directly political issues, have been deemed unacceptable and open to criticism. This becomes even trickier as, without codification, she must carefully walk the line between acceptable and unacceptable activism if she has goals she wishes to achieve. In 1972, the National Republican Committee produced a manual for political wives that advised them on how to use their positions to the best advantage of their husbands' careers. They were carefully instructed not to detract from him and his political stances, to never contradict him, and to always maintain a feminine demeanor and persona. It has been argued that Republican First Ladies, such as Mamie Eisenhower and Nancy Reagan, were more willing to maintain traditional notions of femininity than Democratic First Ladies, including Rosalynn Carter and Hillary Rodham Clinton. Still, the meaning of this manual rings true, regardless of party: all First Ladies were to maintain enough of the vestiges of traditional womanhood to prove a help and not a hindrance to their husbands' political ambitions.\footnote{Troy, \textit{Affairs of State}, 219; Watson, \textit{The Presidents' Wives}, 78, 129-131.}

It is clear, therefore, that a First Lady's political ambitions and power are and were starkly limited by her role as First Wife. While First Lady scholar Robert P. Watson has argued for the use of the term “First Spouse,” this obfuscates the fact that all First Spouses have, so far, been First Ladies. While Watson hopes to use this term to
challenge views that the First Lady has no identity outside of her marriage, it does not go far enough to meet the demands of feminists and feminist scholars who argue the First Ladyship sets up an unacceptable standard for women. Dressed in her finest, including heels and lipstick, the First Lady can be seen, in Gil Troy's words, as “an accessory, one of the many flourishes that helped paint a presidential portrait.” Another scholar has noted that the First Lady is to play the role of inexhaustible cheerleader and “is expected to let herself be seen beside her husband, so that she can lead the appreciation for his every word and action.” In these views, the First Ladyship, instead of a position of power, can be seen as rather stifling, in terms of both power and identity.13

But that is only true if the First Lady allows it to be stifling. Betty Ford did not. She chose, on more occasions than her husband and his administration would have liked, to break away from the traditional confines of her political role and espouse a broader view of the First Ladyship and the issues she could fight for within her purview. Some of her activities and viewpoints, such as the 60 Minutes interview, gained her great scorn and criticism from her opponents. Luckily for Betty Ford, she seemed to have more supporters than critics, in her own time as well as with current historians and contemporary public opinion. Even though she has been called the most controversial twentieth-century First Lady other than Eleanor Roosevelt, her candor and courage to speak her mind has earned her a top-ten spot in the Sienna Research Institute's ranking of the First Ladies since 1982.14

13 Troy, Affairs of State, 1; Watson, The Presidents' Wives, 33; Greer, “Abolish Her,” 22.

14 Troy, Affairs of State, 207; Sienna Research Institute, “Ranking America's First Ladies,” Sienna Research Institute Website, retrieved from www.siena.edu/sri/research on August 16, 2012.
Historians and political scholars have described Betty Ford as the first modern First Lady, aside from Eleanor Roosevelt. They base assessments of presidential wives on a number of factors, including the woman's ability to achieve her own political ends, their influence with the president, and their public approval ratings. Robert P. Watson labeled Betty Ford a “partial partner,” meaning that she had only limited power over the president and only accomplished some of her goals. This ranking was due to the divisive nature of her views, particularly within the Republican Party during the 1976 primary and 1977 presidential campaign. This ranking did not stop him from noting that Betty Ford broke the mold of Republican First Ladies who were seen as not as powerful or politically independent as their Democratic counterparts. Myra Gutin ranks her higher, deeming her a “political surrogate,” arguing that she was just as powerful as Gerald Ford in terms of political clout in the court of public opinion, if not more. This is partially due to the way the public consistently approved more highly of her than her husband as she consistently received more glowing press coverage.¹⁵

Political insiders also understood the power of the First Lady. Most importantly, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, presidents during Betty Ford's time of political power, understood her importance to the administration and her decision-making capabilities. Before Ford was sworn in as President, the nation witnessed more scandal in the executive branch of the federal government than ever before due to Vice President Spiro Agnew's corruption and subsequent resignation. Gerald Ford later remembered that when Nixon called him to ask him to be the next Vice President, he asked that Betty Ford listen in on the call as the news would affect her as much as Gerald. Additionally, when

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¹⁵ Watson, The Presidents' Wives, 129-131, 142; Gutin, The Presidents' Partner, 132-140. While it seems odd to say Ford was the first modern First Lady save Eleanor Roosevelt, analysts tend to see Roosevelt as an outlier whose political power and activism was not replicated until Betty Ford.
Nixon contemplated his own resignation after Watergate, Gerald Ford spent many nights deep in “pillow talk” with his wife and together they decided whether and how he would take up the position as President. It is clear from these remarks that Betty Ford's influence on her husband was an important part of his political career, and that did not change when he accepted higher office. Due to her insistence on political participation, her willingness to honestly speak her mind, and her widespread approval by the American public and press, historian Mary Linehan argued that the Fords' partnership model of governance was later emulated by their successors. Indeed, because of her importance to Gerald Ford's numerous elected offices, Betty Ford, Linehan theorized, “made the personal political, creating new options for women and for political wives. In doing so, she transformed the role of first lady.”

Betty Ford, née Bloomer, was born on April 18, 1918, and was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan in a blue-collar, middle-class family. There is little evidence that she was interested in political issues before her second marriage to Gerald Ford. Instead, Ford pursued her interest in dance during her childhood and early adulthood, eventually reaching her pinnacle when she studied and performed under the renowned modern dancer Martha Graham in New York City. She also worked as a model to help pay for her dance education and living expenses in the bustling metropolis. After a failed marriage to a traveling salesman, Betty returned to her familial home in Grand Rapids in 1949 and met Gerald Ford. The couple began a whirlwind courtship and married a year later while “Jerry” ran for the United States House of Representatives. He was so invested in his

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campaign that he left their rehearsal dinner early and was late for the wedding itself as he
gave a speech which went on too long. After Gerald Ford won his congressional seat,
Betty joined the National Federation of Republican Women and the Congressional Wives
Club, and began volunteering with disabled children in and around their new home in
Washington, D.C. While the new Mrs. Ford quickly took to the life of the political wife,
her involvement seems to have been sparked as a social necessity to aid her husband's
political standing.17

Betty Ford earned national and historical renown due to her popularity and her
charisma, but she also championed important issues other First Ladies never had before.
The more experience she had as the spouse of a government official, the more she took on
controversial issues with greater levels of public discourse and division. Most
importantly, she supported numerous women's rights platforms aside from her
involvement with the Equal Rights Amendment. In describing her path toward
amendment advocacy, two issues are most important. First was Betty Ford's struggle
with breast cancer which put her in a position of media prominence and began her interest
in and entrance into women's issues. Second was her use of “pillow talk” to persuade her
husband to appoint Anne Armstrong into a federal position, including as one of his
presidential advisers, as the first female ambassador to Britain, and even her unsuccessful
attempt to push Armstrong into the vice presidency. Activism such as this has made
historians question whether Betty Ford should be properly deemed a feminist, even
though she never used the label to describe herself.

17 For an analytical and exhaustive biography of Betty Ford's early life, see John Robert Greene,
_Betty Ford:  Courage and Candor in the White House_ (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2004),
1-37.
In many ways, Betty Ford was a traditional rightist, sometimes even holding conservative political viewpoints. The First Lady described her own Republicanism and conservative outlook numerous times in her memoirs. She was a member of the Republican Party and held much political clout since her husband was such an important party official. As a political wife, Betty Ford took it upon herself to “shake up the Republican wives” and persuade them to play a greater role within the party and their husbands' careers through volunteer work and supporting their various issues and causes. She was also conservative when it came to foreign affairs, particularly the war in Vietnam. While her children tended to be more interested in ending the war and removing American troops from the ground, Betty Ford considered herself a “hawk,” supporting American intervention even if it meant extending the machinations of war. She also believed “all citizens—and that includes females—should give two years of service to their country.” In these ways, Betty Ford was no dove. These viewpoints contradict assumptions about the necessary tie between feminist views and leftist or liberal political orientation.\textsuperscript{18}

Even though Betty Ford was officially a member of the Republican Party, and therefore allied with the political right, it was her interest and activism within women's issues that made her a political celebrity. She began her career as a women's advocate during a time of great personal struggle. On September 26, 1974, the First Lady was diagnosed with breast cancer and soon afterward had a full mastectomy of her right breast. After she recovered from surgery, Betty Ford held numerous interviews with the media, allowing them to document her struggle as well as her success. Biographer John

\textsuperscript{18} Ford, \textit{The Times of My Life}, 121, 139.
Greene noted the instantaneous support the First Lady received from women across the country who told her of their own battles with cancer, those of the other women in their lives, and their fears of mammograms and the possibility of having the disease themselves. During a time when women's health issues were not openly discussed, Betty Ford's candor served as a consciousness-raising moment, a time when women who lived and fought with fears of cancer or struggled to survive the disease itself did not feel alone. National calls were made for women to seek mammograms and perform self breast examinations. Happy Rockefeller, the wife of Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, found a tumor in her own breast and went through a mastectomy as well, crediting Betty Ford for opening her eyes to the need to examine her body. Scholars such as Greene have argued that Betty Ford realized her political power due to her battle with cancer. The First Lady realized that she could affect American women through voicing her opinions, struggles, and beliefs. She utilized her newly found power in the struggle to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.19

Betty Ford also showed her insistence on the high priority of women's rights within her husband's administration with her “pillow talk” pressure for Anne Armstrong to be appointed to a high position of leadership. John B. Roberts postulated that Betty Ford was an important adviser in Gerald Ford's decision to appoint Armstrong as one of his presidential advisers and, later, as the ambassador to Britain. The former president also noted this in his memoirs, even writing that he would have liked her to be his vice presidential running mate. She was not nominated, though, as her pro-women's rights stance would have alienated many Republican voters. This did not alienate Betty Ford,

though, who viewed her as a worthy ally in the fight to extend women's equality nationwide. Through her office as presidential adviser, Armstrong had her hand in many of the most important women's issues of the day. When Gerald Ford established Women's Equality Day on August 22, 1974, Armstrong wrote his influential speech. Most importantly, Armstrong participated in the struggle to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment as she wrote up numerous talking points for Betty Ford as well as kept track of how various states and regional women's organizations were doing in their fight to enact or ratify the amendment locally. In these ways, Anne Armstrong proved herself an important partner in enacting women's rights throughout the federal government and earned Betty Ford's unequivocal support.20

Betty Ford made it clear that, through her influence, her husband's administration would support women's equal rights. In this light, Americans first came to know Betty Ford as a pro-ERA advocate through massive national publicity she received due to numerous phone calls she made from the White House to state senators, urging them to support the proposed amendment. Though making telephone calls seemed like a relatively small matter to her, ERA opponents thought otherwise. Betty Ford was derided by more conservative members of the political right and the Republican Party, including Phyllis Schlafly, in an attempt to silence the First Lady. People interested in the Equal Rights Amendment and in the political power of the First Lady debated whether Betty Ford had stepped outside of her bounds, both politically and socially. These comments and criticisms appeared particularly through the medium of newspapers. Politically,

opponents challenged her use of federal resources in her lobbying efforts and if, as First Lady, it was officially correct for her to lobby in the first place. Socially, critics believed that she had stepped outside of the bonds of proper womanhood. As the wife of the President, they claimed, she had stricter rules guiding her personal behavior than other women had. In other words, they argued Betty Ford had to be a perfect woman, at least perfect by traditional definitions of domesticity, submissiveness, and silence. The debate over Betty Ford's telephoning became such a debacle that Gerald Ford's advisers began to devise ways to silence her or, at the very least, muffle her voice as the road to the 1976 presidential primaries loomed ever closer.

The controversy began over a few phone calls. In early February 1975, the First Lady telephoned numerous Arizona state senators, including Barry Goldwater, and asked that they make certain the ERA would be well supported within their state's legislature. There were numerous reports that, due to the conservative nature of the Arizona state legislature, there was little hope that the amendment would be ratified in 1975. Senator Goldwater had many friends throughout the national Republican Party and news of the First Lady's telephone calls spread throughout the party, particularly among its more conservative members. Phyllis Schlafly, one of Goldwater's most influential supporters and head of the anti-ratification organization STOP ERA, heard the news and was greatly dismayed. She sent a telegram to the White House and Betty Ford on February 8 to voice her complaints. Alluding to the fact that Ford had sponsored command briefings on the Equal Rights Amendment during working hours, Schlafly also wanted to know how much federal money the First Lady spent on long distance phone calls to state
legislatures and how much time her East Wing administrative staff members, who were federal employees, spent on lobbying for the ERA during paid business hours.\footnote{Washington Star article, February 4, 1975, GFL, Elizabeth O`Neill Files, Box 4; Greene, Betty Ford, 58; “Phyllis Schlafly Telegram to Betty Ford,” GFL, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Box 47.}

What came next was a firestorm of criticism against Betty Ford. Her public condemnation by members of the conservative right, particularly those within the Republican Party, showed the limitations of a First Lady's political power. Schlafly's highly organized grassroots association displayed its political might by making its opposition heard nationwide. Though Betty Ford publicly claimed no federal funds were used in her endeavors, opponents, particularly members of STOP ERA, threatened to picket the White House on February 13, only five days after she made the telephone calls. It was no idle threat, and soon women traveled from across the country to protest outside the White House gates. Betty Ford later remembered that the picketers, Schlafly the most vocal of them, questioned not just her political right to lobby but her womanhood, motherhood, and femininity. Though the First Couple had to constantly pass by and through groups of women who were against them and their political viewpoints, they tried to make the best of it. In fact, Gerald Ford even joked about it during a press conference with Jackie Gleason, noting that his wife received more pickets than he did. He supported her, though, as he believed that it was in her nature and character as she was already well-noted for her candor and controversial viewpoints.\footnote{“From the Wire Article: Asks Mrs. Ford to Account,” “Stop E.R.A. Group May Picket White House,” and “Exchange of Remarks between the President and Jackie Gleason,” GFL, Patricia Lindh and Jean Holm Files, Box 21; Ford, The Times of My Life, 203.}

But picketers were just one aspect of the criticism the First Lady received. Oklahoma's Republican State Committee (RSC) sent Betty Ford a letter on February 14\footnote{Washington Star article, February 4, 1975, GFL, Elizabeth O`Neill Files, Box 4; Greene, Betty Ford, 58; “Phyllis Schlafly Telegram to Betty Ford,” GFL, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Box 47.}
urging her to cease and desist. They noted that the ERA was unpopular in Oklahoma and that their state legislature had passed resolutions opposing it. If she did not stop her lobbying, they claimed, further actions would be taken. As the First Lady continued to make her voice heard, Oklahoma's RSC passed a resolution demanding that families of politicians refrain from using their family member's position of power to their own ends. The Missouri state legislature went even further, introducing a resolution which condemned the First Lady for her lobbying efforts. While it is important to note that the two legislatures who demanded her silence opposed the ERA and probably would not have protested her lobbying otherwise, they justified their demands by focusing on her governmental position, which was inherently gendered. In essence, the two groups requested that Betty Ford not lobby because her husband was President. As First Lady, she was to be seen and not heard, at least in the opinions of the members of the RSC of Oklahoma and the state legislature members of Missouri, especially since she spoke for an amendment with which they disagreed.23

The East Wing of the White House also received dozens of letters from citizens concerned about Betty Ford's lobbying efforts in support of the Equal Rights Amendment. The letter writers opposed the First Lady's perceived usurpation of presidential power as well as her challenge to the traditional bounds of rightist womanhood. Politically, oppositional letter writers focused on the fact that legislation was supposed to come from the legislative branch of government, not the executive branch or the office of President. They believed Betty Ford overstepped her role when

23 “Letter to Betty Ford from the Oklahoma Republican State Committee,” “Telegram to Gerald Ford from the Oklahoma Republican State Committee,” and “From the Wire,” GFL, Lindh and Holm Files, Box 21.
she used her political position as First Lady to lobby for the ERA. They understood that the First Lady had many duties while in office, they just did not believe that participation in the legislative process was one of them. The leader of an Indiana Republican Women's Club wrote that “it is not one of her duties to persuade the state legislators to vote in favor of ratifying the E.R.A. Amendment.” Another letter writer pointed out that Betty Ford used executive power in a political measure that was fully legislative. Additionally, one Republican woman noted that the First Lady actually lost adherents to the President's cause, noting that Betty Ford sided with “liberal Democrats, Women's Libbers, the Ms. Organization and individuals of that cult,” most likely referring to feminists as a whole. These letters showed that the First Lady's lobbying caused divisions within the rightist Republican Party.24

Other oppositional letter writers took their criticism a step further, arguing that the First Lady not only usurped presidential power, but also took on a masculine role. In their view, the role of First Lady held a particular moral weight as she was seen as the standard bearer of American womanhood. One author asked why the First Lady did not “stick to the gracious position as 'first lady' and forgo ERA and politics?,” implying that her role as the husband's wife and politics were completely separated and should not be mixed. Another asserted that “the President's wife, who is supposed to be representing the American women as a whole, should not intervene, on either side, in this controversy.” A newspaper editorial asked if the American public had “the right to expect a more genteel, lofty moral code in the woman who willingly or not represents American womanhood?” Finally, one made the connection to perceived changes in womanhood

24 “Oppositional Letters to Betty Ford,” GLF, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Box 47.
due to Betty Ford's activism and potential implementation of the ERA most clear when
she argued that

People who love God, and respect His Word know that He expects man to be “head” of the home—to respect the woman for her role as homemaker, and like-wise women are to have respect for the man of the house—if he truly lives his role according to God's will. Passage of ERA will destroy the basic foundation of our country—we cannot let it be made into law.

Words such as these made it explicitly clear that Betty Ford did not just challenge the legal position of women in the United States. She also challenged traditional gender behaviors, roles, and spaces, transgressing into the political word previously deemed for men only. Her position as First Lady, perceived as the symbol of American womanhood, only made this transgression worse.25

By the end of February of 1975, Betty Ford had received three letters opposing her activism for every one she received in support. This ratio was published and broadcasted by news media across the country. By the beginning of March, with her husband in the planning stages for his campaign during the 1976 presidential primaries, Gerald Ford's political advisers began to worry. If she continued with her lobbying, the President's wife could become a detriment to his electoral ambitions. Numerous historians have noted that the public criticism as well as the high volume of negative letters made the President's advisers feel that they need to try to reign in the First Lady's vocal views, if only until the primaries were over.26

25 Ibid.; editorial quoted in Greene, Betty Ford, 79.

26 Greene, Betty Ford, 66-79; Roberts, Rating the First Ladies, 305; Linehan, “Betty Ford and the Transformation of the Role of First Lady, 65; “Mrs. Ford's Mail 3-1 Against ERA,” The News, GFL, Lindh and Holm Files, Box 21.
In late February and early March, the advisers tried two different tactics to try to quiet Betty Ford. First, they made it clear to the East Wing that if federally funded facilities and resources had been used to lobby for the ERA, they should not be used again. Betty Ford's top aides received a memo forcefully asking that any future lobbying efforts, including those to senators or the public at large, be cleared with the President's administrators before they went any further. In other words, the West Wing claimed bureaucratic jurisdiction over the East Wing's business and demanded greater administrative oversight. Secondly, the advisers decided that it was time for Betty Ford to go on the defensive and meet the public outcry against her. Though Betty Ford was not shy of the media limelight, the West Wing provided the First Lady with some talking points meant to stave off greater public criticism. In response to media questions about her opponents' critiques, she was to note that she was entitled to her opinion, even if she was First Lady. She was also to point out that she was forced to use federal resources to lobby as her phone was located in her home, the White House, a federal, public building. What the advisers pressed most, though, was that Betty Ford was to stress “how much you enjoy being a feminine wife and mother—and still believe in the ERA.” The President's advisers also understood the strong ties between the First Ladyship and traditional womanhood.27

Even as the West Wing moved to silence Betty Ford, or at least feminize her image, her opponents' criticism did not go unmet. Betty Ford's activism and lobbying efforts had many supporters within news media and the public at large. She also received bipartisan support from Republican and Democratic women and men. News media, in

27 “Memorandum,” GFL, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Box 47; “Talking Points,” GFL, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Box 37.
editorial newspaper articles and radio pieces, argued that it was imperative that the First Lady's First Amendment rights not be restricted due to her official position. The *Kansas City Star* claimed that “anyone with a rudimentary interest in government knows that Mrs. Ford has every right to express an interest in a proposed amendment to the Constitution of her country.” The *Detroit Free Press* agreed, believing Betty Ford's voice fell under the right to free speech, just as any other citizen. The *Providence Bulletin* noted that Betty Ford added to public perceptions of the First Ladyship when she spoke her views with such candor. Most strikingly, the conservative radio station KMOX out of St. Louis, Missouri, stated that, even though they did not support the Equal Rights Amendment, they supported Betty Ford's right to speak. As they put it, “when we start regarding political activity by a first lady, or any citizen, as 'demeaning,' our democracy is in big trouble.”  

Letter writers focused less on First Amendment rights and more often than not supported the First Lady because they shared the same opinion on the ERA. Many were especially pleased that Betty Ford spoke as the First Lady, documenting the chasm that separated people's opinions on changing views of legal and social womanhood. Female letter writers were both Republican and Democratic and, oftentimes, did not write of their own political affiliation, only that they supported Betty Ford. A Democratic woman declared that if Betty Ford could influence her husband, Gerald Ford would have her vote. Many women also noted that the reason they wrote letters was to change the East Wing's mail ratio in an attempt to alter the three to one statistics they read about in the news. One woman wrote that “most people, like myself, do not write praising your

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28 “From the Wire,” GFL, Lindh and Holm Files, Box 21; “KMOX Radio Editorial,” GFL, Sheila Weidenfeld Files, Box 47.
position because support of the ERA is of course the only logical, rational decision, and it seems in a way redundant to praise something which is obviously right.” Finally, some letter writers wrote specifically to praise how Betty Ford's activism challenged traditional notions of a First Lady's behavior and womanhood more broadly. A supporter put it succinctly when she declared “you might just be another in a long line of First Ladies. But you are indeed our First Woman.”

Thanks to the support of women such as these, news outlets reported that by March 3, 1975, Betty Ford's mail had completely turned around. Now she received three supportive letters for every one which was negative. Her main secretary of the time, Sheila Weidenfeld, reported that, so far, the First Lady had received 6,412 letters in favor of her lobbying and the Equal Rights Amendment and 2,729 letters against. During the first full week of April, though the public furor had significantly diminished, the East Wing received 229 letters for and 90 letters against, maintaining close to the same ratio. But the debacle over Betty Ford's public activism was about more than letters written and sides taken. It showcased the changing values and viewpoints on womanhood. These changes did not follow party lines as Republican women supported or rejected them, and the ERA, regardless of party platform. Most importantly, the furor over telephone calls showcased the growing division within the political right over traditional womanhood.

