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Feminists Ignite Fight for Maine Equal Rights Amendment

by FEMINIST NEWSWIRE on Jun 9, 2017 - 4:38 PM No Comments

In light of the Trump Administration's threats to women's rights, Maine legislators have pushed for their state constitution to include the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

The bill's leading sponsor is Representative Lois Reckitt, a long-time ERA activist who has spent her career advocating for the rights of women and victims of domestic violence, serving as vice president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and over thirty years as executive director of Family Crisis Services in Portland, Maine. Dedicated to the amendment's passage, Reckitt addressed the floor on April 6th, saying, "We won't be silenced – we will use our voices, our compassion, and our political skills to prevent the destruction of the legacy our sisters, our mothers and their mothers – and we ourselves fought so hard to secure."

The Maine ERA was passed by majority support in both chambers, but failed to gain the necessary two-thirds vote in both houses necessary for the measure to be placed on the Maine Election ballot for final passage. Reckitt, in the final vote in the house, reminded her colleagues that women have faced legislative roadblocks at each push for equality. Specifically, she nodded towards Maine's 1917 rejection of women's right to vote. She noted how the persistence of women eventually led to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, and reminds her opposing counterparts that such persistence is undying, and will continue to be seen in legislatures to come.

"In 2017, it seems certain Maine women – and men – will lose again as this 128th Legislature rejects sending ERA for Maine to the voters. But I will persist, and with the continued strong support of my constituents, my stubborn self will be back in the 129th. And those of you who vote "no" today will have another chance to be on the right side of history. I will see you then, but for now, I request a Roll Call."

Reckitt closed her commentary with a request for roll call as a not too subtle reminder that those who vote "Nay" will have to face a majority of the legislature that want full equality for women.

Media Resources: Maine State Legislature 1/24/17