



December 19, 2018

VIA Express Mail

The Hon. Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Majority Leader of the Virginia Senate
Room No. E603
Senate of Virginia
PO Box 396
Richmond, VA 23218
District03@senate.virginia.gov

Dear Maj. Leader Norment & Speaker Cox:

This is to let you know that the undersigned, Board of Directors of Biscayne Contractors, Inc., support ratification by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia of the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Americans overwhelmingly support equal rights for women and men, as do Virginians. Article I, Section 11 of the Virginia Constitution has provided a guarantee of equal rights for nearly half a century. This helps protect our daughters and sons against governmental discrimination on the basis of sex, and has not resulted in unintended consequences. This state level guarantee cannot protect Virginia women against federal discrimination, however. Only the federal Amendment can do that.

As noted by the American Bar Association (ABA), statutes protecting against government discrimination and gender-based violence "provide patchwork protection and have been subject to different levels of enforcement and judicial interpretation." The ABA states that ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment would have the following effects:

First, it would establish that gender equality under the law is a fundamental and irrevocable tenet of our society.

Second, it would require all judges to apply the highest standard of scrutiny when deciding cases involving sex discrimination. This means judges would use the same standard of review in sex discrimination cases that they now use in deciding cases involving discrimination based on race, religion, and national origin.

And third, it would protect and reinvigorate enforcement of existing gender equity laws.

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As 32 year old business in Virginia, we find it important and helpful that ratification does not have any associated cost. In addition to overwhelming evidence that increasing gender equity results in significant increases in gross domestic product (GDP) and net business profits, we strongly believe that ratification of the ERA is morally and ethically the right thing to do.

Now is the time. Much has changed. Illinois has ratified. Virginia's Attorney General released an opinion letter finding no definite legal bar to ratification. Governing boards throughout Virginia, including those of Albemarle, Blacksburg, Charlottesville, Chesapeake, Fairfax, Montgomery, Norfolk, Page, Powhatan, Shenandoah, and Virginia Beach, have passed resolutions urging you to ratify the Amendment. Leading citizens have published letters to many local newspapers, and thousands have signed a petition.

Accordingly, this is to urge that you ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as proposed by Congress on March 22, 1972, early in the 2019 legislative session. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Please note that all three of the undersigned Board of Directors of Biscayne Contractors, Inc. are Virginia residents as well as active voters.

Respectfully,



Alberto Omechevarria, President



Frank Zawitoski, Vice President



Timothy McCarthy, Treasurer