Though Betty Ford used many platforms to advocate for the Equal Rights Amendment, the largest, and most important to her, was the International Women's Year

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29 “Letters of Support,” GFL, O'Neill Files, Box 6; “Letters of Support,” GFL, Weidenfeld Files, Box 47.

30 “Mrs. Ford's Mail Swings to Pro-ERA,” The Christian Science Monitor, and “From the Wire: Mrs. Ford Happy Over Change in Mail,” GFL, Lindh and Holm Files, Box 21; “Betty Ford—Mail Analyses,” GFL, Weidenfeld Files, Box 39.
Congress in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1975. Not only did she play a key role in the congress, she pushed for its existence and brought it into prominence and the national spotlight. The congress served to raise the consciousness of thousands of women and men about the ERA. It also showed how much power a First Lady had at her disposal, thanks to her public government role and her close proximity to the president. In the case of International Women's Year, Betty Ford used all of the privileges of her office to her advantage, and to the advantage of equal rights for women.

Betty Ford had long wanted a large gathering of women to discuss women's equality and issues, even those which were clearly perceived as feminist, including the Equal Rights Amendment. Thanks to their loving and respectful marriage, Betty's “pillow talk” had effect. Gerald Ford noted Betty often spoke to him about the ERA and other women's issues as they laid in bed, and he recalled that her gentle prodding and suggestions came to a successful end. On January 9, 1975, in tandem with the United Nation's declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year, the President signed Executive Order 11832. The order declared that although women's position had greatly advanced, there were still inequities nationwide. To this end, EO 11832 established a National Commission on the Observation of National Women's Year. Its main goal was “to promote equality between men and women,” and the Commission was given power to strive for this equality on a national scale.31

The First Lady's influence can be seen in this presidential decision. She later recounted Gerald Ford's signing the order as a proud personal achievement. She argued that the executive order had “moral force” and showed that the President stood up for women's rights and, more specifically, the ERA. Thanks to Betty Ford's pillow talk and political influence, Gerald Ford fully understood that one of the National Commission's goals would be to push for the Equal Rights Amendment. In his remarks to the Commission on April 14, 1975, Ford noted that one of his goals for International Women's Year would be to nurture and inform debate on gaining women's equality through the ERA. This was fully in line with Betty Ford's established position on the matter.32

The women and men on the Commission knew just what an important role Betty Ford played in the group's establishment and that a big event was necessary to meet the President and First Lady's goals. They decided to stage a conference on the status of women in the United States to be held in Cleveland on October 25 through 27, 1975, better known as the Greater Cleveland Congress. The organizing committee placed Gwill York as chairperson of the Congress. York, vice-chair of the Cleveland Foundation, a major community support organization, had a profound task before her. She was in charge of organizing the entire affair, which quickly turned into a massive event with 150 workshops, 250 exhibition booths, and a future attendance of over 45,000 participants.33


York was also responsible for finding the keynote speaker and, together with the rest of the organizing committee, immediately decided on Betty Ford. Thanks to her position as First Lady and her national prominence as an ERA advocate, the planners thought that she was the most obvious choice for the opening day address. Gaining the attendance and participation of the First Lady was no easy task, though, as her time was precious and in great demand. In a letter from September 1975 to the East Wing of the White House, York stated that they wanted the First Lady due to her candor as well as the Commission's great respect for her. She also referenced the recent public outcry over Ford's *60 Minutes* interview and hoped that the “reaction...in no way diminishes her ability to speak publicly and speak how she believes.” It did not. Betty Ford accepted the speaking engagement and thanked the committee for their gift of cymbidium orchids.\(^\text{34}\)

After the Commission received Betty Ford's acceptance, planning for the arrival of the First Lady became their next big challenge. The committee knew this would be her first major address as First Lady and that they had to plan for it accordingly. They eyes of the nation would be on Cleveland so the committee, as well as the East Wing, put a large amount of preparation into Betty's keynote address to make sure that it went smoothly. The committee also had to plan for the arrival of the White House press corps as well as other local and national reporters, over 100 altogether. The organizers spent

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more time planning for her arrival than any other attendant, showcasing the power and
prestige that a First Lady held.\textsuperscript{35}

Betty Ford's arrival went smoothly and she was scheduled to give her speech at
12:30 PM on October 25, the opening day of the Congress. She was introduced by Jill
Ruckelshaus, Republican feminist and one of the event organizers, and her message
indicated just how much the First Lady was revered for her personal stance on the Equal
Rights Amendment and other women's issues. She stated that Betty Ford was “a woman
who has exemplified in the loyalty and the love...with which she has raised her family,
and supported her husband in his public role, a spirit which to me typifies the spirit of
IWY.” Ruckelshaus's gratitude was evident as she felt indebted “for the great support
and intelligence, [and] partnership for support for the ratification of the Equal Rights
Amendment.” The women on the National Commission supported her and Gerald Ford
in her actions and, speaking for them, Ruckelshaus told her that “whatever you do and
wherever you go, in the future, I, and millions of American women are beside you.”
They were gracious words and showed the criticized Ford and the nation that, even with
the public condemnation which emanated from her ERA activism and her \textit{60 Minutes}
interview, a great body of American women supported her work in pursuit of women's
equality.\textsuperscript{36}

First Lady scholar Myra A. Gutin has argued that Betty Ford's keynote address
was the most important speech of her political career and her major policy address on

\textsuperscript{35} GCC Editorial Commitee, \textit{Toward Equal Partnership}, 18, 30-33; Press Applications, WRHS,
International Women's Year Papers, Container 1.

\textsuperscript{36} Jill Ruckelshaus Introductory Speech, WRHS, Container 3.
women's issues and the Equal Rights Amendment. Transcripts of the speech confirm Gutin's assessment. The First Lady was firm in her support of the pursuit of women's equality and the necessity of the ERA in achieving that goal. Betty Ford first called attention to the criticism she received when she wrote letters and phoned members of Congress asking them to support the amendment, noting that critics argued that she had stepped outside the limits of her political position and the proper bounds of womanhood. She disagreed with their critique, noting her belief that “being First Lady should [not] prevent me from expressing my views.” She then argued that other women had spoken out on the ERA, either for or against, and forcefully stated that “being ladylike does not require silence.” In one simple but poignant declaration, Betty Ford challenged traditional definitions of rightist and Republican definitions of women's proper behavior. Women did not have to stay within the private sphere of the home but, instead, could and should participate in the public realm of politics as vocal and powerful political actors.37

Large portions of the rest of her speech challenged social implications of the Equal Rights Amendment, at least those perceived by opponents. The battle over the ERA had become emotional, she noted, with worries over how the possible amendment would change the United States' social structure, including gender definitions and women's places within American families. Though she never used the word itself, she pointed out that the women's movement and the amendment ratification struggle had already altered patterns of gender behavior and views on proper womanhood, stating that “part of the job of those of us who support ERA is to help remove this cloud of fear and confusion.” But Betty Ford understood that more than legal equality was necessary to

37 Gutin, The President's Partner, 134; “Mrs. Ford's Remarks, Greater Cleveland IWY Congress, October 25, 1975,” GFL, Elizabeth O'Neill Files, Box 4.
make women fully equal with men. Women also needed to believe themselves equal and value themselves as members of the national community for social equality to be achieved. While the ERA was an important and necessary first step, women themselves needed to believe in the changes that occurred, including the restructuring of American womanhood. After all, as Betty Ford argued, “the heart of the battle is within.”

But equality did not mean that women needed to become men, much like her adversary Phyllis Schlafly believed. In fact, the First Lady was bothered by criticism of women who were “just a housewife.” In her view, part of valuing women, and of women valuing themselves, was supporting their role within the home and their choice of staying within the home if that is what they wished. She noted that “downgrading this work has been part of the pattern in our society that has undervalued women's talents in all areas.” Women should not be condemned if they chose to be homemakers, but supported as important workers in their own right. For Betty Ford, a woman's right to choose was key, even if they chose to support and act out traditional female gender roles. But, women had to be free to choose other life paths as well, as “the search for human freedom can never be complete without freedom for women.” In this way, the First Lady mixed her undefined feminism with championship of more rightist values and gender definitions, carving out a niche where she could construct new definitions of American womanhood. Her insistence on personal choice also pointed out the key difference between her perspective and Schlafly's, who focused more on what woman's place should be, instead of could be.39

38 “Mrs. Ford's Remarks,” GFL.

39 Ibid.
Betty Ford had always had a positive relationship with the press due to her candor and her willingness to speak to them, and press coverage of her keynote address was no exception. Newspapers across the nation wrote about her speech and generally gave it favorable reviews. The Cleveland Press even published large sections of the transcribed address verbatim in an article on October 25, 1975, drawing special attention to parts during which she argued that legal equality for women did not necessarily mean the end of womanhood. The press also made special note of her support for homemakers. For women who did not attend the congress or personally witness Betty Ford's speech, this positive press coverage helped inform their opinion of the First Lady and the Equal Rights Amendment.  

Women who attended the congress also voiced their support of the First Lady and her speech. After the address, Gwill York publicly thanked Betty Ford for her speech, calling attention to the crowd's reaction to her words, and stated that “I hope that this response from all the people out in the audience and down on the convention floor gives you some idea of how greatly you are admired for your courage and your honesty, in fact you are a very brave woman and every woman is a little braver and a little stronger because of you.” And she was not the only voice to be heard. Women were asked to write responses to various Congress events, including Betty Ford's speech. One respondent agreed with Betty's views, especially with the idea that the Equal Rights Amendment did not mean the extinction of traditional views and performances of womanhood, only that they could choose how to define that womanhood for themselves. She argued that it was important that the First Lady felt “men and women should work

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40 Gutin discusses the First Lady's positive relationship with the press throughout her section on Betty Ford. For more information see The President's Partner, 140.
together. The women should not fight the men...this is one thing I think some of the women forget,” possibly alluding to more radical feminists, or at least perceptions of those feminists. Though Betty Ford supported some feminist goals, her distance from feminism as a self-defined identity category made her an ideologically safer choice for those women who did not support more radical aspects of the feminist agenda.\(^41\)

The rest of the Congress followed Betty and Gerald Ford's initial vision for International Women's Year, as well as the First Lady's support for the ERA. Nancy Arnesen, coordinator of the Task Force of the Implementation of the Equal Rights Amendment in Ohio, led a roundtable discussion on the proposed amendment. After Ohio ratified the amendment on February 7, 1973, her group's goal was to see how it would affect current legislation and the Ohio legal code. Their statistical analysis and subsequent published work found over 900 instances of gender differentiation within the state's laws. The roundtable, therefore, spent time discussing some of the various changes, as well as criticism of the ERA by opponents. One of the discussants, Harvey Gittler, another member of the Ohio Task Force, argued that the proposed amendment would benefit men as well as women by making marriage a true legal partnership. Additionally, he believed that it would not drastically change societal perceptions of marriage as, while the ERA would kill legal inequality, chivalry would not die with it. His line of reasoning was meant to sway the opinions of critics, making it clear that the amendment would affect the legal equality of genders and would not necessarily change the behaviors between them.\(^42\)

\(^41\) “Gwill York Speech,” WRHS, Container 3; “Betty Ford Speech Session Summary Report,” WRHS, Container 3.

\(^42\) “Transcript of Taped Workshop, ERA,” WRHS, Container 3; William J. Brown, Andrew J.
For those who supported women's rights and the Equal Rights Amendment, including Betty Ford, the Congress was a grand success. It not only helped to publicize women's activism in pursuit of their own equality and raise the consciousnesses of uninformed women, but it also set a new tradition of yearly events with the same goals in mind. In fact, in November of 1977, after Gerald Ford was denied reelection and replaced by Jimmy Carter, the National Women's Year Congress was held in Houston, Texas. Former First Ladies Lady Bird Johnson and Betty Ford shared the stage with current First Lady Rosalynn Carter and received ceremonial torches for their support of women's issues and equality, particularly the Equal Rights Amendment. As Johnson and Carter were both Democrats while Ford was a Republican, this event showcased the bipartisanship and politically ideological middle-ground women's issues could take. In this way, no First Lady displayed the willingness to challenge the traditional gender roles of her party and its views on womanhood more than First Lady Betty Ford.43

Betty Ford was put on the campaign trail after Ronald Reagan's primary candidacy in November in 1975, stumping for her husband across the country. This helped Gerald Ford in two ways. His wife was incredibly popular with the voting populace and the press. Any appearance she gave at various locations received positive publicity as well as a large, cheering constituent body. The First Lady went on numerous independent campaign trips, partially because the President's campaign staff was stretched so thin, but mostly because they knew Betty Ford could hold her own on the


trail. The 1976 presidential primary was a statistically tight race and all hands, including the First Lady's, were needed to cover as many primary states as possible.\textsuperscript{44}

The second reason Betty Ford was placed on the campaign trail was to bring her to heel. While her vocal support of women's rights had earned Gerald Ford's administration sizable support from non-Republican citizens, her views were detrimental to gaining the support of more conservative Republicans, Reagan's main constituency, including the women of STOP ERA. Even before Reagan's candidacy, Gerald Ford's advisers took steps to try to place Betty Ford back within the confines of traditional womanhood. One method they used was having her accept the Homemaker of the Year Award at an “Identity in Homemaking” conference in September, 1975. Betty Ford was a logical choice to win this award as she had always been supportive of homemakers and their choice to maintain a domestic lifestyle. In fact, part of the First Lady's women's rights ideology was constructed around her role as a mother, wife, and homemaker. In her memoirs she argued for women's rights by noting that she “thought motherhood was swell. But I wasn't so sure mothers shouldn't have \textit{rights}.” In a 1974 interview with \textit{Family Circle} magazine, Betty Ford defined the women's movement “as a force encouraging you to do what you want with your life. Be a wife and mother, have a home or career, even both.” But, even though Betty Ford viewed homemaking as a choice and used it as a platform and catalyst for women's equality, Gerald Ford's advisers were more interested in depicting the First Lady as the archetypal wife and mother, reinforcing their claim that she fell well within traditional definitions of motherhood and womanhood.\textsuperscript{45}

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\textsuperscript{44} Linehan, 66.
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\textsuperscript{45} “Identity in Homemaking Conference Itinerary,” GFL, Local Events File, Box 4; Betty Ford, \textit{The Times of My Life}, 203; Greene, \textit{Betty Ford}, 62.
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These primary campaign trips also forced her to spend more of her public time advocating for her husband's nomination rather than purely focusing on women's equality through the Equal Rights Amendment. Biographer John Robert Greene noted that while the First Lady was on a speaking tour in New Hampshire, she spoke little about her personal activism and instead made much of her husband's various records of success, particularly those concerning women's rights. Though all of her speeches were well attended by supporters waving signs and shouting slogans, they were ringed by opponents. These critics opposed Gerald Ford's nomination based on his wife's support of the Equal Rights Amendment and her pro-choice stance on abortion and *Roe v. Wade*. In this way, even after the Ford administration attempted to silence or at least muffle her, Betty Ford's personal views were still an important point of concern in the President's primary struggle.46

Though Gerald Ford won his primary battle against Ronald Reagan, he lost his re-election bid to Jimmy Carter. Betty Ford was still politically powerful even after she was no longer First Lady. By 1977 she had constructed herself as a symbol of modern Republican womanhood for other women to rally behind. The former First Lady was also politically valuable as a proponent of the Equal Rights Amendment. In fact, when the ERA gasped its last few breaths in 1981 and 1982, women's rights groups across the nation called for massive, concerted efforts to obtain final ratification of the amendment. Dubbed the ERA Countdown Campaign, groups, including the National Organization for

46 Greene, *Betty Ford*, 92. It has been pointed out that by this point Betty Ford was deep within her addiction to alcohol and prescription pain killers. This also helped to silence some of her more outspoken views.
Women, named two people as honorary chairs of the struggle: actor Alan Alda and Betty Ford.47

Betty Ford's greatest source of power, therefore, was her ability to embrace women's political and ideological viewpoints from both sides of the left/right political divide. She mixed feminist notions of female empowerment and breaking patriarchal power structures, most notably through the Equal Rights Amendment, with rightist political ideology under the mantle of the Republican Party. In many ways, Betty Ford was a traditional conservative woman as she considered herself a housewife with her first obligation to home and family. At the same time, she stumped around the country on behalf of women's rights and her husband's political aspirations. These may seem like hypocritical positions (and can be seen as similar to Phyllis Schlafly's rhetorical contradictions), but they epitomized her views on women's rights. Betty Ford believed in choice. She believed women should be legally, politically, and socially able to do what they wanted with their lives in equal standing with men. The notion of choice, constructed as an ideological platform, allowed Betty Ford to cross the political divide and speak with and to women of both political parties, as well as those who were rightist or leftist. Though her power did not extend to extreme liberals or conservatives, the former First Lady bridged the divide between the right and the left, challenging traditional definitions of rightist womanhood.

Betty Ford and Phyllis Schlafly have been used to show the divide which occurred in the Republican Party over the Equal Rights Amendment and definitions of womanhood. The same divide occurred within other socially and politically rightist and conservative institutions, including within evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity.

47 Ibid., 113.
Women within these denominations formed organizations and debated the amendment at the same time as Ford and Schlafly. While these Christian women all used the Bible as their main source of evidence, they came to different positions on the ERA based on their divergent definitions of womanhood. Discourses on womanhood did not only occur during the ratification campaign. For instance, a vocal and controversial one occurred during the women’s suffrage movement, thanks to Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
Chapter Four

“In the Beginning Was the Word:” Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christian Women, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Competing Definitions of Womanhood

During the final years of her life, Elizabeth Cady Stanton became increasingly disillusioned with the progression of the women's rights movement, particularly the struggle to gain women's suffrage. Though she was one of the founding mothers of the movement through her leadership during the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, the ensuing establishment of the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869, and its 1890 merger with the American Woman Suffrage Association to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), by the time Stanton reached her eighties she felt removed from the organization and the movement in general. As the Declaration of Sentiments made clear, Stanton and her contemporaries wished for more than simply the right to vote. While it was the first grievance listed in the many they held against the men of their time, the women who signed the Declaration of Sentiments wished for grander, more sweeping changes to the position of women in the United States, including women's greater involvement and an elevated position for them within the church, particularly the Christian church. As they claimed, men had “usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that
belongs to her conscience and to her God.” This usurpation gave men, especially the clergy, the power to push women “in church, as well as state, [into] but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church.” While the Declaration of Sentiments was penned in 1848, Stanton saw little change by her eighth and ninth decade of life in the 1890s. This lack of progress forced her to question the various power structures she believed kept women subordinate to men, and her judgment fell more harshly on established Christianity than on any other organization, viewpoint, or ideology.¹

As she aged, Stanton came to the conclusion that the Christian church was one of the fundamental reasons women were so oppressed within American society. This occurred in a number of ways. First, much American law, particularly those which had to do with marriage, family, and the home, originated from Christian morality and biblical authority. Second, supporting the rule of law was a society which relied on Christianity and the Bible for much of its understanding of morals and ethics, on what was right and what was wrong. Victorian morality, still well established in American mentality, infused both the church and the home with an insistence on female subordination to male authority. The ideology of separate spheres, which mandated that women remain within the private sphere of the home and out of the public sphere of politics, was partially based

on biblical wisdom and the belief that God had placed men in the special position of leadership. This was part of the reason why, by the late 1880s, women did not have the right to vote. In this way, Christianity informed women's political and social positions, relegating them to the home and out of the polling place.²

What was more, Stanton argued, through their obedience to church leadership and their insistence on following the church's dogma and mandates, women were instrumental in their own subordination. It was not just that the law and society were tinged with biblical rhetoric. Church women reinforced their subordination by participating in their congregations and obeying the power structures put in place. For Stanton, American society oppressed women. Problematically, the clergy and the Bible instructed women that their oppression was not only natural but decreed through divine revelation. This produced a never-ending cycle as women solidified their own oppression through their acceptance of these norms. This led to Stanton's conclusion “that the religious superstitions of women perpetuate their bondage more than all adverse influences.” Stanton's view has been supported by modern day historical scholarship.

During this period, women heavily outnumbered men in the number of bodies sitting in pews and, without them, congregations would have been much smaller, so much so that clergymen would have remarkably few people to preach to. As historian Anne Braude has noted, female congregants were instrumental to clergy due to their attendance and participation. As she argued, “there could be no lone man in the pulpit without the mass of women who fill[ed] the pews.” Without that mass of women, churches and the clergy

who ran them would have lost significant amounts of power. One of the best ways to maintain the congregation, therefore, was to demand female subordination and proclaim it in accordance with biblical law.³

Stanton believed, though, that God did not demand female subordination to male authority, clergy and the men of the church did. Therefore, Stanton's goal was to break women free from the bonds placed on them by established Christianity, to help them understand that their dictated roles in life were not ordained by God but forced upon them by men. One of the ways she did this was through writing and publishing The Woman's Bible in 1895, which was the most controversial of all of her written pieces or activist enterprises. The ramifications of this work went even farther than Stanton ever believed they would go, challenging not just her position within the suffrage movement, but the way she would be remembered by historians for generations to come.⁴

The title of the book was a bit of a misnomer as The Woman's Bible was a biblical commentary rather than a new edition. Stanton gathered a group of like-minded women and asked them to analyze how the Bible portrayed women. What they found angered them and, at least in their minds, justified their belief that the Bible and the men who supported it were at fault for women's oppression. Stanton summarized their findings in The Woman's Bible's introduction:

The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period


⁴Kern, Mrs. Stanton's Bible, 4.
of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to ask her husband at home. Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up.  

Stanton understood that her work would be highly controversial and most likely meant it to be so as she knew it would prove controversial to readers. She may never have realized, though, just how much it would anger them. The Woman's Bible had few supporters and was mostly rejected. While some reviewers criticized her work on scholarly or theological grounds, the appraisals which bothered her the most were from her fellow female suffragists. Reviewers such as NAWSA leader Carrie Chapman Catt argued that Stanton had positioned herself as a religious radical and, as a suffrage leader, had tied women's suffrage to religious radicalism, pushing more conservative Christians away from supporting suffrage. Stanton, therefore, made herself a political liability and was pushed into the margins of the movement. NAWSA even passed a resolution at their national convention which publicly condemned and repudiated her arguments, making her a pariah.

The Woman's Bible was brought back to the spotlight during the campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Though some radical feminists abandoned and denounced Christianity and its place within American society, the Seattle Task Force on Women and Religion (STF) argued that women could maintain their faith in God and support feminism at the same time. They re-published Stanton's commentary in 1974 and used it to support a growing body of women who were both Christians and feminists. The women of STF argued that God was not the problem, men were, just as Stanton

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6Kern, Mrs. Stanton's Bible, 4, 127-134, 176-189.
declared decades ago. They argued “that the real curse of womanhood is not so much intentional cruelties perpetrated by men upon women but the hidden premise that permeates every thought and action of both oppressor and oppressed: that man is rightfully dominant, and naturally entitled to the prerogatives attendant thereto.” In essence, *The Woman's Bible* displayed not just the root of women's oppression, but the system of power that enforced oppression. Women who believed in God, who were evangelical or fundamentalist Christians, could find an ideological home within the second wave feminist movement. They could even support the ERA, believing that God had meant men and women to be equal, just as Elizabeth Cady Stanton argued.  

This book, and the women of two different generations who supported it and brought it to life, illuminates an important discussion within the history of the Equal Rights Amendment. During the ratification period from 1972 to 1982, Christian women, particularly fundamentalist and evangelical women, played an important role in the debate and discussion over the amendment. While current historiography predominantly portrays evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women as members of the right and, therefore, adversaries to the ERA, the truth is much more complicated and complex. This chapter argues that evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women supported or rejected the Equal Rights Amendment based on how they defined womanhood. While all evangelical and fundamentalist women used the Bible as the main source of evidence in their arguments about proper roles for women, they came to very different conclusions. Some women, such as members of the National Evangelical Association (NEA) and Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America (CWA), used what they perceived as a

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literal interpretation of the Bible to support and explain their view that God made the two sexes different and, therefore, inherently politically unequal, though not inferior or socially unequal. In their views, men were made to rule and, subsequently, the ERA had no place within the U.S.’s rule of law. Other women, such as the members of the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC), argued that the Equal Rights Amendment was necessary as God wished for the sexes to be equal in all ways, including politically. In their view, human fallibility led to biblical interpretation which supported female oppression and did not resonate with the word of God. In this way, differing biblical interpretations led evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women to opposite definitions of womanhood, though all of them were self-defined theological conservatives. Their definitions of womanhood in turn informed their varying opinions on the Equal Rights Amendment and complicated the idea that all evangelical and fundamentalist women held the same religious and political beliefs.

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Historical discussion of evangelical and fundamentalist women's roles throughout the twentieth century is riddled with attempts at psychological explanation. As American Studies scholar Axel R. Schafer has pointed out, “rather than being understood on its own terms, orthodox religion was defined as a reaction against, a deviation from, or an adjustment to the given modern setting.” Scholars continue to describe traditionally religious people, particularly evangelical and fundamentalist Christians, in this light. Historian Randall Balmer claims fundamentalist Christians “have felt beleaguered and besieged by forces beyond their control” during much of the twentieth century and sees their insistence on voicing their beliefs as “a desperate attempt to reclaim” a culture that
has abandoned them. Religious scholar Karen McCarthy Brown emphasized this point and states that “fundamentalism, in my view, is the religion of the stressed and the disoriented, of those for whom the world is overwhelming.” Her belief is that fundamentalists are not rational actors but, instead, psychologically disturbed and unwilling and unable to fully participate in the modern world. Evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women receive the same treatment, sometimes even more harshly than that given to their male peers. Betty DeBerg, religious studies scholar, argues that “any hint of androgyny—a world without gender limits—seemed very frightening.” Linda Kintz supports this point by arguing that antifeminism offered a “solace to women who feel exhausted and desperate because they cannot keep up with the competitive world supposedly introduced by feminism, a world in which women who have felt humiliated by the more general historical contempt for women now feel even less secure because they are unable to keep up.”

This chapter seeks to challenge this bias through discussion and analysis of evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women's theological and political ideologies, as well as their definitions of womanhood. Before this discussion can begin, though, it is important to define evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity. As with most belief systems—religious, political, or otherwise—historians do not agree on what defines either faith and definitions of the two faiths often overlap. Fundamentalist and evangelical Christianity share some common ideological threads. Both believe in what

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have been deemed “traditional” values, most notably those which come directly from the Bible. Historians such as Pamela Cochran have argued that both groups believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, that God's Word, enshrined in Scripture, is absolute and inerrant. To this end, they believe that American society—and even the world—should be based on their particular brand of Christianity. There are some important differences, though. First, historically, evangelicals evangelize their faith, spreading the gospel to those who have yet to hear the Word of God, particularly through missionizing.

Evangelicalism is also usually defined as revivalistic, interested in maintaining the faith's cultural relevance, and demanding political relevance. On the other hand, as historian Nancy Ammerman notes, fundamentalists have historically wished for separatism from the public world in an effort to maintain the strict doctrines of their faith from outside influences. To this end, Clyde Wilcox, in an exposition on the Ohio Moral Majority, found that while evangelicals tended to be more politically savvy, fundamentalists were more politically conservative and believed in a stronger connection between their religion and their political beliefs. Most importantly, what unites both faiths, as sociologist Julie Ingersoll argues, is that both faiths actively participate in the debate over women's proper roles.⁹

While this dissertation makes use of the historiographic discussion over the definitions of evangelicalism and fundamentalism, it gives precedence to women's self-
definition. All of the women who are discussed below identified themselves somewhere within the evangelical and fundamentalist paradigms, usually as either “evangelical,” “fundamentalist,” or, rarely, both. This chapter gives precedence to self-definition, with the exception of women who chose to define themselves as “Christian” while they described and discussed their belief in a fundamentalist, inerrant reading of the Bible. When this was the case, this dissertation applies the term “fundamentalist” to them.

Just as scholars debate the definitions of the denominations, there is an active discourse over how their restrictions on female behavior and personal lives affect women's access and use of power. While this discussion has been mostly undertaken by sociologists, it has important ramifications for historical discussions of evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women. A brief look at the sociological discussion over the connection between evangelical and fundamentalist women and power shows that women respond to their position in the church and in the outside world in diametrically different ways. While some of these women see their positions within their denominations as a source of empowerment, other women find their subordinate position problematic and believe it restricts them from finding and acting out their true purpose in life and becoming the person God wished them to be. This is an important distinction that is informative in understanding how various evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women's organizations responded to the Equal Rights Amendment.

R. Marie Griffith opened up the discussion with her book God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission, published in 1997. Griffith noted that she believed the stereotypes of evangelical and fundamentalist women as weak, timid, and completely subsumed by Christian patriarchy until she met the women themselves
and began the research for her book. Numerous interviews and personal narratives led her to the conclusion that while these women may not have had public, political power, Griffith's interviewees felt empowered and self-identified as powerful individuals. Their religion put limitations on their behavior based on their gender, but women navigated the boundaries of power to carve out a niche for themselves. For example, Griffith attended a women's prayer group and noted many of the women seemed to have marriages that left them unhappy and unfulfilled. While their religion frowned upon divorce and therefore made their female congregants leery of pursuing separation, the women found empowerment through prayer and believed, as Griffith wrote, that “only through the surrender of prayer can a woman be completely healed, transformed, empowered, and set free.” Prayer became therapeutic and their prayer group became a sisterhood involving like-minded women whose bonds to each other gave them community, purpose, and empowerment. While these women believed women should be submissive to men, have their main presence within the home, and should be subordinate members of the church, they found that prayer and putting one's life in God's hands freed them, or at least gave them the perception of freedom. By acting out God's will, praying to Him, and sticking to traditional female behavior (such as following their husband's headship, even if they were unhappy with his choices), they liberated their souls. Once these women forged their connection to God and became submissive to Him and their husbands, their husbands became happier and their family lives improved. Submission, therefore, gave women the power to transform their lives for the better, or at least better within the confines of their religious beliefs. In this way, submissive evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women could wield power, but only if they sacrificed some of their own wishes
and submitted to power they perceived as greater and more divine than their own.\textsuperscript{10}

Brenda Brasher supports Griffith's thesis and discussion of the power of submission in her 1998 work \textit{Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power}, but Brasher takes the argument one step further. She continues the argument that female submission within evangelical and fundamentalist churches empowers women, but Brasher discusses how these women use this power to their advantage to create greater levels of authority for themselves within the church and their homes. First, the women in the churches she studied used all-female retreats as places to open up public spaces for women to speak, act, and lead. Second, Brasher describes the practice of mutual submission. While the husband was to have the final say in all matters, the wife had a voice as they were both to submit to each other and, together, submit themselves before God. Men were not to rule over women as dictators for this was not the role that God wished for husbands. Instead, they were to take their wives' opinions into account and do what was best for the family as a whole. As Brasher argued, “the husband who exercises it [submission] simultaneously becomes responsible to God for his wife's response to the decision he has made. If his decisions are selfish and make his wife angry or sad, he will, women insist, have to answer to God for the hurt he has inflicted.” Some women within the churches Brasher studied used this to their advantage by bargaining with their husband for what they wanted and, oftentimes, receiving their wishes in the guise of their husband's choice, akin to manipulation. In this way, Brasher argues evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women believed in the importance and power of female submission, but this did not mean they were powerless. Instead, their submission gave them greater access to power through the doctrine of mutual submission and the

\textsuperscript{10} Griffith, \textit{God's Daughters}. Quote from page 19.
possibility of leadership and authority within female church groups.¹¹

Julie Ingersoll challenged the theory that female submission led to empowerment in *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battle*, published in 2003. Ingersoll posited that scholars of evangelical and fundamentalist Christian womanhood—particularly those who utilized feminist theory—ignored those women who struggled with or against the patriarchy within their churches. While Griffiths and Brasher found and interviewed women who felt empowered by the doctrine of submission and flourished within it, Ingersoll provided oral testimonies of women who either struggled against patriarchy or were confused and torn over what God intended for their lives. While Ingersoll's main focus is on biblical feminism (discussed later in this chapter), her most poignant work discusses the lives of women who were caught in the in-between.

Some of the women she interviewed felt called to certain professions and, as Christian women, believed that those callings came from God. Their clergy, though, usually informed them to stay away from what they perceived to be masculine professions, particularly those within math and science, and focus instead on motherhood, the family, and finding a husband. In other words, clergy gave these women a choice: they could either be traditional Christian women and submit to domesticity or they could follow what they believed to be God's calling for them as individuals and be seen as unwomanly and heathenistic by their congregations. For these women, as Ingersoll points out, there was nothing liberating about their submission to Christian doctrine and male rule. Submission was not powerful, it was what kept them from feeling truly fulfilled as

human beings.12

This sociological discourse shows that womanhood is a major debate within evangelical and fundamentalist circles in the present just as it was in the past. During the twentieth century, and especially during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, traditionalist Christian women participated in the debate over the limitations of their gender and proper gender roles, which helped construct and inform their life experiences, political opinions, and sense of self. This traditionalist and conservative Christian definition of womanhood was in no way monolithic as some conformed to the doctrine of submission and found comfort and self-worth within it while others felt trapped and suffocated within church patriarchy and rallied for greater access to power, as well as a new, less constrictive, and more subjective definition of womanhood. These varying definitions of womanhood were instrumental in forming an evangelical and fundamentalist Christian woman's individual opinion on the Equal Rights Amendment.

One of the largest and most powerful evangelical organizations was the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Founded in 1943 by pastors J. Elwin Wright and Harold John Ockenga, the NAE was meant to unify all of the various and localized evangelical congregations and denominations. Though its ostensible purpose was to serve as a network to connect evangelical churches across the country, historians describe it through the modern parlance of “umbrella church” or “parachurch.” This vocabulary is not unfounded. The organization wished to represent all of the United States' evangelical congregations and help them in achieving their goal of spreading their faith and God's word. The NAE served as a clearinghouse and helped smaller, localized congregations

12 Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women*.
with information, the fellowship of like-minded colleagues, and consolidation of physical, administrative, and spiritual resources. It was a voluntary organization and, as their founding document stated, their goal was to “give articulation and united voice to our faith and purposes in Christ Jesus, while not considering ourselves as an executive or legislative body in any wise controlling constituent members, nor proposing to initiate new movements and institutions.”

The NAE was not a politically active conservative organization when it was originally founded, though it was explicitly theologically conservative. In its early years, it took effort to bring all of the congregations and movements together, let alone persuade them to follow a specific political philosophy. As World War II ended and the Cold War began to rage, though, the NAE leaned decidedly to the right. The members of the NAE viewed the Cold War in black and white terms: one either sided with the United States and embraced democracy, free enterprise, and Christianity, or strayed off the path of righteousness and sided with the Soviet Union and its brand of communism, socialism, and atheistic heathenism. These views were best espoused by the NAE's figurehead and leader, revivalist preacher Billy Graham, who was known for speaking against liberal government activities and decisions as much as he spoke against the devil. Not all congregations under the NAE accepted these terms and, in fact, historians criticize the group's inability to create a truly unified voice or political goals. While the organization might have failed in stating and maintaining an explicitly unified doctrine, it is safe to say

that by the end of the 1960s, the organization fell to the right of the political spectrum.\textsuperscript{14}

Even if the NAE did not have a unified voice or succinct organizational goals, one agreed upon socially and theologically conservative conclusion was the position of women within the church and the world at large. The NAE’s membership argued and acted upon the faith that the Bible was the last and only word in defining proper gender roles and behavior. From their view, there should not and could not be any discussion of how womanhood was defined because God, through the Bible, had defined it for them. As they argued, if read literally, the Bible explained how women were to act, where they were to hold power, and how they should relate to men in both their personal and political relationships. As previously discussed, while women were viewed as important complements to men, as equal but different, they were also to be subservient to men and allow themselves to be ruled. This fundamentalist, literal biblical interpretation of the status and position of women was the same later held by women within Concerned Women for America and partially evoked by Phyllis Schlafly. The Bible defined womanhood and it was up to women, as good Christians, to follow the mandates and limitations expressed within it. But how, one might ask, did the Bible demand female submission to male headship and authority? For women within conservative evangelical structures like the NAE, they only needed to turn to scripture to find their proper role. Numerous Bible passages, including those in Genesis, Ephesians, and the numerous Pauline texts, explained the necessity of female subordination in what fundamentalist evangelicals believed to be the unerring word of God.

It can be assumed that the female members of the National Association of

\textsuperscript{14}Dochuk, \textit{From Bible Belt to Sunbelt}, 118, 173; Schafer, \textit{Countercultural Conservatives}, 10, 63; Ammerman, \textit{Bible Believers}, 24.
Evangelicals understood God's and the Bible's plan for their lives and the definition of their womanhood. Even though they believed their proper place was within the home caring for their families, subordinate to their male family members, they still sought to be useful to the organization's goals and the evangelical movement at large. To this end, the National Association of Evangelical's Women's Fellowship (WF) was founded in 1948. The group's purpose was stated in *Action* magazine, NAE's publication sent to its denominational members, in October of 1948:

> Long aware of the important place of women in the work of the Church, the National Association of Evangelicals has recently recognized the need for a medium through which the wives and sisters of NAE leaders and other evangelical church women might make an invaluable contribution to the program of the movement. Since its inception six years ago the NAE has been a man's organization, composed of ministers, evangelists, and Bible school leaders—all men. Now, women have been accorded their rightful place in the "sun" of the NAE work. Achievement of the numerous and worthy objectives of the NAE is considered the task of all evangelicals—men and women, laymen and ministry.

While the women who founded WF wanted their rightful place, they understood that it was the rightful place God granted to them. They wanted to aid in the evangelical cause, but they were circumspect about doing so within the bounds set by the Bible. As Lovina Kimbel, President of the Women's Fellowship in 1970, wrote, “the reason for chapters in my estimation is to promote fellowship among evangelical women and to give a stronger voice on issues of importance to the Cause of Christ.” This was not a feminist call for gender empowerment but a call for women to participate within God's army and to do so from their assigned rank.15

The Women's Fellowship flourished along with the NAE. While there are no records which detail the exact number of WF members, there are enough written records

15“Report to the Board of Administration,” WSC, NAE Women's Fellowship Folder 1 of 2, NAE Files, Box 188; “Letter from Lovina Kimbel,” WSC, NAE Women's Fellowship Folder 1 of 2, NAE Files, Box 188.
to indicate an active executive board of leaders throughout the ERA ratification period. There are also no documents which indicate the women's race or class, but pictures within archives indicate that the women were probably all white and upper- to middle-class. It is safe to say, though, that those women who were active within the Fellowship participated in numerous different goals and activities. During the 1960s, the women did not focus on national politics or the radical social changes, including the civil rights movements and second-wave feminism, which rocked the country at its core. Instead, they focused on supporting their religion and the goals of the male leaders of the National Association of Evangelicals at large. Between 1963 and 1974, the WF participated in a number of global charities, most of them tied to the World Relief Commission. They sewed mittens, pajamas, and blankets for the poor in South Korea and for Vietnam War refugees. They also gathered funds to purchase an ambulance for an emergency medical team in South Korea. The WF sought to educate their communities, through lectures and personal example, of the vices of alcohol, tobacco, and narcotics use and abuse. They spread their interest in dismantling the pornography industry, which they saw as the epitome of smut and obscenity. Finally, they rallied against secularism and the expansion of the federal government at the expense of personal family management, which they considered directly tied to the Communist menace.16

While these activities had direct political consequence, they fit comfortably within the definitions of evangelical womanhood. Women could participate in the outside world of the public and politics as long as they did so in a maternal, nurturing way. In other words, if women could connect their new interests in world participation to

16“Meeting Minutes, 1963-1974,” WSC, Women's Fellowship Folder 1 of 2, NAE Files, Box 188; “Women Involved Now,” WSC, Women's Fellowship Folder 2 of 2, NAE Files, Box 188.
historical and traditional visions of women's proper place, men in power and the other women in the WF viewed their actions as acceptable. There was no problem with women sewing pajamas as they wanted to take care of the world's poor like they would their own children. Raising money for a cause was welcomed if it was for a cause that men supported because, in this way, women helped them. It made sense for women to fight against drugs and pornography because those issues threatened the sanctity and safety of the home, that which women were bound to protect. These activities, and their interest in supporting male members of NAE achieve their goals, were accepted and celebrated as valid based on their definition of womanhood. It was clearly understood by those within WF and the NAE that “God gave woman to be a help meet to man.” While these women certainly felt pride with their accomplishments, they knew to do so within their accepted sphere for, above all else, “a free woman is a woman who knows the rules and abides by them.”

Up until 1975, there was little to no interest in increasing their activism and visibility in state and federal political matters. While there are no records which categorically state the WF wished to pursue politics at a higher level due to the Equal Rights Amendment, the timing seems too perfect to be coincidental. The ratification campaign was in full swing by 1975 and it would have been impossible for WF members to not be aware of the amendment or the possible changes it would bring. As has been shown in previous chapters, the ERA was discussed everywhere and, by 1975, 33 out of 38 states had ratified the amendment, leading proponents to believe it would be added to the Constitution quickly. With this possibility of success in the front of their minds, the

\footnote{17"Why Have a Women's Fellowship for the National Association of Evangelicals?,” WSC, WF Scrapbook Folder, NAE Files, Box 188; “NAE Women's Fellowship Bulletin, August 1974,” WSC, WF Scrapbook Folder, NAE Files, Box 188. Underlining in the original.}
WF's executive board began to warn and inform its members about the ERA. All of the its records show that the board members were soundly against the amendment. Throughout the final years of the ratification campaign, especially during and after the 1978 campaign to extend the ratification period, the WF became increasingly more politicized and vociferously argued that the ERA would act as a harbinger of a totally secularized state and the end of the traditional definition of womanhood which they, and their religion, espoused.

The earliest preserved WF publication that voiced an anti-ERA position was the 1975 edition of the *NAE Women's Fellowship Bulletin* which was sent to all Fellowship members. It reads much like the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, so much so that one wonders if sections were not duplicated verbatim. The pamphlet argued that the proposed amendment would legislate that a husband no longer had to provide financial support to his family, everything (including restrooms) would have to be sexually integrated, and women would be forced to participate in the draft. The author then suggests that all WF members find a way to contact their congressman, even try to meet him or her personally, to show that they were against the amendment. Additionally, numerous minutes of WF meetings from 1975 and 1976 show an increasing interest in the ERA and the larger debate over gender roles, including the definition of womanhood. At a 1976 WF meeting, Irene Conlan, wife of John Conlan, Congressional Representative from Arizona, spoke to the members about the power of women. She declared that women were powerful if they supported their men in their social and political enterprises, following God's plan for them. There were women in the United States, she warned, who “want to make us equal instead of superior as we've always been,” a nod to the potentially
negative transformative power of the ERA. In 1977, WF members were also informed of a pamphlet originally written by Rosemary Thomson in 1975 where she argued that the ERA would do no good for Christian women as the proposed amendment did not take God's will for women into account. Instead, it would only extend secularist (and feminist) visions of what women should be, not biblical. By 1978, therefore, the members of the NAE Women's Fellowship were made aware of the ERA and the challenges to traditional definitions of womanhood it would bring if ratified, but, other than writing letters to Congress and state legislatures, there was little other direct and participatory political action discussed or planned.18

Even though the WF did and said little against the ERA before 1978, there were rumblings within the organization about women's proper place within political activism and whether women should step up to take a larger role in the public sphere, including whether they should hold leadership positions within political movements. In 1973, two male leaders of the NAE, Billy Melvin and Clyde W. Taylor, exchanged letters about a woman named Marjlis Parke. Parke was known to both men and Taylor quipped, “as you know, she's some girl.” Parke had written previously to Taylor to express her interest in expanding the potential of the Women's Fellowship. She wanted the group to have more centralized leadership, a circuit speaker who could travel across the country, and stronger and more well-attended women's Bible study groups. She also believed that the WF should be used as a tool to connect women to grassroots political activism, including struggles against drugs and pornography. Taylor and Melvin believed Parke herself

would be the perfect woman to lead the WF and she served as President until at least 1976.\textsuperscript{19}

While the WF completed many humanitarian and missionizing projects during her tenure, Parke was unhappy with the level of local or national direct political action, including participation within the anti-ERA movement. In 1976, Parke resigned her leadership position in a letter that stated her problems with the WF. To put it simply, Parke argued that none of the other women were as interested in direct activism as herself. As she wrote to Edward J. Hales, NAE Director of field services, nothing was accomplished at the WF meetings. According to Parke, the women discussed various projects, including writing “a position paper on Womanhood (a type of answer to ERA),” but none of their suggestions went further than the board room. Nothing was ever finalized or finished. Frustrated with her colleagues’ lack of initiative, Parke resigned as President, facetiously and sadly calling herself a “‘rat’ [who] left a ‘sinking ship’.”\textsuperscript{20}

Parke's exodus from WF lasted until 1978, when the group wrote prolifically against the ERA. There are no records left which indicate why the group waited until 1978 to push for the amendment's failure. One can assume that the debate over extending the ERA's ratification period, which began in the same year, frustrated the WF enough that they became more vocal against it. Whatever may have been the case, Parke, more than any other woman, penned most of the Women's Fellowship's opinions. First, like all ERA opponents, Parke and the WF were explicitly against the extension and argued that it was wholly unfair and portrayed women in general in a negative light. As

\textsuperscript{19}“Letter from Clyde W. Taylor to Billy Melvin,” WSC, Women's Fellowship Permanent File, NAE Files, Box 41. Unfortunately, no biographical information on Parke was found.

\textsuperscript{20}“Letter to Edward J. Hales from Marjlis Parke,” WSC, Women's Fellowship Permanent File, NAE Files, Box 41.
Parke stated, extending the ERA past its original ratification expiration date, made “us women look like poor losers or like children wanting our own way.” While proponents of the ERA saw the extension as a means to attempt to convince more people about the amendment's efficacy, Parke and her fellow members saw it as changing the rules halfway through the competition because of unwanted results.21

Additionally, Parke made it clear that the definition of womanhood upheld by feminists and the ERA was not the definition embraced by WF members or, from her perspective, God. She argued that the ERA was unnecessary because women already held the reins of important, life-changing power. Women were given the gift of creating life, of bearing and raising families, of nurturing and educating them to full development. God had given women this kind of control and power, had placed women within the private sphere of the home, and it was heretical blasphemy to demand more than He had already given. To make sure God's plan for women was not spoiled, evangelical women had to fight against the ERA. As Parke wrote,

It is time for the Evangelical Woman's voice to be heard as to the Biblical meaning of woman's role in life. We have had to listen to too much of the secular world, the advertising world, telling us women what we are and what we should be, how we should and should not act, leading up to the image of a sex-pot, smelling like a rainbow of soaps and flowers, and acting like brainless fools. It is time to put femininity and God fearing womanhood back into the female image.

Parke's vision of womanhood was clear, and it was in no way similar to that which feminists celebrated. She supported a definition which relied on traditional femininity

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21“Untitled Press Release,” WSC, Folder ERA 1977-1978, NAE Files, Box 38; “Untitled News Release,” WSC, Folder Evangelical Women's Fellowship, NAE Files, Box 138. The records are unclear whether Parke resumed her presidential position. Some documents refer to her within an executive position, including both President and Secretary, while others, within the same month, state she is just a member with no official administrative authority. It is likely that she re-assumed the presidency in 1978, but there are no documents which explicitly state her position. I have chosen not to give Parke a title due to this confusion.
and the gender hierarchy established in the Bible. Parke and her colleagues within WF's executive board pushed their fellow members to write to their Congressmen and state legislatures and urge them to reject ratification.\textsuperscript{22}

The Women's Fellowship recognized its own power and fought for the causes that they believed in, whether they were church activities or political actions on a national scale. Often, the Women's Fellowship acted alone, without male support or that of the NAE as a whole, especially when it came to the ERA. In 1979, Phyllis Schlafly asked if the NAE would categorically state its opposition to the amendment and, in response, Robert P. Dugan, NAE Director during the late 1970s, said he could not because it was not one of NAE's official resolutions. Though he said that he supported the struggle against the ERA and appreciated Schlafly's efforts against the amendment, the NAE, as a volunteer umbrella organization, could not state its opinion one way or another. It was only in 1984, two years after the ERA was defeated, that the NAE as a whole officially declared its opposition, should the amendment ever come up again in the future. In these ways, the members of the National Association of Evangelicals Women's Fellowship stepped out of their traditionally accepted boundaries of proper gender behavior. They participated in the political struggle against the ERA more than their male colleagues and challenged even their own traditional definition of womanhood.\textsuperscript{23}

While the women of the NAE Women's Fellowship seemed to agree on the proper bounds of biblical womanhood, not all evangelical and fundamentalist women agreed

\textsuperscript{22}“Untitled News Release,” WSC, Folder Evangelical Women's Fellowship, NAE Files, Box 138; “Women's Fellowship 1978 Summer Bulletin,” WSC, Folder WF Scrapbook, NAE Files, Box 188.

\textsuperscript{23}“Letter to Phyllis Schlafly from Robert P. Dugan,” WSC, Folder Women's Movement, NAE Files, Box 19; “Resolution Adopted at the 42nd Annual NAE Convention, 1984,” WSC, Folder WF Scrapbook, NAE Files, Box 188.
with their position. As has been noted earlier, some women who were active in their churches felt torn between two different facets of their identity: their conservative Christianity and their (at least nascent) feminism. Women who felt caught in the in-between searched for a way to unite their personal qualities and identities. As the sociological discussion of women, the church, and power indicated, while some women found empowerment and contentment within the church's prescribed roles, others felt that they had to deny aspects of their personalities to fit within church doctrine. While WF members fought to maintain traditional definitions of womanhood, other evangelical and fundamentalist women used their faith and knowledge of scripture to rationalize changes to that definition. Supported by a more politically liberal wing of evangelical Christianity, a like-minded group of women set out to reconstruct Christian womanhood and revitalize a movement called biblical feminism. They wrote, spoke, and struggled against what they viewed as the church's restrictive definition of womanhood and, in November 1974, formed a new organization for evangelical and fundamentalist feminists: the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC).

While the EWC was organized during the height of the Equal Rights Amendment struggle, it was also formed in response to heightened discussion of proper gender roles and behavior for fundamentalist and evangelical Christian women thanks to the publication of Marabel Morgan's 1973 book *The Total Woman*. Morgan was born in Crestline, Ohio, in 1937 and attended The Ohio State University where she studied home economics, was elected May Queen, and evangelized as part of the campus organization Crusade for Christ. She married her husband Charlie Morgan in 1964, but soon after the couple experienced marital problems. *The Total Woman* details the methods and
strategies she used to fix her marriage and the book's publication was followed by a series of lectures and workshops of the same name. In essence, it was a self-help book for women who wanted to live closer to the evangelical and fundamentalist version of God's vision for them. In Morgan's opinion, women suffered from a false consciousness, just not the one described by second-wave feminists. Morgan supported Betty Friedan's assertion that there was something terribly wrong with the plight of the American housewife; there truly was a “problem that has no name.” That was the end of any agreement between Morgan and Friedan. While Friedan wrote that women's problems stemmed from an interconnected system of oppression with roots at all levels of society, Morgan argued that women were bored and depressed because they had fallen away from God. In the Bible, God had a specific place and role for women and, until they accepted this divinely mandated role, they would never find true happiness or fulfillment. Morgan's goal, through *The Total Woman*, was to help women find and reclaim their happiness by embracing their biblical role.\(^{24}\)

Marabel Morgan's work was an attempt at evangelical and fundamentalist Christian female empowerment. Speaking directly to housewives and women whose primary presence remained within the private sphere of the home, Morgan argued that the wife was the most powerful individual within the family structure. They could influence their husbands and children toward living a biblically righteous life and had the power to create a home that was a place of refuge and relief from the burdens and stresses of the outside world. Housewives also had the power to be happy and find contentment in their...

lives and within their hierarchical relationships with their husbands. To do this, they needed to submit to both God and their husbands by assuming and accepting their role within the family and the world at large. As Morgan wrote, “God always planned for women to be under her husband's rule.” This did not mean, though, that woman was inferior or unequal to her husband, just subordinate. Though God had given men and women different roles, their roles were equal in status and function. As it was the wife's function to take care of the home, it was the husband's job to lead.\textsuperscript{25}

While Morgan argued that women held great power within the family structure, it came with the responsibility of accepting her subordinate role. When women scorned this responsibility and tried to usurp the male prerogative, through attempting to make too many decisions or by correcting or chastising their husbands, the family unit broke down, husbands became angry and distant, and God's plan for the family was not met. In this way, women (including feminists) were responsible for the breakdown in family structure that evangelical and fundamentalist theorists argued was the true cause of the breakdown of society as a whole. Morgan put a positive spin on this dissolution of the family. If women and housewives wanted to be happier, if they wanted stronger, more cohesive families, they did not need to be angry feminists, they simply needed to get right with God. As Morgan reasoned, if a wife embraced God and loved herself as a submissive, domestic, Christian woman, her family, including her husband, would follow her guidance and, seeing her as a role-model, embrace God's plan for them as well. To wives who had strained, unloving relationships with their husbands, Morgan wrote, “First of all, the Bible says that wives should love their husbands. If you've lost the love for

your husband, why not ask God to restore it?”26

Part of restoring this love, of both self and husband, was realizing that by living outside of God's prescribed role, wives deserved to bear most of the blame for their problem families and depressed feelings. Husbands were supposed to be in charge and be the dominant figure in the family. For Morgan, “a great marriage is not so much finding the right person as being the right person.” Women had to do most of the changing so that men could assume the mantle of leadership they were always meant to have. And there was much to change. To be a “Total Woman,” the wife must allow her husband to make all of the major family decisions without complaint or comment because, after all, “he doesn't need your advice; he needs your acceptance.” Feminism was the exact opposite of Total Womanhood since women were supposed to accept the love and protection of their husband with gratitude and reverence and “a wife cannot be grateful if she's grasping for her rights.” Even if a wife changed her dominating ways, it might take her husband a moment to believe her change and to accept her submission as valid. Wives were to hold fast, even if their husbands seemed not to want to accept their own biblically ordained role. As Morgan noted, “you may have a husband who does not do anything but stay home drinking beer in his underwear. The responsibility of the family may rest on your back because somewhere along the line you usurped his role.” Husbands would change once they realized their wife's transformation was not manipulative or temporary, but until that moment wives had to accept that the problems within their family were their fault to begin with.27

26Ibid., 53. All of Morgan's emphasized words are from the original text.

27Ibid., 38, 56, 84. For more on the disparity between Morgan's Total Womanhood and second wave feminist values, see Bendroth, Fundamentalism & Gender, 1-5.
After reading *The Total Woman*, it would be easy to argue that it seems that the wife has been manipulated, not the husband. Morgan places all of the responsibility on the woman's shoulders; she is entirely at fault for her problematic marriage, her struggling family life, and her own boredom, malaise, and depression. Her book reads differently from an evangelical or fundamentalist Christian perspective, through the lens of adherence to biblically ordained gender roles. While, yes, the woman was at fault for not accepting and embracing her natural subservience, she has all the power to make things right again. She could choose to love her husband and follow God's mandates and path, the only path that will make her truly happy. She can recognize who she is, what she was created for, and find comfort, love, and stability within the arms of God and, consequently, her husband. While feminists argued that this was a false consciousness and responsible for female oppression, many women who read Morgan's book and followed its precepts argued that this was the one and only way to find true happiness and release from the anger and bitterness they believed that feminism wrought. As Morgan wrote, “when you understand, accept, and love yourself, you are then free to be yourself.” For many evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women, this was true female empowerment, not the type suggested and espoused by second-wave feminists. And it certainly could not be found in feminist-inspired legislation, including the Equal Rights Amendment.²⁸

While there are no indications that absolutely indicate that the women who formed the Evangelical Women's Caucus read *The Total Woman*, it is likely that they at least knew about it. It sold around four million copies and, especially after her success as

²⁸Morgan, *The Total Woman*, 44. Italics are in Morgan's original.
a lecturer and workshop organizer, Morgan appeared numerous times on the popular *Phil Donahue Show*. Her work and her words spread throughout evangelical and fundamentalist Christian circles and women's groups. While her book uplifted and empowered some women, it made others uncomfortably aware of the female subordination inherent in their denominations. Though they wished to retain their membership in their theologically conservative churches, the Evangelical Women's Caucus was formed to challenge this definition of womanhood, recently repeated by Marabel Morgan, and support and participate in the political and social emancipation of women promulgated by second-wave feminism.29

The EWC originated in the milieu of what were known as the “Thanksgiving Workshops.” Beginning in 1973, the workshops, held over the Thanksgiving weekend in Chicago, brought together dozens of evangelical Christians of both genders who were concerned about the increasing political and social conservatism within their faith. At the same time as the Equal Rights Amendment made waves across the country and Phyllis Schlafly began her crusade to derail it, more liberal evangelicals questioned the growing conservative tide and whether it was evidenced within the Bible and their churches. In other words, these people challenged whether fundamentally conservative evangelical Christianity and conservative politics were inherently tied together. In a historical example of asking “What Would Jesus Do?,” the Thanksgiving Workshop attendants grappled with tough social issues. Did scripture (and therefore God) support the Vietnam War? The continual denial of civil rights to blacks and other people of color? Did He support unchecked capitalism and the growing economic division between the rich and

29.“Marabel Morgan,” Ohio History Central.
the poor? Most importantly, did God demand the inequality of the sexes? Letters between participants of the 1973 Thanksgiving Workshop show that these questions, and the growing conservative/liberal divide, loomed heavy within their minds.\textsuperscript{30}

Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA), a new organization meant to promote more politically liberal evangelical views, was formed from this Chicago meeting and the discussions which ensued. Invitations were only given to a limited number of people and only a handful of women. The attendees constructed their new organization and wrote a number of proposals for social action after the meeting finished. One of these addressed the issue of gender and equality between the sexes and stated the new organization's position on the gender question:

1. Due to the uncritical absorption of sex role models from the secular culture and the improper exegesis of Biblical passages, a view of women and men has been propagated among Christians which has often been dehumanizing and misrepresentative of the Christian position. We call for a restudy of our hermeneutical principles regarding the interaction of Scripture and culture. We encourage the church to preach and teach a theological stance which provides for the maximizing of potential for all human beings.

2. We propose the organization of an information network concerned with the problem of sexism. This network might aim to produce a newsletter and to encourage the birth of consciousness-raising groups.

3. We urge the church to present a true picture of male-female relationships in Christ. This may mean revised Sunday School materials, male and female teachers at all levels of church education, and men sharing in the childcare, dishwashing and cooking responsibilities at church functions as women share in the leadership responsibilities.

4. We urge Christian schools, organizations and mission boards to affirm the equality of the sexes in the way they hire, promote and pay their employees.

Religious studies scholar Christel J. Manning noted this was a “watered-down” version of the more feminist plank proposed by Nancy Hardesty. Hardesty, who graduated from

\textsuperscript{30}“Letters,” BGC, Folder Thanksgiving Workshop, Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) 1975-1976 Files, Box 1.
the University of Chicago Divinity School and completed a doctorate in the history of Christianity from the same institution, had previously spoken and published about the complicated relationship between evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity and changing gender roles. Though there is no extant copy of the original plank in preservation, it is watered-down compared to mainstream feminist demands and is, in some ways, weak in terms of gendered language. While the proposal alludes to equal pay, it does not state it categorically. It declares that the position of women has been “misrepresentative,” but does not claim what the position of women actually should be. While Nancy Hardesty and the handful of other female attendants signed the proposals in support, their plans for the next Thanksgiving Workshop made it clear that this was the first step, not the final step.31

The year 1974 was eventful for those women who supported evangelical women's equal rights as they organized the Evangelical Women's Caucus in direct response to the 1973 Thanksgiving Workshop and its proposal on sexism within the church. The EWC brought together women who were interested in biblical feminism. Haunted by the common perception within their denominations that women could either be an evangelical Christian or a feminist and not both, they hoped to create a theological and socially political space where women could feel free to embrace all aspects of their identity without having to choose one side or the other. In essence, they were frustrated

with the black-and-white nature of their churches and portrayals of mainstream feminism and wished to create a middle ground where women could define their own womanhood instead of having it defined by others. The problem was, though, that evangelical congregants argued that God had made women inherently unequal to men. Just as the National Association of Evangelicals Women's Fellowship argued that God made women different and special, the EWC knew that in order to persuade women, and hopefully even men, to join their cause, they needed to find a home for women's equality within the Bible. What they needed was a new hermeneutic, a new way of analyzing scripture. They did not want a new interpretation because, as adherents to a conservative Christian philosophy, EWC members believed in the authority of the Bible as the true word of God, meant to be listened to and obeyed. They did not want to have to “resort to modern culture, a human sense of injustice, or allegorization of the text to defend their positions.” In order to tie their feminist philosophy to their evangelical faith, they needed their positions to defend the text and not the other way around.32

The EWC's views attained theological grounding with the 1974 publication of All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation by Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni. Commonly referred to as an “evangelical feminist handbook,” the work sold thousands of copies in its first year of publication and was voted most influential book of 1975 by Eternity magazine, a leading evangelical Christian publication. Hardesty and Scanzoni's argued that the modern version of the Bible fundamentalists and evangelicals read and preached from was itself an interpretation as it was not in the original language or format. Through the years and editions, the Bible had been altered,

32 Cochran, Evangelical Feminism, 2-5; Ingersoll, Evangelical Christian Women, 21.
sometimes unconsciously and sometimes knowingly, and that it had been misinterpreted in two ways. First, they argued that passages, especially those which concerned the position of women, had been improperly translated from the original language. Second, even if the translations were accepted as correct, clergy misapplied and misunderstood the text. The Bible was written within a specific historical context and culture.

Admonishments about female nature and behavior could not be applied to the modern era without fully understanding the Biblical period. With this challenging new hermeneutic as their goal, Scanzoni and Hardesty critiqued not the Bible but the men who translated, interpreted, and applied the Bible to modern life. In this way, they accepted the Bible's authority, and therefore the inerrancy of God's word, while at the same time critiquing how the culture they lived in misused those words to subordinate women.33

As Hardesty and Scanzoni pointed out, “proof texts from the Bible have been hurled at women to 'keep them in their place'.” To this end, the authors first tackled one of the most often quoted stories that supposedly supported female subordination: the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis. Fundamentalists who supported gender inequality used it to show that, because God created Eve second from Adam's rib and Eve was responsible for original sin and the fall of mankind, women were easier to morally corrupt and were therefore unequal to men. In response to these arguments, Hardesty and Scanzoni posited that by creating Eve from Adam's rib, God made them of “one flesh,” unified and same. Other evangelical fundamentalists, though, believed that God gave Adam headship over all the Earth, including over his wife, setting up the religious precedence of female submission to male authority. Hardesty and Scanzoni posited this

33Bendroth, Fundamentalism & Gender, 123; Manning, God Gave Us the Right, 52; Ingersoll, Evangelical Christian Women, 20-25.
was a misinterpretation of the original language as well as a contradiction of other scriptural passages. The Greek word *kēphale*, the word used for “head” in the original text, was never meant to denote a hierarchy but to represent the connection between the head and the body, referring back to the concept of “one flesh.” Additionally, 1 Corinthians 1:11-12 states “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man from woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.” How could God demand female subordination in one passage and then point out women's inherent equality in another? As Hardesty and Scanzoni argued, He could not and did not, His words were just misinterpreted from the original language.34

Hardesty and Scanzoni also focused on cultural misinterpretation of the Bible. Cultures changed over time and they believed that it was unacceptable to apply scripture to modern culture without critically analyzing its historical cultural biases. To show this point, the authors relied on one of the “Pauline texts,” the apostle Paul's various writings throughout the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Paul demands that women stay silent within the church and “if there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home.” This was an important passage as not only was it thought to demand subordination to male authority, it also was used to argue against female ministers, a topic which Hardesty was understandably invested. If women were to remain silent in the church, there was no way they could be allowed to speak with enough authority to be a preacher or pastor. Hardesty and Scanzoni argued that this misapplication of scripture

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34 Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974), 19, 21-32. All biblical citations are the same as those used by Scanzoni and Hardesty. While they translated scripture from the original language, their English citations are from the King James version.
was due to contextual negligence. Paul did not command complete silence from women in the church, he just did not want them talking, asking questions, and interrupting the service in their thirst for knowledge of Christ. Basically, Paul did not ask for silence, he asked for order.\textsuperscript{35}

Scanzoni and Hardesty ended their book on an empowering note: “God does have daughters as well as sons; Christ does have sisters as well as brothers. Now is the time for the church to recognize this—and to act upon it. That's what the Christian woman's liberation is all about.” This spirit of biblical equality, and its academic, theological underpinnings, helped push forward the establishment of the Evangelical Women's Caucus. Though they did not hold their first official gathering until 1975, they proceeded with the inaugural publication of their newsletter, \textit{Daughters of Sarah}, in November of 1974, just preceding the 1974 Thanksgiving Workshop in Chicago. It began with a statement that encapsulated the dilemma of personal identity biblical feminists faced: “We are Christians; we are also feminists. Some say we cannot be both, but Christianity and feminism for us are inseparable.” This first edition included an essay from Nancy Hardesty on whether women were created to be men's helpers (she argued they were not) and included a number of additional books interested parties could read to gain more perspective on biblical feminism. \textit{Daughters of Sarah} was relatively well-read within evangelical circles as historian Pamela D. H. Cochran notes that 1,200 people subscribed to the newsletter by 1978.\textsuperscript{36}

With a well-received book, a brand new organization, and a successful newsletter

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 68-71.

\textsuperscript{36}Scanzoni and Hardesty, \textit{All We're Meant to Be}, 209; Cochran, \textit{Evangelical Feminism, A History}, 15, 33; “\textit{Daughters of Sarah, Volume 1},” BGC, Folder Thanksgiving Workshop ESA 1974, ESA Files 1965-1976, Box 3.
under their belts, the EWC attended the 1974 Thanksgiving Workshop hoping to enact substantial positive feminist change. Instead, they found that their views and opinions brought more controversy than congratulations. Their proposals were radical, especially compared to the definitions of evangelical womanhood propagated by the NAE Women's Fellowship. The EWC asked that “each woman here determine how she can live as a role model for Christian feminism, whether married or single, not only for the sake of encouraging our adult sisters, but also as living examples of Christian feminism to both male and female children.” They proposed greater female participation and leadership within their churches, including supporting female ministers. Most importantly, and most controversially, they supported passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. As Cochran described, some men at the Thanksgiving Workshop argued that the female attendees, particularly those within EWC, were simply mimicking second wave feminists and pushed too hard for their proposals to be passed within the workshop as a whole. While the group eventually accepted the proposal in support of the ERA, the disagreement showed fundamental lines of division within the ranks of even the most liberal evangelicals.37

Even though there was considerable disagreement, the EWC continued to fight for the ERA based on what they considered to be biblical mandate based on a fundamental reading of the Bible. If God made men and women equal, as Scanzoni and Hardesty argued in All We’re Meant to Be, then the ERA was not just a feminist vision, it was God's vision. Since God created men and women as inherently equal, the amendment was essential to women's political, legal, and spiritual liberation. As

37“Proposals from the Women's Caucus,” BGC, Folder EWC 1975, ESA Files 1965-1976, Box 3; Cochran, Evangelical Feminism, A History, 15.
Scanzoni and Hardesty declared, “in speaking of liberation for the Christian woman, we are not thinking of an organization or movement, but rather a state of mind in which a woman comes to view herself as Jesus Christ sees her, as a person created in God's image whom He wants to make free to be whole, to grow, to learn, to utilize fully the talents and gifts God has given her as a unique individual.” To this end, the EWC threw its full support behind the ERA. Their support was recorded in newspapers, tying the organization's foundations to support amendment support. In pursuit of this goal, EWC members helped plan a women's conference titled “Women in Transition: A Biblical Approach to Feminism,” where the attendants decided to support the ERA and fight against the recision movement, a growing issue over whether states which had previously ratified the amendment could revoke their ratification. The EWC also held its first official gathering in 1975 where the amendment was once again officially supported as “consistent with Christian convictions.”

This 1975 EWC gathering received much publicity within newspapers. All accounts point out the seemingly paradoxical nature of biblical feminism. These women were “evangelicals—conservative Protestants,” and therefore their embrace of feminism was newsworthy. Three hundred sixty women attended and listened to a speech presented by Virginia Mollenkott, English Professor and biblical feminist activist. Along with rallying the women to push for greater power and emancipation within their churches, the attendants could attend twenty-five different workshops on such as areas as politics, the law, and the impact of second-wave feminism. They also passed numerous

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resolutions and issues to fight for, and the first one they decided on was the Equal Rights Amendment. While the event tended to receive glowing praise from the media, not all reports were supportive. One newspaperman argued that the women needed to think about the consequences of altering biblical texts in such a way that proclaimed equality between men and women. While he applauded their interest in church activities, he was uncomfortable with their perception of proper gender roles.  

The purpose and conviction of EWC, and its connection to the Equal Rights Amendment, was well expressed in a 1976 newspaper article from Greeley, Colorado titled “‘Jesus Is a Feminist’. ” Discussing an EWC meeting in 1976, the article displayed why members, and biblical feminists as a whole, believed the ERA was an absolute necessity if society and God's plan were to be fully connected and God's vision for the country realized. The article author noted that the EWC once again voted to support the ERA, but, more compellingly, detailed the consciousness-raising which occurred during the meeting and the sense of sisterhood, empowerment, and contentment it brought to the women present. As the author noted, “to many people the terms 'feminist' and 'Christian' seem mutually exclusive. EWC hopes to show them that feminism is not only consistent with the Bible, but a natural outgrowth of the Scripture rightly interpreted.” This was a complete redefinition of evangelical womanhood, even though it was still based on conservative Christian theology. The EWC allowed women to carve out their own definitions based on the gifts and individual personalities God gave them. They fought against Marabel Morgan's construction of the “Total Woman” and for women to define themselves. As one attendant who struggled with the tension of whether to be a Christian

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or a feminist said, “I thought I was alone and that I was wrong in what I was feeling; and now I find that I am not.” This woman, through the EWC's biblical feminist actions, realized she could be exactly who she wanted to be, both a feminist and a Christian. This ability to define oneself, to have the power to choose one's own identity, was what made the EWC so successful. In fact, throughout the ERA ratification period, numerous cities across the country founded their own branch, including in the Bay Area of California and in Southwest Michigan. As the organization spread, its biblical feminist members supported the Equal Rights Amendment.  

While this radical reconceptualization of Christian womanhood had its adherents, it also spurred an enormous backlash. While some evangelical and fundamentalist women applauded the new spiritual freedoms the EWC's interpretation of the Bible heralded, other women within the denominations believed the new hermeneutics were another symptom of a broken, anti-God society. For them, feminists, including biblical feminists, were the enemy. They viewed the war against feminism and the ERA, the war for God, in inherently black and white terminology. Rejecting all biblical interpretations that allowed women greater access to institutional, familial, or societal religious power, a new group of of evangelical and fundamentalist women organized to fight against what they saw as loosening morals and vacillating gender norms. Their group was Concerned Women for America (CWA). Their leader was Beverly LaHaye.

Beverly LaHaye was the wife of Tim LaHaye, a fundamentalist evangelical preacher and one of the founding members of the Moral Majority. Serving as his wife, fellow traveler, and writing partner, LaHaye had been heavily invested in evangelical and

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fundamentalist politicization for many years before she made a name for herself as the founder and first president of CWA. Like Phyllis Schlafly before her, LaHaye claims she had little interest in feminism or women's rights until she watched Barbara Walters interview Betty Friedan in 1978. According to her husband, during the interview Friedan said she spoke “for the women of America.” Beverly later remembered that Friedan proclaimed “I'm representing the women of America.” Either way, Beverly LaHaye was infuriated. As a woman who believed in male headship and a historically fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, the founder of the National Organization for Women did not speak for her or represent her views and values. The interview acted as a moment of consciousness-raising for LaHaye who quickly realized that she viewed as true Christian women needed to have a larger and more powerful voice to fight off the feminist menace. Angered, LaHaye organized a conference soon after and quickly formed Concerned Women for America.41

While the original intent of CWA was to fight against feminism, a group such as theirs had been a long time coming within evangelical and fundamentalist political circles. For Christians like the LaHayes, feminism was a facet of a much bigger problem, another example to use to prove societal decay. That decay went by the name of secular humanism, originally organized in 1933 under the leadership of educational reformer John Dewey. Their goal was to create a new philosophy which placed man at the center of existence, not God or the church. In 1973, humanists from a multitude of professions and social and political viewpoints wrote “Humanist Manifesto II,” wherein the authors noted, “as in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the

prayer-hearing God, assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith.” They furthered this notion with a direct attack against the expanding and conservative power of evangelical and fundamentalist churches, arguing “that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species.” For supporters of evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, especially to people like the LaHayes, this kind of thought was heretical at the very best. What made it worse was the number of intellectual leaders who signed the manifesto and ranged from science-fiction author Isaac Asimov to psychologist B. F. Skinner. For Beverly LaHaye, the most damning signer was Betty Friedan.42


Evangelical and fundamentalist Christian leaders such as the LaHayes argued that secular humanism was visible everywhere within American society. In their view, God was increasingly pushed out of all aspects of American life and replaced with the intrusive hand of secularized government. For them, the evidence was everywhere. The government forced busing between schools so that they could be interracial, often going against local sentiments. President Jimmy Carter, who won election in part because of his pro-family platform, either supported or did not voice an opinion on abortion rights, gay rights, feminism, and the Equal Rights Amendment. The battles over whether to teach evolution or creationism in schools showed the ascendance of scientific logic over biblical wisdom. For those against secular humanism, it seemed as though the nation fell deeper under its spell with each passing year and further away from God. They were not
entirely wrong in this. One of secular humanism's goals was to remove God from His platform of centrality and secular humanists were in numerous positions of power where they could utilize their influence for the good of their philosophy. For those people whose lives revolved around their conservative Christian faith, it was time to take their country and their society back. 43

One of the best ways to do this was to inform the public of the threat the philosophy posed. In this light, one of the earliest responses to “Humanist Manifesto II” was Frank Schaeffer’s *A Christian Manifesto*, published in 1981 but originating in a series of lectures given throughout the late 1970s. Schaeffer, a theologian and philosopher, posited that secular humanism was more than just a philosophy of a human-centered existence but a creed or religion in its own right. Its adherents prescribed to a certain worldview held together by rules which were dichotomously different from the Christian structure set forth by God. In his view, it was not enough for Christians and their various religious institutions to speak against secular humanism. They must also be warriors in the battle for God, fighting for His reinstatement as the primary decider in all modes of human existence, including within society, family life, and government. There was no time for evangelical and fundamentalist Christians to rest on their laurels. The secular humanist threat was a dire one, spreading every day, and Christians needed not only to call it into question, expose it to the light, but struggle to rid it from the United States. 44

While Schaeffer's work helped inform Christian leaders about secular humanist


perils, Tim LaHaye's book *The Battle for the Mind* informed the general populace. While historian Walter H. Capps notes LaHaye's work was just a concentrated form of Schaeffer's argument, it was read by thousands more people. In it, LaHaye argued that the secular humanist movement was larger and more dangerous to evangelical and fundamentalist Christian viewpoints than the majority of congregations would ever have believed. He argued that “the truth is, humanism is unmistakably and demonstrably a religion,” that the two humanist manifestos served secular humanists as the Bible did for Christians, and that the two belief systems were diametrically opposed to one another.

LaHaye described what he called the “five tenets” of secular humanism: atheism, evolution, amorality, autonomous man, and a socialist one-world view. As he argued, within secular humanism, humans claimed centrality and sought to transform the world into a socialist, atheistic, and, therefore, immoral landscape. God had no place within that world, nor did Christians, as man created the world in his image based on scientific empiricism and selfish narcissism. The worst adherents to this heretical worldview were politicians who supported big government. LaHaye argued that most politicians were completely disconnected from their Christian constituents, who he argued were in the majority. As he noted,

> Consider abortion-on-demand, legalization of homosexual rights, government deficit spending, the size and power of big government, elimination of capital punishment, national disarmament, increased taxes, women in combat, passage of ERA, unnecessary busing, *ad infinitum*. If such measures were debated and voted upon by the people, they would be turned down; yet the politicians blithely enact legislation that is antithetical to the will of the majority.

Within such a battle, where all aspects of political and social life were up for grabs, there could be no fence-sitting. LaHaye's words painted a stark picture of black and white, right and wrong. For him, the battle against secular humanism was truly a “battle
between good and evil.” As he put it, “what humanists call rights, the church consistently calls wrongs. Therefore, if we fail to get involved politically on these moral issues, the humanists will pollute our land.” There was a battle raging between Christians and secular humanists. No good, true Christian could have the luxury of sitting on the sidelines, not if they wanted God crowned the victor.45

For Beverly LaHaye, faced with the threat of feminism, especially led by a self-proclaimed secular humanist such as Betty Friedan, women had to join the ranks of soldiers for God. They could no longer sit back and watch as American society was taken from their grasp. Focusing her energy on challenging the expansion of feminism, particularly the Equal Rights Amendment, Beverly LaHaye realized that the definition of womanhood was up for grabs. She took it upon herself to articulate what she argued was God's definition of womanhood. A prolific writer, LaHaye penned numerous books throughout the remainder of the ERA ratification period and beyond with the goal of guiding evangelical and fundamentalist Christian women away from the sin of feminism and toward God's plan for them. Her beliefs expanded upon the limited politicization of the women within the National Association of Evangelicals' Women's Fellowship and completely contradicted the definition articulated by the Evangelical Women's Caucus. LaHaye's books, even those written after the ERA went down in defeat, laid out a specific, fundamentalist Christian definition of womanhood which was similar to Marabel Morgan's position but with one big difference. While woman's place was rightly under God and her husband as Morgan argued, she was not to remain completely within the private sphere of her home and family. The evangelical and fundamentalist Christian

woman needed to be a warrior for God, a standard-bearer against feminism and the secular humanist heresy that suffused the nation.

Beverly LaHaye began and ended her argument on the proper definition of womanhood with the same source used by the Women's Fellowship: the Bible. God made men and women inherently different and, for LaHaye, there was no way to get around this scriptural truth. Women were made to be helpers to men and, especially after Adam and Eve fell from the Garden of Eden, women were to be under male headship. But, as LaHaye pointed out, that did not mean that God meant women to be inferior, only subordinate. Those who said that women should stay within the home due to weakness or inability to handle the work-a-day world were incorrect in their viewpoints of women. God created women to be strong, capable, and intelligent, but he did so to benefit them in raising their families and taking care of the homestead. As she put it, “to say that God intended women to be the inferior partner to man is accusing Christ of being second-rate to God the Father.” For LaHaye, women were in no way inferior to men, but they were not equal to men, and this was not something women should be upset about. Instead, they should celebrate their important but different functions within the family and society. In her view, Christianity “exalted” womanhood—why would women want to be lowered down to simple equality?\footnote{Beverly LaHaye, \textit{I Am a Woman by God's Design} (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980), 18-25, 43, 128; Beverly LaHaye, \textit{The Restless Woman} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 19-29.}

LaHaye knew that some of her critics and readers challenged this definition. She was aware that thousands of women who lived within purportedly Christian households were miserably unhappy. A running thread throughout LaHaye's writing is that men were more responsible for the moral and emotional illnesses within their families than wives.
were, contradicting Morgan's earlier assertions. While it was clear that women were to submit to their husband's leadership, the gift of submission came with a hefty price men were supposed to pay. Ephesians 5:21 demanded that husbands and wives “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” God and his Word declared that men and women were to submit to each other, just in different ways. As LaHaye noted, husbands, in their headship, were to emulate Jesus Christ by willing to sacrifice any and every aspect of themselves, including their very lives, for their wives. Problematically, men had forgotten this central tenant of God's vision and neglected their families in pursuit of pleasure, particularly personal and economic success. Men needed to spend more time in the home, bonding with their families and aiding in domestic tasks. As LaHaye claimed, “the husband who will not do the dishes, change a diaper, or scrub the floor, simply because he is a man, is acting in selfish arrogance and certainly is not supported by Scripture,” as he does not submit himself to his family as he wants his wife to submit to him. In her view, men's lack of responsibility within their homes and families was so severe that LaHaye argued that “in a very real sense, uncaring men—whether as fathers or husbands, spawned the radical feminist revolution.”

This idea, that husbands' failures within the home were the cause of women's anger, did not mean that women and wives were off the hook for their behavior, particularly if they supported feminism. Even if men did not live up to their Christian duties, that did not give women the right to shirk theirs in response. As LaHaye categorically stated,

Some of you are objecting, because you know of marriages where the women have been slaves to their husbands, or were treated as second-class citizens. That is sadly true, in some cases. Nevertheless, such a

wrong does not alter the biblical teaching on submission to the Lord or a woman's submission to her husband. It is important to keep our eyes on what God teaches as the standard, and not on man's misuse of the circumstances.

If women worked and acted as wives with God's vision for them within their hearts and minds at all times, the family would, and most likely could, transform itself to adhere to God's dictates. When women submitted before God and, therefore, submitted to her husband, she underwent a profound transformation where her entire attitude adjusted and she felt, peaceful, happy, and fulfilled. This mindset, visible to her husband and children, would push them to alter their own attitudes and, together, following the wife's example, the entire family would become the very example of the true Christian family. Women had enormous power to change their family's lives, and their own. By submitting, they could give their families the leadership they lacked by persuading their husbands to reclaim control and their proper headships. After all, though LaHaye believed men held much of the blame for family decay, women were not innocent. Echoing Marabel Morgan's earlier argument, she did note that many women usurped their men's power, emasculating him and pushing the family further away from God's plan, though men deserved their share of the blame.⁴⁸

In LaHaye's estimation, feminists were most responsible for the usurpation of paternal power. While she gave pause to the fact that housewives across the country were angry, submission to God was the solution to their anger, not trying to alter the delicate and divinely ordained balance between husbands and wives. Feminists were hostile and bitter women and, in LaHaye's view, this did not please God. Their arguments against the biblical dictates of female subordination were not just immoral and wrong, they were a

rebellion against God, a rejection of his Word. For LaHaye, God's Word was unchanging. It did not matter if the modern world changed, if family lives altered, if society deemed female subordination a necessary good or a personal evil. God demanded that wives submit themselves to their husbands and this view would never change. As LaHaye wrote, “it is not the Church that needs to fit in with the world's sociological changes; rather, the world needs to conform to the teachings of Jesus Christ!”

LaHaye reserved her most strident condemnation for biblical feminists and specifically for the Evangelical Women's Caucus's Nancy Hardey and Letha Scanzoni, authors of All We're Meant to Be. Referring to them by name, LaHaye argued that Hardey and Scanzoni caused Christian women to become confused and disoriented, unsure of God's proper role for them. LaHaye refuted the new interpretation within All We're Meant to Be by arguing that God's Word could not be interpreted and that the only proper way to embrace the Bible was through a literal, fundamental reading. Biblical feminists, therefore, threatened Christianity as they challenged not just the patriarchal family structure but the validity of Scripture. In LaHaye's view, she, or any other “good” Christian woman, could not abide this. As she warned, “I caution 'Christian [biblical] feminists' against causing divisions in the church. If they have legitimate grievances, they should state their position—once—and commit it to the Lord. Anything more than that is rebellion.” For LaHaye, the issue was black and white, there was not and could be no middle ground. A woman either supported God and the Bible or she was a feminist and heretical—the Bible and God's words gave her no other option and, for a good woman, none was needed. As she passionately argued, “caught in the middle of the

49LaHaye, I Am a Woman by God's Design, 12, 67-76; LaHaye, The Restless Woman, 78. In the final quote, emphasis is from the original.
feminist/traditionalist battleground, the restless woman must make a choice. She can join the feminists and spend her life with the family agitators who would destroy the 'patriarchal' system; or she can join those who are working to preserve Christian morality and the traditional family.” A woman could be a Christian or a feminist, not both.\(^{50}\)

Feminism, biblical or secular, was not the only threat to the American Christian family. Aligning herself with the political belief system outlined in her husband Tim LaHaye's *The Battle for the Mind*, Beverly LaHaye argued that the country faced a dire threat from secular humanist philosophy. Echoing her husband near verbatim, Beverly LaHaye warned against the five tenets of secular humanism and argued that Christians needed to fight against them by implementing the “five fundamental beliefs” of Christianity: “God; Creation; morality; servants of God; and a compassionate worldview.” Following this logic, LaHaye believed, as many did throughout the course of twentieth-century American history, that women, as intrinsically more religiously pure and virtuous than men, were on the front line of the battle between God and those who would reject Him. It was primarily up to them to fight against secular humanism's entree into their homes and family lives. Secular humanists, particularly feminists, realized this and, therefore, held “women as the number-one target.”\(^{51}\)

The primary means secular humanist feminists fought to break through and into the fundamentalist Christian family and the hearts and minds of Christian women and wives was through the Equal Rights Amendment. As both Beverly and Tim LaHaye described in their various writings, Concerned Women for America was formed as a direct response to Betty Friedan's assertion that she spoke for all American women.

\(^{50}\)LaHaye, *I Am a Woman by God's Design*, 63; LaHaye, *The Restless Woman*, 120-123.

\(^{51}\)LaHaye, *I Am a Woman by God's Design*, 129, 142.
Friedan, as a feminist leader and a signer of “Humanist Manifesto II,” supported and fought for the ERA. To the LaHayes, the logic was clear. Feminism and secular humanism were directly tied together and sought to destroy the fundamentalist Christian version of the true and proper American family. The ERA, as an effort to redefine the relationship between men and women as one of political and legal equality, was therefore a secular humanist assault against traditional familial and gender definitions. It was the culmination of secular humanism and feminism's plan to alter the country's philosophical underpinnings, to challenge and remove God's definition of womanhood from the United States. As Beverly LaHaye forcefully argued, secular humanists and feminists wanted to change every aspect of American politics and society and they fully understood they had to alter womanhood as wives and mothers were God's first line of defense. In her view, and the view of CWA, “the ERA is just a stepping-stone to the ultimate goal of revolution in our existing American society: a change to an atheistic, humanist nation. The passage of the amendment is only one cog in the wheel.” It was a cog good, true, fundamentalist Christian women needed to passionately fight against.52

Throughout her writings, Beverly LaHaye declared time and again that she was not against equal rights for women, but she was against the Equal Rights Amendment. The issue was not whether women deserved legal and political equality but how that equality was gained. As she wrote, “I am totally in favor of equal pay for equal work; I support a women's right to be free from sexual harassment on the job. What I am against, however, is an amendment to the Constitution that is a cleverly disguised tool to invite total government control over our lives.” In this vein, her argument against the ERA

52Ibid., 130.
closely followed those of Phyllis Schlafly's STOP ERA and the National Association of Evangelical's Women's Fellowship. While women deserved equality and respect in the public world of paid employment and politics, Section Two of the proposed amendment mandated strict control over the amendment's implementation by the federal government. Echoing women before her, LaHaye argued that any benefit the amendment would bring would be poisoned by government intrusion into the home and family, God's domain. Additionally, the amendment was legally useless as their were a plethora of previously passed laws which legislated women's equality. Plus, the ERA was inherently feminist and allowed feminism and its anti-Bible, anti-God ideology a gateway into the homes of Christian women and men, all supported by the federal government. The big-government interventionism and feminist redefinitions of womanhood, tied together, created an amendment that was inherently anti-God and, therefore, fundamentalist Christian women needed to fight against it. Since God's view on proper womanhood, as defined in the Bible and espoused by LaHaye, was diametrically opposed to feminist definitions of womanhood, supported and possibly legislated by the ERA, it is no wonder that Concerned Women of America's first goal was to make sure the amendment never succeeded the ratification process and became a part of the Constitution.53

Beverly LaHaye later remembered her struggle against the ERA as one of the most satisfying and religiously motivating times of her life. Her reminiscences are tinged with the rhetoric of being a warrior for God, of fighting for a noble cause and defeating a heretical foe. To a reader who does not subscribe to fundamentalist Christian faith or practice, her words can read as zealotry; to feminists, it can reek of cognitive dissonance.

But, for Beverly LaHaye and the other women of CWA who fought at her side, they were comrades in arms and in faith, struggling for the existence of their way of life against a secular humanist and feminist plan to rid their belief system from the country. To the women of CWA, it was clear that “the amendment [was] simply legalizing the means for imposing the philosophy of humanism on American society.” As Beverly LaHaye correctly pointed out, within “Humanist Manifesto II,” “the humanist is saying that the faith (and even the mind) of anyone who believes in prayer, a God who answers prayer, or salvation and heaven, is unreasonable and outmoded.” Within a conceptual framework where secular humanism and fundamentalist Christianity were pitted against each other—and both “The Humanist Manifesto II” and A Christian Manifesto made this explicitly true—CWA only did what they thought was in their best interest. If God and the ERA were on opposite sides of the debate—as secular humanists and fundamentalist Christians argued was the case—the CWA fought for their rights when they fought against the ERA, just like feminists who supported the amendment believed that they fought for theirs.⁵⁴

Concerned Women for America made their views on the amendment clear during the National Pro-Family Coalition's Conference on Families in 1980, one of the first times CWA presented itself as an organization. Within the conference's “Statement of Principles,” CWA members and LaHaye herself were instrumental in the addition of an anti-ERA plank which stated: “We support the historic American principle that laws relating to marriage and domestic relations are exclusively in the jurisdiction of the states, not the federal government. We oppose the ratification of any Equal Rights Amendment which would grant the Congress authority to legislate in the area of family law, as in the

⁵⁴LaHaye, I Am a Woman by God's Design, 139, 144.
presently pending so-called Equal Rights Amendment.” It is important to note that within this conference, the women of CWA chose to present their argument as secular rationale, as a group of people fighting against the possibility of increased governmental powers which would be brought about by the ERA's Section Two. The women knew how to fight the secular state within its own game.\textsuperscript{55}

By the end of 1980, CWA was a well-funded and populous organization. Numerous sources state that LaHaye claimed to have over 600,000 members, though historians and critics challenge this number as there are no membership registers available. It is safe to state that the group had enough members to be a significant political force. During the contentious 1980 ratification debate in Illinois, CWA paid to have thirty second television ads appear throughout the state at a cost of $30,000. Speaking from Illinois, LaHaye claimed that she and her followers would travel to other states if necessary in pursuit of the amendment's defeat. Activism such as this changed women's minds about the value and purpose of the ERA. In an open letter to then President Ronald Reagan in 1981, a woman from Kansas named Carolyn Simms wrote against the amendment and argued the same points and ideas used by Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly LaHaye because, as she noted, she held a CWA pamphlet in her hand. LaHaye's and CWA's point of view spread across the country thanks to their money, high membership rates, and political savvy. These strategic and organizational success strengthened anti-ERA forces and pushed forward the amendment's eventual defeat.\textsuperscript{56}

Other areas of CWA's anti-ERA activism made it clear they fought not just as

\textsuperscript{55}LaHaye, \textit{Who But a Woman?}, 47.

women and Americans, but as fundamentalist Christians who wished to maintain their traditional and conservative definition of womanhood. Beverly LaHaye recounted CWA's involvement in Illinois's ERA ratification debates of 1980. Using prayer and speeches as a means to gain media attention, as well as sending letters to the editors of papers across the state where they asked the Illinois legislature to reject the ERA and, therefore, protect God's will, CWA members helped persuade politicians not to ratify. As LaHaye joyously documented, “our media blitz paid off! The ERA was again defeated in Illinois—for the eleventh time! We had helped to assure its defeat.” They also believed that God aided them in the ERA's final destruction on June 30, 1982, the last day of the amendment's ratification period. Beverly LaHaye asked that all CWA members pray to God (and send letters to various state legislatures), pleading for the amendment's defeat for about a month before the ERA's sunset date. She beseeched them to pray especially hard on Wednesdays as June 30 happened to fall on a Wednesday. What LaHaye witnessed only cemented what she previously believed: that God heard prayers and was against the amendment. As she wrote, “out of nine votes, six had occurred on Wednesdays. And we won them all! That's the power of prayer! The feminists may have access to the media, tax dollars, and the influence of notable personalities, but we have access to the Creator through fervent prayer!” For LaHaye, prayer was all she needed, all God wanted from her, and it helped defeat the Equal Rights Amendment, protecting God's—and CWA's—definition of womanhood.  

In her discussion of CWA's use of rhetoric, historian Sara Elizabeth Hall makes the important point that Beverly LaHaye, and in turn CWA, “essentialize[s] what it means

to be a woman (and a man, for that matter) and that she ignores differences among women.” Further, Hall argues that “by positioning her own perspective as universal, she [LaHaye] is able to frame feminists as radicals who are out of touch with their own femininity.” This is undoubtedly true. One only has to peek at LaHaye's numerous publications to see that her vision of womanhood is categorically defined in the black-and-white. One either falls within the dictates of conservative fundamentalist Christianity and is a good woman or rebels against God and is, therefore, a bad woman.

The battle between secular humanism and fundamentalist Christianity also falls within this binary dichotomy as LaHaye declared that “America is involved in a battle between two philosophies: the wisdom of man (humanism) versus the wisdom of God (biblical revelation).” Hall sees this as inherently problematic, that LaHaye's rhetoric is exclusionary, hierarchical, and patriarchal. While she believes CWA's rhetoric to be worthy of critical study, one must consider whether LaHaye's binary logical structure in any way minimizes her argument. Much like Phyllis Schlafly, LaHaye essentializes womanhood because to her it is essential—God created all women, at their core, as inherently equal, the same, and unchanging. Society, not God, was responsible for the differences among women who held different political and theological persuasions, and those differences could only be erased if women embraced God's vision for them and then struggled to create God's vision in American society. LaHaye believed that the differences within women that Hall, and feminists across the country, noted were due to the fact that women, and American society as a whole, had moved away from God and his vision of what humanity should be. There is also no evidence, at least within present archival materials and documents, that LaHaye meant for her rhetoric to be exclusionary.
In fact, one could argue that she meant for her books and activism to be *inclusionary*, to bring women closer to God and his definition for their womanhood, at least how she perceived it. There was nothing essentially illogical about LaHaye's argument or her rhetoric. While it posited a completely different definition of womanhood than that supported by feminists, including the biblical feminists of the Evangelical Women's Caucus, it was because her argument originated from a different logical premise: that God, in the Bible, ordained women to be subordinate to men, not unequal or inferior. Following that premise, her logic was sound, just different from secular logical arguments posited by her opponents and detractors. It was not necessarily irrational, it just came from a dichotomous belief system.  

As has been shown, different views on the proper definition of womanhood, espoused by the National Association of Evangelical's Women's Fellowship, the Evangelical Women's Caucus, and Concerned Women for America, were informed by various interpretations of evangelical and fundamentalist Christian faith and the Christian Bible. The National Association of Evangelicals' Women's Fellowship defined womanhood in a traditional biblical way which minimized their avenues for political action while maintained their position of power within the home. In response to this definition and that pushed by Marabel Morgan's *The Total Woman*, the EWC redefined womanhood and argued that flawed fundamentalist interpretation left women in a position of powerlessness that God never wished upon them. Instead, they defined womanhood as one of equality with men which empowered them to participate in politics, including measures like the Equal Rights Amendment espoused by feminists. In

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response to the EWC and the perception of a growing feminist secular humanist threat, Beverly LaHaye reiterated the WF's definition of womanhood while at the same time expanding it to include avenues for female political activism, including the struggle against the ERA. As historian Anne Braude poignantly argues, “we cannot expect to understand the history of religion in America until we know at least as much about the women who have formed the majority of participants as we do about the male minority who have stood in the pulpit.” As the women of the three organizations discussed above show, religion was an integral part of their history as women and, based on the way they defined their own identities, was inseparable from their political stances and their definitions of womanhood.  

These women participated within a debate that occurred within their established religious communities. Just like the previous two chapters on the Republican Party have shown, not all women within rightist and conservative institutions held monolithic beliefs. Did this change for women who were rightist but were not members of these organizations? Libertarian women and libertarian feminists posed this challenge. Positioned somewhere outside of the liberal/conservative, rightist/leftist divides, the Equal Rights Amendment caused them to struggled to maintain their political and gendered ideologies at the same time. Their problem with the amendment was foreshadowed by another suffrage leader: Alice Paul.

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“Male Domination or State Domination—Neither Should Be Tolerated”:
Libertarian Feminists, the Equal Rights Amendment, and Challenges to the Definition of Womanhood

The struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment did not begin in 1972 when it 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. In this way, the first step toward a constitutional equal rights amendment occurred on August 18, 1920, when Tennessee, the final state necessary, ratified the Nineteenth Amendment that gave women the right to vote. On August 26, the Secretary of State Robert Lansing signed the amendment, formally adding it to the Constitution. The struggle for suffrage was long and difficult; forty-two years passed between the proposed amendment’s introduction to Congress in 1878 and its successful ratification in 1920. Women across the country rejoiced and celebrated as they 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.¹

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. 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. Paul believed that although it was necessary for women to have the vote so that they could participate in politics and thereby challenge notions of female inferiority, suffrage was only the first step toward equality. In order for women to be politically, legally, and socially equal, Paul believed that the idea of womanhood and women’s capabilities had to 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. 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.²

With this goal in mind, Paul and the Executive Committee of the NWP met in Seneca Falls, New York, on the seventy-fifth 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, famous abolitionist and suffragist, the

¹To date, one of the best narrative accounts of the women's suffrage movement is still Eleanor Flexner, A Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996).

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. The common historical narrative is that some women were worried that the ERA would take away protective legislation that they had previously won, especially since Paul was for the removal of such legislation if necessary. Florence Kelley, who usually supported Alice Paul and the NWP, was against the ERA for fear that it would nullify the protective legislation that she fought so hard for previously. 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 based on divergent definitions of womanhood. For Kelley, women deserved protection as women, even if it meant that their privileges kept them from full equality. Paul, on the other hand, argued that equality was a black and white issue with no gray in between. Women's legal and political equality was a necessity and protective female legislation kept women from full equality and citizenship.3

Historian and Alice Paul biographer Amelia Frye tells a different side of the story. Fully aware of constant battles and debates over what the balance of power should be between the people, the states, and the federal government, when she originally wrote the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, Paul included an executive clause that stated that the

power to enforce the amendment would “reside in 'Congress and the several States,'.”
While this declaration was imprecise at best, it was an attempt to mitigate the reaction of people who were against the encroachment of the federal government into what they deemed state jurisdiction, as well as into the home and family life. In 1972, when the ERA passed through Congress and went to the states for ratification, the phrase “the States” was removed from the wording of Section 2. Well into her old age but still an active and vocal supporter of the amendment, Paul was understandably upset. As Frye pointed out, Section 2 “left enforcement to the federal government—hardly a section that states righters would approve.” Paul had an even more sobering reaction. “In Alice Paul's words: ‘We lost.’” She was certain that the edited Section 2 had killed any possibility of successful ratification.

Paul's prescience is startling and apt. She recognized one of the main issues that conservative and rightist critics of the ERA used to their advantage. Just like Phyllis Schlafly, many opponents were bothered that the Equal Rights Amendment would bestow greater political power to the federal government. This was especially problematic for libertarians, who held minimal government expansion and interference as one of the core tenets of their political philosophy. Section 2 of the ERA put libertarian supporters at a disadvantage, particularly the women of the Association of Libertarian Feminists (ALF). Libertarian feminists were stuck in an ideological catch-22. Did they support the amendment because, as feminists and libertarians, they believed that it was a necessary step toward full women's liberation and political and legal personhood? Or did they, as libertarians, reject the amendment as it would expand the power of the government? Put

in such a precarious position, the members of the ALF struggled to make their voices heard within the context of a growing Libertarian Party as they both libertarians and women who supported feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment. It was a difficult position to be in.

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It has become common parlance to discuss a person or group's historical and modern political thought and activity along the concept of a spectrum. The notion of a political spectrum comes with the assumption that political belief falls along a linear path. One is either a rightist or a leftist, a conservative or a liberal. One can be a moderate or radical conservative, falling closer to the right or the middle of the liberal/conservative political binary, but they must still stand somewhere along that binary's path. While this is true for the vast amount of political actors, including the majority of American voters and constituents, where do historians and political scholars place historical actors who held leftist beliefs on some issues but radically rightist beliefs on other issues? What happens when the linear model of the political spectrum is shattered by individuals and groups who do not fall neatly and cleanly along any of its points? This is the problem that libertarianism has given to American political history.

Another consideration for conservative political history, which applies to libertarianism as well as all other forms of rightist thought, is that it included women as well as men. The preceding pages have articulated some of the vast changes which occurred within definitions of womanhood during the same time period as the changes within the conservative movement and political and social right, particularly in response to the second wave feminist movement. Like all of the individuals and groups discussed
in the previous chapters, libertarian women refused to sit on the sidelines and be silent when their very identities were perceived to be in flux. Instead, they were active participants in the debate over evolving definitions of womanhood. Just as conservatism was not monolithic, libertarian women’s views on changing definitions of womanhood were diverse as well. Some conservative women, such as Phyllis Schlafly, and rightist women's organizations such as Concerned Women for America, argued to maintain traditional womanhood as they defined it. Others, particularly libertarian women, sought to recreate womanhood with greater emphasis on individual autonomy, equal opportunity, and liberation from the dichotomy of previous ideas of gender difference.

It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to place libertarian women squarely within either side of the conservative/liberal binary. While they railed against government expansion and intrusion into private lives, and therefore fit in with conservative ideology, libertarian women's commitment to the importance of the individual as the key unit within political and social life also situated them as leftists. Due to their belief in the importance of autonomous personhood and political agency, they were unwilling to accept gender inequality as an acceptable position for themselves as individuals or for the state of American politics at large. Many libertarian women self-identified as feminists and organized the Association of Libertarian Feminists (ALF) in 1973 in order to pursue greater equality between men and women.

Just because these libertarian women declared themselves feminists did not mean that they were leftists or committed to all of the various goals of second-wave feminism. On the contrary, as individualistic libertarians, the women of ALF only embraced feminist positions and actions which complemented their political philosophies. The
Association of Libertarian Feminists' members spoke out against feminist policies that they believed would harm the individual's ability to live her or his own life with only minimal government interference. They were particularly vocal in their assertion that freedom from patriarchy would be useless if women turned to the government for aid instead of their husbands, as they argued some second-wave feminists did. Additionally, not all of the association's members agreed with each other and often argued over how issues would affect them as women as well as libertarian human beings. Since libertarian political philosophy began with the premise that the individual had the right and power to make up her own mind in a utilitarian pursuit of personhood, there were scant few issues that the members of ALF all agreed on. Their goal was to find the fine line between limiting government authority while at the same time mandating legally established equal rights, and it was a difficult path to tread.

For libertarian feminists, this struggle between government and the individual, between personal agency and legally mandated and enforced equality, is best elucidated by the Association of Libertarian Feminists' discourse and activities concerning the Equal Rights Amendment. Due to their belief in the centrality of the individual, ALF argued women's equality was not just an absolute political and social necessity but a self-evident human right. Some ALF members, particularly one of its leading and most vocal members, Joan Kennedy Taylor, contended that the Equal Rights Amendment was necessary in pursuit of gender equality and should therefore be supported by libertarian feminists. Other members were leery of the idea that a constitutional amendment at the federal level was the best method and questioned whether placing women's equality squarely within the hands of the federal government could ever truly be aligned with
libertarian political philosophy.

Their activism and discussions over the ERA showed this divide and challenged the notion of a monolithic libertarian doctrine. Due to this separation within the organization, which was symptomatic of the divisions within the Libertarian Party and libertarianism as a political philosophy, the amendment received little more than discussion within ALF's ranks. While the members educated each other and libertarians as a whole about the ERA, there was little direct action in pursuit of ratification. There were two main reasons why the Association of Libertarian Feminists did not do much active work toward the ERA. First, they recognized the divisions within their own ranks and never fully articulated an official position on the amendment, though the organization's members participated in a vocal and public discussion during the ratification process, especially over if new power would be granted to the federal government. Second, though the ALF did not officially support any particular political party, they were allied with the fledgling Libertarian Party and many of the group's members actively worked within it in an attempt to make it a viable third party. As with any new political party, there were many issues and problems that they wanted to solve and the ERA usually fell low on the party's list of priorities, meaning that it received little attention and activism. While the members of the Association of Libertarian Feminists were interested and committed to gender equality and a gender-neutral definition of personhood which would necessarily encompass womanhood, without an official position on the Equal Rights Amendment and little formal activism in pursuit of ratification their organization did little toward the amendment's success.

As nationally syndicated editorial columnist James J. Kilpatrick pointed out in a
column published in September 1975, the Libertarian Party national convention of the same year made the libertarian paradox emphatically clear. As Kilpatrick wrote, “these Libertarians are something. They are ultra-right, or ultra-left, but never in between.” Congressional Quarterly author Rhodes Cook, writing in 1976 about the Libertarian candidate for President Roger MacBride, noted that “on some matters, Libertarians sound liberal...but there is also something for conservatives.” Kilpatrick and Cook pointed out what it would take historians and modern day political pundits a couple of extra decades to fully articulate. While libertarians and members of the Libertarian Party were usually thought of as conservatives and members of the political right, many of their beliefs did not line up fully with conservative dogma, especially as the right became more radical and invested in traditional social conservatism throughout the 1970s. This confusing situation, that libertarians did not have their own place on the linear spectrum between political left and right, emerged from a specific historical context. During the 1960s, conservative intelligentsia experienced disagreements over the future of their movement which challenged the philosophical underpinnings of conservatism and the political right and split the movement between traditional conservatives and libertarians. Barry Goldwater's unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 1964 also challenged which political ideology would make conservatism most successful with voters and in the nation at large. Since women were influential in Goldwater's campaign, these intellectual and ideological battles left them particularly vulnerable to changes within the movement as a whole. Women were left to question their place within conservatism and, especially, their position within the new separatist ideology of libertarianism.\(^5\)

While pundits and reporters during the 1970s may have been unwilling to place libertarianism squarely within the conservative camp, historians have pointed out how libertarianism and the Libertarian Party emerged from politically rightist routes. One of the earliest and most influential works which discussed the centrality of libertarianism to conservative political thought was George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, Since 1945* which described the movement as an alliance between three groups: libertarianism, traditionalism, and anti-communism. Other historians have followed his lead as the inherent tie between libertarianism and the evolution of conservative thought has been made clearer within the historical narrative. Jerome L. Himmelstein, like Nash, argues conservatism can best be thought of as a trio of ideologies which encompasses economic libertarianism, social traditionalism, and militant anticommunism. Himmelstein posits that “the core assumption that binds these three elements is the belief that American society on all levels has an organic order—harmonious, beneficent, and self-regulating—disturbed only by misguided ideas and policies, especially those propagated by a liberal elite in the government, media, and the universities.” Conservatives, therefore, believe that their views are the natural order of things and that liberal meddling and an aggressively expansionist federal government led to the chaotic state of affairs epitomized by the 1960s social upheavals. In contrast, Lisa McGirr marginalizes anticommunism in her discussion of conservative ideology, arguing that the true separation in the conservative movement lies in libertarianism and religious conservatism, which is an understandable consideration as she discusses the changes which occurred within the movement during the advent of the Religious Right. Word choices aside, it is clear that libertarianism has historical roots within conservatism and
the political right, not the left.6

Prominent historian of conservatism Rebecca E. Klatch also notes the importance of libertarian thought within conservative women's ideology. In her influential monograph *Women of the Right*, Klatch separates conservative women's political thought into two different camps: social conservatism and laissez-faire conservatism, the latter of which serves as a code-word for libertarianism. Separating the traditional moralism and religious foundation of social conservatism from its libertarian counterpart, Klatch argues that “libertarianism represents perhaps the 'purest' expression of laissez-faire conservative belief.” Throughout her larger discussion, the author notes that women subscribed to libertarianism even though it challenged the dominant social belief that females were nurturing, structured their identity around their role within the nuclear family, were uninterested in the economy, and were heavily invested in their religious purity. Instead, Klatch notes that libertarian women were invested, first and foremost, in *themselves* and fought against the various ways society, politics, and the law kept them from living to their fullest potential and denied them various and multiple opportunities in the public world of politics and employment. Libertarian women, therefore, were interested in full equality as human beings but recognized that their womanhood and the way it was socially and politically defined and legislated often kept them oppressed.7

This discussion of women's libertarianism necessarily begs the question of what

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their place was within the ideology and, especially, within the formal Libertarian Party. Before this can be analyzed, though, one must understand what exactly libertarianism was. First, libertarianism was a troublesome aspect to the intelligentsia who articulated 1960s conservative ideology in direct response to the liberal legacy of the New Deal and the perceived communist threat during the early Cold War. It was particularly troubling to intellectual William F. Buckley and the board of the most popular conservative magazine, the *National Review*. These political theorists and activists were of mixed opinion over whether libertarianism or social conservatism should be at the forefront of modern conservative political ideology. Buckley was instrumental in two of the most influential conservative institutions which were powerful during the 1960s: the *National Review*, which was founded in 1955 under his leadership, and the college organization Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), founded in 1960. To this end, his personal political beliefs were important in piecing together the dogma of the conservative movement. Libertarianism was infused in conservative philosophy because, as Buckley biographer Carl F. Bogus notes, Buckley held libertarian beliefs, at least in his earlier years. To this end, within the *National Review* “all three schools [of conservatism] were able to make common cause in the conservative movement because William F. Buckley Jr. was himself a libertarian, a religious conservative, and a neoconservative. As a result, he and *National Review* defined conservatism in a way that accommodated all three schools of thought.” Additionally, Buckley hired writers who subscribed to all aspects of the rightist political spectrum, including libertarians. In fact, libertarian political philosopher Frank S. Meyer was on the magazine's founding board.⁸

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Buckley's libertarianism was also influential in the foundational political philosophy of Young Americans for Freedom. Founded at Buckley's home in Sharon, Connecticut in 1960, the “Sharon Statement,” YAF's organizational manifesto, used libertarian ideology throughout. Buckley served as a mentor to the college-aged women and men who gathered to form the new organization, and historian Godfrey Hodgson argues that the “Sharon Statement” “followed the National Review line by fusing traditionalism, libertarianism, and anticommunism.” This is apparent as one of the document's first lines states “that liberty is indivisible, and that political freedom cannot long exist without economic freedom.” This is directly in line with libertarianism's premise that protecting personal liberty is the primary purpose of government and, in the end, the most important aspect of human life. As the nation's premier college-based conservative organization, Buckley's libertarian influence on YAF shows the philosophy's importance to the history of conservatism. In the early 1960s, therefore, libertarianism had a welcoming home within the auspices of the political right.  

Buckley's interest in libertarianism waned throughout the 1960s and had important effects on its place within conservatism as a whole. As Buckley placed greater emphasis on social and religious conservatism, especially after Goldwater's unsuccessful presidential race in 1964, the National Review and YAF experienced schisms which resulted in the eviction of writers and members who adhered to libertarianism more than social conservatism. Rebecca E. Klatch even argues that “one of the consequences of this purge of libertarians from YAF was the blossoming of an independent movement of

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libertarians.” By 1976, after the formation of the Libertarian Party, Buckley was no friend of libertarianism. At best, he viewed it as a child who “gets [satisfaction] from sticking out one's tongue at the teacher.” Libertarianism, in his view, should be taken as medicine to the corruption he saw inherent in liberalism and leftist politics, but only in small doses. “The Libertarians' brew is toxic when taken whole. But put a few drops of it into the conventional mush of the major parties, and you'd have yourself the best drink in town.” Another author quoted him as saying “the Libertarian Party suffers, in my judgment, a failure to cope with reality ... [though] this is not universally disqualifying.”

Since William F. Buckley would no longer bear their standard and had practically evicted them from conservative doctrine, practice, and institutions as early as the late 1960s, libertarians needed a new leader and a new definition of their philosophy. They lived within the context of the radical changes of the 1960s, particularly the movements for social justice for people of color and women. Libertarians needed a leader who connected their support of the civil rights movements, which embodied a deep insistence in personal freedom and equality and therefore aligned with libertarian theory, with their dislike and distrust in government expansion. They found that leader in John Hospers, who was more than willing to become the public face and primary philosopher of the libertarian movement. Hospers was a professor of political philosophy at various colleges across the nation and in 1971 published Libertarianism: A Political Philosophy for Tomorrow, one of the foundational libertarian texts. The work further elucidated the definition Hospers articulated within his earlier essay “The Libertarian Manifesto,” as he

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The political philosophy that is called libertarianism (from the Latin libertas, liberty) is the doctrine that every person is the owner of his own life, and that no one is the owner of anyone else’s life: and that consequently every human being has the right to act in accordance with his own choices, unless those actions infringe on the equal liberty of other human beings to act in accordance with their choices.

While it is usually unacceptable to define a word using itself, Hospers defined libertarianism as truly all about liberty. He continued that the sole purpose of government should be to protect individuals from the harm of their countrymen. Government, he believed, was “inherently dangerous,” and “the role of government should be limited to the retaliatory use of force against those who have initiated its use.” Additionally, no one had the right to be a “moral cannibal” of any person's life, liberty, or property. For Hospers, this applied to those who received benefits from any sort of social welfare, who he argued did no work but still received food, pay, and other forms of property. In his insistence on limited government and the mitigation of the social welfare state, Hospers's libertarianism is deeply colored with rightist or conservative ideology. At the same time, though, his insistence in a person's freedom to be as they chose and do as they chose as long as they harmed no one else smacks of leftist, liberal thought, especially 1960s and early 1970s liberalism which was partially defined by the various movements toward greater equality for all human beings.  

A fascinating aspect of Hospers's prose is his use of gender-neutral language; he chose to use the words “person” and “human being,” save sporadic use of the pronoun

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11 John Hospers, “The Libertarian Manifesto,” in Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives, James P. Sterba, ed. (Third Edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), 410-436, quotes from 427, 432; John Hospers, Libertarianism: A Political Philosophy for Tomorrow (Los Angeles, Nash Publishing, 1971). No source, including Sterba, provides a clear date on when “The Libertarian Manifesto” was originally written or published. While it was certainly written before Libertarianism, that is as chronologically exact as can be established.
“his” instead of “their” or “his or her” in reference to the generic person. Libertarianism, at least from a textual standpoint, seemed to be gender-neutral, and the hope of women who subscribed to libertarianism was that the philosophy's politics would support women's interest in personal and political equality with their male counterparts. Political philosopher Susan Okin questioned this and argued that gender-neutral language, especially that which was used in the historical context and time frame Hospers used it in, is inherently problematic. By utilizing gender-neutral language during a period in which gender was anything but neutral, Hospers and those like him masked the true disparity between men and women without ever doing anything to make their purported equality a reality. In essence, Okin argued, men employed fallacious logic when they used gender-neutral language in that they could not think like a woman, had never experienced women's oppression, and therefore could not realistically neutralize gender because they could not put themselves in the place of a woman and fully recognize the inequality they faced. Gender-neutral language served as a red herring, turning the mind away from true gender disparity by utilizing rhetoric that connoted that equality had already been achieved.12

While this is an important theoretical criticism of libertarian political philosophy, the reality of libertarian politics challenged Okin's position as, from the outset, women held positions of power within Hospers's libertarianism and, quickly, within his new Libertarian Party. In 1972 (coincidentally the same year as the beginning of the Equal Rights Amendment ratification period), for the first time, the Libertarian Party nominated its own candidate for President of the United States. Unsurprisingly, their presidential

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12 Susan Okin, “Justice As Fairness—For Whom?,” in *Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives*.
champion was John Hospers. What is surprising for the time period, though, was that their Vice Presidential nominee was a woman named Tonie Nathan. Nathan was a television producer from Eugene, Oregon who held a liberal and Randian Objectivist political philosophy when she was assigned to cover the first Libertarian Party convention. Historian Brian Doherty provides the anecdote that Nathan did not attend the convention with the mindset of becoming part of the first Libertarian Party presidential ticket, it just happened by happy coincidence. In the end, though, Nathan joined Hospers in running for the highest federal political office. Future Libertarian presidential candidate Roger MacBride, who was in 1972 a Republican federal elector from Virginia, voted for them during the presidential election. Thanks to his renegade vote, Nathan became the first woman (and the first Jewish person) to receive an electoral vote, and she did so as a member of the Libertarian Party. If nothing else, this shows that the Libertarian Party was not squeamish about including women in positions of high political power. Instead, they welcomed them into the fold as viable political actors deserving of liberation from government expansion and intrusion into their private lives.13

The Hospers/Nathan duo ran on a purist libertarian platform. Newspapers published the various goals and policies the Libertarians stated they would fight for if elected. Advertisements for the party's platform declared that the Libertarian Party stood for a drastic tax reduction, a volunteer army, completely voluntary relationships between all humans with no legal stipulations, Vietnam War draft amnesty, an expansive right to privacy, and, most importantly to them, a completely free market economy. As a

fledgling political organization, followers were instructed that if they wanted to see the Libertarian Party reign successful, they had to construct a campaign to write in Hospers and Nathan as candidates for President and Vice President on their local ballots. When asked about the importance and necessity of a political party which espoused libertarian doctrine, Hospers stated that “our party is no more right than left. Conservatives run very high on economic freedom and very low on political freedom. Liberals are very high on political freedom but very low on economic freedom. We run very high on both.” While women were ostensibly included within the gender-neutral language of relationships between “human beings,” there was no plank in their platform either for or against the Equal Rights Amendment, which went to the states for ratification in March of 1972. In fact, the Libertarian Party platform contained no standpoints on any issue which would grant women greater access and opportunities or close the unequal gender gap, including any issues supported and fought for by second-wave feminists. While women were included in the earliest and most powerful leadership roles of the Libertarian Party, the most important women's issues of their day and age were not, questioning whether issues of women's equality would be included in the party's legislative priorities in the future.  

For those women who participated in the earliest formation of the Libertarian Party and a formalized libertarian doctrine, it was clear they would need to follow their own philosophy and struggle for equality and political agency as both individuals and as women to push their party toward greater interest in women's issues. To this end, aside from her historical importance as the first woman who received an electoral vote, Tonie

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Nathan was also the founder of the Association of Libertarian Feminists (ALF) in 1973 in her hometown of Eugene, Oregon. The organization was established outside of but in tandem with the Libertarian Party. Though ALF hailed itself as a nonpartisan organization, its members were libertarians and purportedly subscribed to that ideology and were sympathetic to the success and goals of the Libertarian Party. The group of female and male originators sent out a press release soon after their organization's foundation, stating the reasons they believed the Association of Libertarian Feminists was necessary. First, they argued that the liberal bent of (at least moderate) second wave feminism was oppressive toward women and needed to be mitigated by libertarian political theory. They feared that by embracing social change through government mechanisms, the tactic used by feminist groups such as the National Organization for Women, and therefore relying on government for their legal and political emancipation, women were replacing the protection of the husband with protection by the state. As they poignantly argued, "male domination or state domination—neither should be tolerated." They were completely against female protective legislation and argued, just as Alice Paul did in 1923, that it was inherently oppressive of women and gave them special privileges which, in effect, prohibited them from obtaining full equality with men. The members of ALF, though, admitted their confusion over how women's equality should be obtained, which they, as libertarians, believed was the natural right of all human beings:

We also resent and reject legislation which attempts to “equalize” our social or economic position. Frankly, we don’t think there is anyone else in the world quite like us and we object to political attempts to rob us of our uniqueness. However, recognizing that bigotry and unjust legal discrimination do exist presently, we support the efforts of all concerned individuals to change this situation by non-coercive means.15

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Association of Libertarian Feminist member and activist Sharon Presley (who currently serves as ALF Executive Director at the time of this dissertation), writing in 1974 during the height of the Equal Rights Amendment ratification campaign, articulated the need for libertarianism within second wave feminist policies and practice. Presley disagreed with the perceived practice of mainstream second-wave feminist activists and organizations to turn directly and immediately to legislation to solve the problem of female inequality. Women had fought for the inclusion of gender in the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as well as Title IX in 1972 which mandated sex equality in education. While Presley had no problem with the goals of these laws and fully supported equality for women in all aspects of American life, she had a theoretical and ideological issue with what she believed the laws represented: government authoritarianism. Laws such as these, even though they purportedly had the effect of furthering women's equality, were predicated on the idea that the government should have the right to enforce these laws, using force and coercion to alter the actions of the individual. Presley argued that while women might gain more legal equality, the social power structures in place which relegated women to a subordinate status would be left unchanged as the government was “based on the same authoritarian model as the sexist patriarchal family.” Instead of turning to the government and the law for equality, Presley believed that feminists needed to come up with alternative modes of social reconstruction, ways to alter the authoritarian system at its very core. “Libertarians,” she argued, “believe that people have the intelligence and ability to develop more creative less authoritarian alternatives if only they will try.” Essentially, Presley posited that mainstream feminists did not give the American people,
or themselves, enough credit to come up with new solutions to old problems which could alter political and legal structures at the systemic level. She believed that libertarianism, with its combination of rightist and leftist values, would present a true feminist future. As she argued, “feminists, because of their acute awareness of the destructiveness of authoritarianism, should be eager to join with libertarians in exploring nonauthoritarian, noncoercive alternatives to government. We are learning to break free of Big Brother politically as well as psychologically. We don't need him either way.”

It must be remembered that libertarianism was, and is, both a political movement and a political philosophy. As a philosophy, it necessarily had a specific vision of an American future that it wished to see embraced and worked toward. As the preceding quote indicates, the members of ALF did not wish for government expansion through legislation, even if that legislation was meant to equalize their position with men. That, by necessity, went against their ideological interest in removing government from every aspect of their lives. But, political visions are necessarily idealistic and, at times, utopian, and the libertarian vision is not to be excluded. While the members of ALF, in their vision of the perfect American end game, wished women did not need legislative help in gaining equality, they pragmatically realized that their present day political status was not utopic or ideal. Bigotry and discrimination, including racial, sexual, and based on gender, were written into the law and, in pursuit of a libertarian future, had to be written out of the law, through legislative efforts.

It seems clear, therefore, that the ALF would support the Equal Rights

Amendment using this same logic, that it would remove legal discrimination that was already in place. The proposed amendment went along with their definition of womanhood, that women held the same right to life, liberty, and property that men did simply due to their birth as human beings, that they were so inherently equal to men that legislation and consideration of their gender should not even be a necessary thought. Problematically, the wording of the Equal Rights Amendment made it difficult for some libertarians to wholeheartedly embrace the amendment. Read briefly, the amendment's 1972 wording seemed simple, noncontroversial:

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

The problem for some libertarians—and for many other groups of conservative women—was Section 2. While it was included in numerous other amendments which were already part of the Constitution, such as the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Nineteenth Amendments, it served as a portent for the expansion of federal powers, something that libertarians completely opposed. As has been discussed previously, this was one of the main arguments influential ERA opponent Phyllis Schlafly and her organization STOP ERA used in their successful campaign to defeat the amendment and it was echoed by libertarians who were either against or wary of the expansion of federal power they believed was written into the ERA. While most ALF members were proponents of the proposed amendment, the possibility for government expansion in Section 2 served as a roadblock for many libertarians who otherwise would have given their full support. Sharon Presley's theoretical objection to equal rights legislation served as a portent for libertarian discourse concerning the ERA. Additionally, while Presley's rhetoric called
for a connection between mainstream feminism and libertarian feminism, it was unclear how the gulf between the two philosophies over government involvement in individuals' lives would ever be bridged. Would libertarian feminists gain philosophical ascendance in the mainstream feminist movement or would they mitigate their insistence on systemic change in pursuit of more pragmatic goals? Would libertarian feminists support the amendment's expansion of female equality and individual rights, or would they focus on the possible (and probable) government expansion written into the ERA's second section?

The answer to these questions was a little bit of both. While the majority of Association of Libertarian Feminist members supported the second wave feminist movement and the Equal Rights Amendment, they did so with rather grave reservations. They presented their support and their grievances primarily through written pieces in a variety of different publications. Through a sometimes confusing mix of ideological purity and political pragmatism, the Association of Libertarian Feminists attempted to bridge the gap between mainstream second wave feminism and libertarianism, especially in regards to the Equal Rights Amendment. Their most prolific author and main proponent of the ERA was Joan Kennedy Taylor. Born into an affluent family in 1926, her political views were formed as she read Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, published in 1943 and 1957 respectively. Taylor embraced Rand's Objectivist philosophy and later became her close personal friend. After organizing the Metropolitan Young Republican Club as a libertarian group in support of Barry Goldwater in 1964, Taylor followed Rand's advice and started a magazine titled *Persuasion*, a libertarian periodical which helped her strengthen her skills as a writer and activist while at the same time propelling her further into the libertarian spotlight. While she was a founding
member of the Association of Libertarian Feminists in 1973 (on February 2, Ayn Rand's birthday) and later served as the organization's National Coordinator, Taylor reached the height of her prominence when she was hired on as an associate editor in the newly revamped magazine *The Libertarian Review*, working in that position from 1977 to 1981. It was a fascinating time to join the libertarian publication as the political movement was gaining some ground within the nation as a whole. Government distrust was at an all-time high thanks to Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal in 1975 and Gerald Ford's perceived bungling soon after, especially after he pardoned his predecessor of all wrongdoings. For many people who viewed their government as untrustworthy at best, corrupt at worst, libertarianism seemed to pave a new and appreciated path. Thanks to her skill in writing, her influence in libertarian philosophical dynamics, and her friends in high places within the Libertarian Party, Taylor became an important and trend-setting personality and intellectual within the libertarian movement as a whole. In fact, her name and work held such sway with libertarian readers that *The Libertarian Review* listed her as an author in magazine advertisements in hopes that her contributions would boost subscriptions.  

While Taylor used her influence and position at *The Libertarian Review* to

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The connections between Ayn Rand, libertarianism, and feminism could fill a dissertation, though the historiography of their connections is only currently evolving. For more information on Rand's connection to libertarianism, Objectivism, and feminism, see Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
analyze various contemporary political issues, including the debate over pornography and government censorship, taxation reform, and the 1978 Supreme Court case *University of California v. Bakke* which upheld racial affirmative action, much of her writing and activism centered around “the woman question.” For her part, Taylor saw a necessary and inherent tie between libertarian and feminist ideologies and was generally more accepting of the feminist push for legislative change than her colleague Sharon Presley. After all, feminists fought for the rights of women as political and social actors who deserved autonomous control over their own lives and destinies, much like the libertarian insistence on a person's freedom from outside control. Problematically, as libertarian intellectual and author Jeff Riggenbach points out, feminism was such a multifaceted and, at times, contradictory ideology that libertarians never quite knew what to do with the movement's more socialist aspects, and Taylor was no exception. Still, her various written pieces serve as some of the best examples of Association of Libertarian Feminists' arguments for the necessity of creating a sisterhood between mainstream and libertarian feminists, especially in pursuit of strengthening the struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment.18

Taylor's work tended to focus on the idea that mainstream feminism was not perfect or ideal for those who wished to see the ascendance of libertarianism, but it was a good start and was certainly better than nothing. Her earliest piece on the importance of second wave feminism as a stepping stone toward a libertarian future was the article “The Second American Revolution May Be Here,” published in the July 1977 issue of *The Libertarian Review*. Through her discussion of Betty Friedan's second wave feminist activism, Taylor grappled with two of the biggest roadblocks toward solidarity between

18 Riggenbach, “Joan Kennedy Taylor.”
libertarians and feminists: the implication that the feminist movement was radical, led by socialists and communists, and that the movement demanded that the government play an instrumental role in women's liberation, especially through passage of legislation like the Equal Rights Amendment. While Taylor ceded that Friedan epitomized the wing of the feminist movement which supported government intervention, she argued that the basic philosophical underpinnings of feminism and libertarianism sprang from the same source, that “the women's movement is a world-wide grass-roots movement, based on values that are unconsciously Libertarian.” Friedan, as the author of *The Feminine Mystique* and one of the founders and first President of the National Organization for Women, believed that the best course for women's liberation was for “women to think for themselves, not to be maneuvered as a bloc.” Additionally, even though Friedan struggled within governmental avenues to enact gender equality, Taylor wrote that the author and leader's ideological impetus, enshrined in *The Feminine Mystique*, was “women as well as men cannot function without a sense of self, a sense of purpose, a sense of productivity.” Additionally, Taylor noted that Friedan and NOW's goal was not to punish men or deny them power but to make sure that women had equal access and opportunity to that power. In this way, Taylor helped smooth the path toward a more expansive libertarian feminism by arguing the two philosophies used different means and different language but sought the same end.19

Problematically, Betty Friedan and NOW did not represent the entirety of the second wave feminist movement, nor the wing of the movement most libertarians were viscerally against. Taylor argued that the perception of feminists as Marxists,

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communists, or radicals set on creating a socialistic, woman-centered society was only partially correct. She posited that these women were on the fringes of the movement as a whole, but that they often got more press and media attention than their more individualistic colleagues. While libertarians might scorn the feminist movement based on the actions of the radical few, those who they perceived as challenging and rejecting the individualistic future libertarians fought for, Taylor wrote that it was important for her readers to understand that the radicals were in the minority. Betty Friedan's feminist vision and activism were not perfect and Taylor argued she was “wrong in thinking that they [feminist goals] can be achieved through government programs.” Still, Taylor pushed libertarians to seek out commonalities between the two movements, to support feminists in their goal of equality for women on the ideological basis of the importance of personhood, individuality, and self-determination within one's own life. Women's liberation could more fully emulate and espouse libertarian principles if libertarians themselves began to activate more toward women's full emancipation in politics and society. One of the ways they could support female liberation and the more moderate wing of the feminist movement was in support of the ERA, to which Taylor gave her wholehearted approval.²⁰

Though ALF stated they never had an official stance in regard to the debate over Equal Rights Amendment ratification, they published, presented, and passed out literature and papers which arguably claimed otherwise. Taylor, in her interest in supporting the proposed amendment, was their primary medium. In a piece titled “In Defense of the ERA,” originally published in 1977, Taylor's goal was to bring greater support to the

ERA by countering the view, held by most rightists, conservatives, and libertarians, that Section 2 of the amendment was an unnecessary expansion of federal governmental power. Taylor challenged those who opposed the amendment based solely on Section 2, especially opponents like Schlafly who used the history of previous amendments as their sole evidence. Citing the Fourteenth Amendment as an example, Taylor argued that even though it had been and currently was being used in ways that libertarians did not support, such as government mandated interracial school busing, the amendment was still necessary to begin to remove racial inequality that was written into federal and state law. The ERA was necessary for the same reason: women's inequality was currently written into law and the only way to end this discrimination was to remove it from the law. Taylor believed that the Equal Rights Amendment would do just that. She argued libertarians, including members of ALF, should embrace a future nation with the amendment in place, especially since they positioned themselves as proponents of individuality, equal human rights, and the importance of autonomy and agency. If Section 1 of the ERA was added to the Constitution,

This means that the law of the United States or of any state can no longer treat men and women differently and that both Federal and state laws that now discriminate must be repealed or rewritten so as to be non-discriminatory. In concrete terms, state laws that define legal residence, property rights, the right to contract, and the right to sue and be sued differently for husband and wife have to be rewritten in order to be constitutional. On a Federal level it means, for example, that it will no longer be legal for the Army to require women volunteers to meet higher standards than men volunteers.21

The problem for Taylor and the ALF, therefore, was that even if libertarians wanted a utopic future where all human beings were inherently viewed as equal

regardless of their inborn personal characteristics such as race or gender, that day was not in their present. Women were legally unequal and Taylor questioned whether libertarians who were against the ERA, both men and women, fully recognized the extent of women's unequal status. She wrote that the Constitution was originally not written for women, only for men, and only for very specific men at that. The Constitution, historically, needed to be changed to slowly mitigate the bigotry inherent within it and Taylor cited as evidence the Reconstruction Amendments. This need for constitutional change was no different for women in the 1970s as it was for African Americans after the Civil War and the ERA was necessary to strike down all of the legislation which restricted women and their access to equality and opportunities. Once women were equal under the law, Taylor and the ALF argued that libertarians could fight for the rest of their legislative agenda, slowly dismantling the government in pursuit of personal liberty, privacy, and freedom. As Taylor wrote and ALF supported, once the ERA was in place, “then we can fight in the future any move to expand the interpretation of this Amendment, and of the rest of the Constitution, in ways that interfere with individual freedom.”

At the very least, Taylor continued, libertarian feminists and women in general needed the ERA because it would do away with protective legislation. This, in her view, would support the expansion of the free-enterprise capitalist system where the government was completely and totally laissez-faire. It could also serve to forge greater alliances with other, non-libertarian second wave feminists. As Taylor put it, “if libertarians can approach feminists by agreeing with their suspicion of protective legislation, perhaps we can gain a widespread recognition of the fact that the 'question of equality' is the

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elimination of regulations.” Building alliances with second wave feminists, especially in support of the ERA, could, in the end, support libertarian goals. The ERA, therefore, was one of the first steps toward a utopic libertarian future. Informed by their definition of womanhood, that women were inherently imbued with natural rights which were the same as those held by men, the majority of the Association of Libertarian Feminists and its members supported the Equal Rights Amendment.23

Just as not all conservatives and rightists held to a monolithic political ideology, libertarian feminists did not hold one concrete view, either. Partially due to their insistence on individual standpoints and the importance of each person rationally making up their own mind on any given issue, not all ALF members adhered to Taylor's position on pragmatic solidarity with mainstream second wave feminists or in support of the Equal Rights Amendment. While Taylor made it clear how libertarians could have philosophically supported the more moderate wing of the second wave feminist movement, this did not mean that all libertarian feminists could practically stand behind those groups and individuals who fought for women's full equality. This was made emphatically clear in the November 1977 edition of The Libertarian Review. In a letter to the editor, Doris Gordon, a self-identified member of the Association of Libertarian Feminists, though not a leader within the organization, wrote that she did not agree with Taylor's position as described in her July article, specifically her support of the Equal Rights Amendment. Gordon argued along the common anti-ERA libertarian line, that the amendment, if ratified, would greatly expand the power of the federal government. She dissected what she believed to be code words within the technical language of the amendment, especially Section 2's verbiage. The section stated that “the Congress shall

23 Ibid.
have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.” Following the rhetoric of those like Phyllis Schlafly and Beverly LaHaye, Gordon argued that in Section 2’s case, “‘appropriate legislation’ means ‘whatever legislation those in power want’,” most likely referring to arguments that the Supreme Courts at both the state and federal levels would interpret the amendment however they saw fit and would probably do so “to take away rights, not protect them, for men and women.” Just like other conservative men and women across the United States, Section 2 and the expansion of government power was an unacceptable proposition to this self-proclaimed libertarian feminist. It did not matter that Taylor used the historical example of the Fourteenth Amendment to show how it was a necessary addition to the Constitution, even with Section 2 included. For libertarians, even libertarian feminists, who prioritized stopping government expansion over women's full social and political equality, there was no way they could ever support the Equal Rights Amendment as it was written and currently in the process of ratification. Just as there was no perfect sisterhood amongst second-wave feminists and no monolithic ideology amongst rightists and conservatives, there was no uniform solidarity amongst libertarians, either.^[24]

Given the chance to defend her position in the same issue as Gordon's letter, Taylor espoused the same views as those she wrote of in the Association of Libertarian Feminists' resources on the ERA. While Taylor and other libertarian feminists who supported the Equal Rights Amendment wished they lived in a world where government support of women's liberation through the amendment was unnecessary and unneeded, they did not. In an attempt to further align the ERA with libertarian belief in removing government from people's lives as much as possible, Taylor argued that “if women have

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no legal equality...then the state has seriously invaded their rights.” Additionally, she reaffirmed her belief, which was also the belief of most pro-ERA men and women, that “the ERA [was] necessary to do away with protective labor legislation for women and with legal restrictions on women's domicile, right to sue and be sued, right to open a business without permission, and a raft of similar legal inequities.” Though it may have seemed ironic or oxymoronic to ERA-opposing libertarians, Taylor believed the only way to begin the process of government minimalization was through governmental action in pursuit of greater individual freedom and autonomy. While the amendment may not have been the perfect solution for those who wished for a libertarian future, Taylor and those who supported her argument saw it as a necessary first step in achieving legal equality for women and, in the end, removing government from their lives. Even if it was not a philosophically perfect amendment, it was a pragmatically important one.25

Aside from Taylor's various writings, in addition to the press releases and position papers of other ALF members and libertarian feminists, the organization seems to have done little other than educate libertarians and political actors as a whole about women's liberation and the Equal Rights Amendment. One of their attempts to do so occurred at the Libertarian Party National Convention (LPNC) held in September 1978 in Boston, Massachusetts. In diary entries he wrote about his experiences at the LPNC, The Libertarian Review's Senior Editor Jeff Riggenbach discussed ALF's panel titled “Women and the Law: Legislation that Discriminates against Women.” While he does not analyze or give much detail about any of the presentations given as part of ALF's panel, he does note that a former Boston prostitute discussed anti-prostitution laws (which libertarians

believed should be dissolved), that engineer Carol Cunningham spoke against gendered affirmative action as patronizing toward women, and that Joan Kennedy Taylor argued against female protective legislation as creating a tie between women, weakness, and poor job performance. While he does not note if Taylor spoke for the Equal Rights Amendment as a means to end protective legislation, it is likely she did based on arguments she published earlier. Riggenbach recorded that around 200 people attended the Association of Libertarian Feminist panel, though he did not write of any of the audience's views or opinions, comments or criticism. While no documents are available to explore this event from ALF's standpoint, their LPNC panel shows the group's interest in disseminating their views to the larger libertarian audience-at-large, especially those views which created greater ties between libertarian and feminist politics and ideology. Aside from their participation at the LPNC, currently accessible documents provide no other indications of direct political activism. While it is likely that libertarian feminists wrote letters to state congresses or signed petitions either for or against the ERA, this cannot be verified in the historical records.26

Why did the Association of Libertarian Feminists do so little in pursuit of the Equal Rights Amendment other than write about it and attempt to educate their membership and constituency? The reasons are multiple and specific to the politics and ideology of libertarianism and the Libertarian Party. Most importantly, as a newly formed party, the Libertarian Party needed to create a platform which strongly resonated with party members and, hopefully, caused little friction amongst them. Support for feminism, and more specifically the ERA, was not one of those issues. Jeff Riggenbach's 1978 Libertarian Party National Convention Diary makes this explicitly clear. The

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Association of Libertarian Feminists panel only received a scant paragraph in his eight pages of coverage. The rest of the spread covered a myriad of issues, such as the problems of government-mandated public schools, federal and state tax reforms, and, of course, how to get more libertarians into government and public office. While proponents argued that the Equal Rights Amendment should have been important to all people regardless of gender, it was a harder sell than tax reform, which required no reliance on theory to explain how it affected everyone and was basically a libertarian crowd-pleaser. In a society and political group where the concept of gender as a socially constructed and legally defined identity was not fully accepted or understood, it is understandable that the ERA received little time or care outside of the ALF.27

The most important reason why the Equal Rights Amendment gained little headway among libertarian circles outside of the Association of Libertarian Feminists was due to the very nature of libertarian political thought. As political scientist Mary Frances Berry has argued, for a constitutional amendment to be successful, constituents must be undeniably convinced that only a constitutional amendment will fix the problem set out to be solved. In this case, in order to spur a constituency-wide interest in the ERA, libertarians needed to have been utterly certain that a federal amendment was the only way to solve the problem of women's legal, political, and social inequality. They were not certain. In fact, philosophically and ideologically, they believed that government intervention was the exact opposite of the proper pursuit toward any political goal. In such a political and social milieu, there was little chance of ALF ever placing the

ERA as a high priority amongst libertarians as a whole.\textsuperscript{28}

It is likely, though, that through their publications and presentations, the members of the Association of Libertarian Feminists made their mark in terms of support for the Equal Rights Amendment. In the end, the ALF showed the lack of a monolithic political ideology and identity within even the most radical political viewpoint. Though libertarians were historically members of the political right, the women's support of the ERA provides an example of one of the ways in which the model of the political spectrum is not sufficient to explore and explain the full gambit of American political ideology. At the same time, the women of the ALF showcased the power that women's issues can have. Even though they did not agree with the method mainstream second wave feminists used in pursuit of their goals, they agreed with the hoped-for end results. Libertarian feminists relied on a definition of womanhood which presupposed gender equality, that men and women were inherently equal. Even though they were rightist on a variety of issues, they were still feminists. One did not preclude the other, and it does not in the contemporary nation.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

On June 30, 1982, the Equal Rights Amendment ratification period expired. After having received a three-year extension period, the amendment fell three states short of the thirty-eight states necessary for addition to the United States Constitution. Feminists and ERA supporters were understandably upset. After all, they had spent ten years speaking, writing, and rallying for the amendment's addition to the United States Constitution. In the August 1982 edition of *Ms. Magazine*, one of the premier feminist publications (which coincidentally celebrated its ten year anniversary), editor and founder Gloria Steinem discussed the future of the ERA. As she wrote the piece before the June 30 ratification deadline, Steinem noted that there were two state legislatures still set to vote on the amendment, though it would be an “unlikely event that these ratify.” She asked that supporters not be discouraged and, instead, fight to have the ERA reintroduced in Congress to go to the states for another attempt. Steinem stated that women needed to work harder at making the lives of congressmen within unratified states miserable, particularly through economic boycotts of those states' industries and products. In another piece, she argued that various feminist organizations, including the National Organization for Women, did not focus single-mindedly on the issue until it was too late.
and there was little chance of success. Within her *Ms. Magazine* article, though, she placed the blame for the amendment's defeat on conservatism in all of its many forms. Steinem wrote that “the basic problem is the economic/religious conservatism of state legislatures and the special interests that make those poorly paid jobs worthwhile.” Conservatives, in her opinion, doomed the ERA, at least in the 1970s and 1980s.¹

Phyllis Schlafly and the members of STOP ERA, one of the conservative groups Steinem alluded to, had a very different reaction to the amendment's defeat, which *Ms. Magazine* reporter Jane O'Reilly covered for the publication's September 1982 issue. Schlafly and her supporters spent the night of June 30 celebrating in Washington, D.C., at the now ironically-titled “Over the Rainbow” victory party. While O'Reilly recounted that she cried in the elevator over the amendment's defeat, Schlafly, along with 1,400 anti-ERA advocates, including Senator Jesse Helms, Reverend Jerry Falwell, and Brigadier General Andrew Gatsis, who often wrote pieces which were presented in the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, dressed in their finest (Schlafly in diamonds and pearls) and commemorated the historic event. Praise went back and forth between the attendants and Schlafly, the lady of the hour. After all, they achieved their goal. They defeated the Equal Rights Amendment and protected their definition of womanhood.²

This dissertation has argued that socially and politically conservative and rightist women took different and often oppositional stances on the Equal Rights Amendment based on divergent definitions of womanhood. The women held many demographic similarities. On the whole, they were white, middle- to upper-class economically,


practiced varying denominations of Christianity, and were well-educated as most of them held a bachelor's degree or higher. As has been shown, this was where their similarities ended. Challenging the idea of a monolithic interpretation of political, social, and theological conservatism and rightist philosophies, this dissertation has shown that the women previously discussed vociferously argued for or against the ERA based on how they defined and perceived the limits and boundaries of womanhood. They participated in an active and vocal debate about the future of American gender roles, and they did so as women who attempted to protect an aspect of their personal identities they wished to see codified into law.

Some of the conservative and rightist groups discussed disagreed with the proposed amendment, following contemporary and historiographical understandings of traditional and conservative womanhood. Phyllis Schlafly, a staunch anti-communist, anti-statist, and leader of the highly influential anti-amendment organization STOP ERA, was the most prominent opponent. Combining a traditional view of womanhood with an insistence on women's expansion into politics to protect their homes and families from governmental harm, Schlafly brought thousands of women together to combat the threat she perceived was posed by the ERA. While she traveled across the country giving speeches and appearing on television, her most influential mouthpiece was the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, in which she printed her arguments against the legal destruction of the homemaking profession, women in the draft, and government expansion through the amendment's Section 2. Though liberals and second-wave feminists rallied against her, Schlafly's rhetoric preached the truth to women who defined their womanhood along the lines she posed and, therefore, fought with her against the ERA.
The National Association of Evangelicals Women's Fellowship (WF) and Beverly LaHaye and her group Concerned Women for America (CWA) also opposed the amendment based on their definitions of womanhood. While both groups gathered many of their political arguments from Schlafly and her Report, they, as explicitly evangelical and fundamentalist Christian organizations, used the Bible as their main source of evidence. They believed that God was the first and only word about the proper expression of gender roles and argued that He demanded male headship over women and, therefore, was against the ERA. While the WF spoke against the amendment and pushed for its members to do so as well, their activism occurred mainly within the early 1970s and was not as vocal as other groups discussed. The CWA, on the other hand, argued the same biblical stance on proper and traditional definitions of womanhood and on the amendment but challenged its members to be more politically active. Thanks to an expanding secular humanist and feminist threat, the organization believed that evangelical and Christian women's political participation to protect the home and family was more important than ever before. Through the leadership of Beverly LaHaye, members donated thousands of dollars for ad campaigns and attended events in opposition of ratification.

Other politically and socially conservative and rightist women supported the amendment, which was often a position that challenged their group identities and left them open to criticism from their peers. Betty Ford, First Lady of Republican President Gerald Ford, supported the ERA due to her moderate rightist stance and her less-than-traditional definition of womanhood. While Ford believed that being a homemaker was a noble profession, she also argued that women should be given a choice in the matter.
While amendment opponents believed that women should stay in the home because that was the place they were meant to be, the First Lady countered that they should have the legal and political choice to live their lives as they wished free from gendered legal restrictions. She caused a political firestorm of criticism when she used the East Wing's telephone and staff to push for ratification. Once newspapers reported of all of the negative letters she received, women, including other moderate Republicans, wrote letters to her and the President in support of her activism and bravery. She also gave a well-received speech at the Greater Cleveland Congress in celebration of International Women's Year in which she forcefully spoke for the necessity of the Equal Rights Amendment. She was later named an ERA ambassador thanks to her strong amendment support.

Another group of women who supported the ERA based on their definition of womanhood was the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC). They challenged the traditional doctrines of their evangelical and fundamentalist faiths, through the book *All We're Meant to Be*, by positing that the common fundamental reading of the Bible was erroneous and that the passages in the Bible which clergy used to enforce restrictive gender roles were misinterpreted from the original text. Though they found a like-minded group of men and women in the organization Evangelicals for Social Action, the EWC ultimately broke away from the organization as they wished for greater activism in support of women's liberation. While their version of biblical feminism was criticized by Beverly LaHaye and CWA as heathenism and susceptible to secular humanist and feminist propaganda, the women of EWC wrote in support of the ERA in their newsletter *Daughters of Sarah*. Additionally, they organized numerous events, conferences, and
meetings during which they pushed other women to support the amendment, as well as embraced greater levels of church activism and leadership as a means toward true biblical female empowerment.

Finally, libertarian feminists, who did not fit neatly along the liberal/conservative spectrum, were placed in a difficult position in terms of their stance on the Equal Rights Amendment. They believed that, as human beings and United States citizens, women deserved the same rights and obligations as men and that gender equality was an absolute necessity in pursuit of a libertarian society. While, as feminists, they supported the amendment as a necessary measure to legislate female autonomy and individual liberty, they were uncomfortable with the amendment's Section 2 which mandated that political and legal changes brought about by the ERA would be under the jurisdiction of the federal government. While the main libertarian feminist organization, the Association of Libertarian Feminists (ALF) never stated an official position on the amendment as they decided to strengthen solidarity for the new Libertarian Party and allow its membership to make up their own minds, the group did publish position papers and speeches in support of the amendment. Its most prolific author, Joan Kennedy Taylor, argued that the amendment was a necessity, even with Section 2 in place, because bigotry in the law could only be removed through the law. After women achieved legal and political liberty equal to that which men held, then libertarians could fight against the expansion of the intrusive state. Together, all of these various conservative and rightist women and women's groups showed the lack of a monolithic ideology. While some of these women opposed the ERA based on their more traditional definitions of womanhood, others supported it as a means to achieve political and legal equality and reconstruct
womanhood along less restrictive lines.

These divergent definitions of womanhood that translated into different stances on the ERA are indicative of the many reasons for the amendment's 1982 failure. Numerous scholars have analyzed the ratification struggle, many of them publishing in the 1980s, in an attempt to understand what went wrong and what, if anything, advocates could change to ensure future success. They came to many different conclusions. First, one of the problems with the ERA was that it was tied, either in fact or in theory, to a number of other, more controversial issues, namely abortion rights and the draft. While Jane J. Mansbridge claimed that the ERA would have had little substantive effect on the law or in social practice, both opponents and supporters believed that it would. Political scientist Gilbert Y. Steiner, writing in 1985, argued that the idea that the amendment would prove abortion on demand, or at least expanded abortion rights, based on feminist support for both issues, caused many to oppose who would otherwise have supported. Mansbridge wrote that it was unlikely that the Supreme Court would have used the ERA to strike down anti-abortion legislation, but the tie between the two issues, especially after the backlash against Roe v. Wade, hurt the amendment's possible success.³

Additionally, as has been discussed in the previous chapters, the possibility of women forced into conscription served as a serious roadblock. This points out another important aspect of why the ERA failed: no one was quite certain how the amendment would affect women's legal and political status in practice, only that they would be affected. As historian Elizabeth Pleck has pointed out, not even legal and political experts and authorities agreed on how the Supreme Court would interpret the amendment

in response to issues such as the draft. While it has been shown that Section 2's insistence on federal government jurisdiction was a major challenge for amendment supporters, the notion that the Supreme Court would have full reign to interpret the amendment was just as damning. Some, like Phyllis Schlafly, argued, with the amendment in place, women would not only be part of the draft but would have to serve in combat duty. Mansbridge argued that this was not necessarily the case, but that, even with the ERA in place, the Court could have invoked the “war powers” clause of the Constitution to limit women's involvement in the armed forces in general. While experts and academics could argue one side or the other, no one could be certain how the Supreme Court would adjudicate until the amendment was in their hands.4

Issues such as these were some of the many reasons the amendment lost bipartisan political support as the ratification period went on. Many scholars argue that the amendment's defeat was finalized once the Republicans removed their plank of support in 1980. This is partially due to the way the supportive and oppositional sides of the ERA debate were conceived and perceived within the United States. As Mary Berry has argued, ERA supporters were perceived to be liberals while opponents were viewed as conservatives. Mansbridge supported this analysis by pointing out the perception that “the ERA came to be seen as an issue that pitted women against women and, moreover, women of the Right against women of the Left.” Additionally, since many of those liberal or Leftist supporters were also perceived of as feminists, many assumed (sometimes rightly) that the amendment was an attack on conservative values, most notably the position of the stay-at-home wife and mother. As was shown in Chapters One

4Elizabeth Pleck, “Failed Strategies; Renewed Hope,” in Rights of Passage: The Past and Future of the ERA, Joan Hoff-Wilson, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 113; Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA, 61.
and Three, this put opponents on the offense and left supporters scrambling to defend, and it is always more difficult to prove a negative, that consequences detrimental to homemakers would not occur. Even if the amendment would have had little to no effect on homemakers, the amendment's symbolic value, of altering gender roles, left many women uncomfortable or downright angry. Thanks to the idea that no one was exactly sure what would have happened if the amendment was ratified, there was not enough support and too much opposition, and it tended to be conceptualized based on a liberal/conservative binary.  

One of the most startling conclusions about why the amendment failed was that people knew too much about it. When the amendment began the ratification process in 1972, states signed on one after the other until 1975 when support of the amendment stalled. It is not a coincidence that this was the same time as Phyllis Schlafly and STOP ERA publicly and vocally began their attack. What they found, and supporters sadly tended to agree with, was that people supported equal rights for women in theory, but not in practice. Mansbridge argued that men and women supported women's equality if it was termed as a set of abstract rights, but once they realized that those rights might come with consequences, such as the draft, many turned from support to opposition. Pleck further noted that the ERA was most successful in states which did not hold debates on the amendment beforehand but, instead, ratified it as quickly as possible. This lack of or limited public discourse became even less likely once Schlafly and, later, LaHaye and CWA made the anti-amendment movement a national spectacle. 

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5 Mary Frances Berry, Why ERA Failed, 68; Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA, 6, 104-108.

6 Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA, 116; Pleck, “‘Failed Strategies; Renewed Hope,”” 116.
Finally, Mary Frances Berry, in a thorough analysis of the Equal Rights Amendment and other failed federal constitutional amendments, enunciated which social and political factors need to be in place to ensure an amendment's success. First, there needs to be a consensus that a problem existed that was so major that it could only be fixed by a new amendment to the United States Constitution. Second, this problem had to be urgent, one which had to be fixed immediately or great harm would befall the nation. Even with these conditions in place, Berry claimed it was likely, outside of times of national crisis like the post-Civil War era, that ratification attempts would take decades of work, not years, much like how the suffrage movement took over seventy years to pass the Nineteenth Amendment. Berry argued that the ERA fit none of these qualifications. There could be no consensus as there was no idea of compromise. For supporters, women were either equal or they were not and there could be no in-between. For opponents, traditional gender roles would either be redefined by the amendment or they would not, based on the ERA's success or failure. Both sides of the debate conceptualized and publicly spoke about the amendment in terms of a zero-sum game that women would either win or lose. As state support began to erode throughout the 1970s and as opponents grew stronger and more numerous, there was little to no chance of success.7

Joan Hoff-Wilson has noted one of the most important lessons that ERA supporters could have learned from the past. During the debates over women's suffrage, particularly during the Nineteenth Amendment's ratification struggle, liberal and/or feminist suffrage supporters made alliances with conservatives. Suffragists allied with

7Berry, Why ERA Failed, 3.
any individuals or groups who supported women's right to vote, including temperance organizations and individual women who supported women's right to vote so they could have a voice in conservative politics. Equal Rights Amendment advocates did not heed history to the extent that they could have. This dissertation, therefore, is important in that it showcases the possibilities for alliances and sisterhood between liberal feminist amendment supporters and political and theological conservative and rightist women. Liberal ERA supporters embraced Betty Ford as a leader of the amendment movement, but there is little evidence to indicate that they embraced the EWC in the same way. Additionally, this dissertation has focused on leaders, political celebrities, and larger women's organizations. There is good cause to postulate that there were hundreds if not thousands of women across the nation who, much like the women of EWC, felt that they could not be evangelical or fundamentalist Christian and feminist at the same time. This is probably also true for moderate Republican women who felt challenged and politically adrift by the increasing conservatism within their party, though they had Ford to turn to for example. As the Republican Party delved further into the right during the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially after Ronald Reagan’s election, it is likely that many moderate-rightist women, with no role model to turn to, followed the party line against the ERA. Still, since not all rightist and conservative women held a monolithic ideology, some of them supported the Equal Rights Amendment, and the support of a larger body of women would certainly have been useful during the ratification struggle.\(^8\)

These analyses, and this dissertation, are instructive for the future of the Equal Rights Amendment which, at the time of this dissertation, is still on the congressional

\(^8\)Joan Hoff-Wilson, “Introduction,” in Rights of Passage, xvii.
floor. With enough support, the amendment could go back to the states for ratification. One of the strategies discussed in contemporary pushes for the ERA is the “three state strategy.” The 1972 version of the amendment received thirty-five of the thirty-eight state ratifications necessary for addition to the Constitution. Supporters of this strategy argue that Congress can alter the time limits that proposed amendments have and, even though the ERA ratification period expired, can give more time, even an unlimited amount, by reopening the amendment and giving it back to state legislatures. If this occurred, theoretically the thirty-five state ratifications from the 1972 to 1982 period would still be in effect. There is great disagreement, though, over whether this would be legal, especially since some of those states which voted for the ERA have subsequently rescinded their ratifications. While the three state strategy will need legal maneuvering to become a reality, it is the position embraced by many women's organizations, including the National Council of Women's Organizations, one of the largest supporters of ERA reintroduction.⁹

Reintroducing the Equal Rights Amendments to state legislatures is a future possibility. If it ever does go back up for ratification, it will be important to remember that while the ERA was meant and written to give only political and legal equality to women, it also had symbolic value that pertained to women's social equality as well. That means, necessarily, that definitions of womanhood will come into question, just as they did during the 1970s and 1980s. There must be a consensus that womanhood needs to be reconceptualized to embrace women's liberation from inequality and, for some

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women and men, this will be a hard sell. There are areas of possible solidarity, though, with bipartisan support from both Democrats and Republicans. There are also social and theological conservatives who would, and did, support the amendment even though it served as a challenge to their group identities. Sisterhood can be, and often is, powerful. As this dissertation has shown, sisterhood was achieved among women who held similar definitions of womanhood. If the ERA ever goes back to the states, supporters must struggle to find and support sisterhood, even if it crosses the liberal/conservative and Democratic/Republican divides.
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