MOVIE "OUT OF THE HOME AND INTO THE HOUSE"

SYNOPSIS

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the United States Constitution stated: "Equality of rights under law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on the account of sex." After having passed both houses of Congress and a majority of state legislatures, the ERA failed in the Illinois General Assembly by only garnering a simple majority. Having failed to gain ratification by a super majority in the general assembly, and also failing to receive a supermajority of state legislatures, the ERA failed nationally. This film examines the 1973 campaign before and after the crucial second vote in the general assembly, and features a balance of arguments in favor of and against the ultimately doomed ERA.

OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the components of the Equal Rights Amendment.

2. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of amending the Constitution for equal treatment before the law of men and women.

3. Explain the arguments for and against "protective" laws in which women are prohibited from employment in certain occupations presumably for their own benefit.

4. Evaluate the tactic of seeking judicial injunctions for policy changes when such changes fail in the legislatures.

5. Discuss the argument that woman and men have equal capabilities in the work world.

6. Describe methods utilized by ERA proponents to win votes in favor of the amendment.

7. Assess the two basic different styles of promoting the ERA:

    a. The confrontational approach towards legislators with a hostile attitude towards women who dissent.

    b. The conciliatory approach to cajole legislators and avoid alienating women who are undecided or conflicted in their opinions.

8. Describe and assess the arguments made against the ERA by opponents, particularly the arguments of it being superfluous or symbolic.

9. Identify sex-based policies in the United States that might have been ruled unconstitutional if the ERA was successfully ratified.

10. Explain the complexities of merging the ERA campaign with the Civil Rights movement for African-Americans.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the advantages of a constitutional amendment over judicial precedents that basically accomplish the same goals?

2. What changes in approach may have increased the prospects to ratify the ERA in Illinois?

3. How were proponents of the ERA portrayed by opponents of the legislation?

4. How might an ERA affect affirmative action policies that benefit women?

5. What factors might discourage an Illinois legislator from ratifying a federal ERA, especially when Illinois had already created a state constitution with similar language?

6. In 1973, how might have ratification of the ERA affect military draft policy?

7. Why did the Equal Protection clause of the 14th Amendment not satisfy the proponents of the ERA?

8. What concerns did African-American men regarding the ERA?

9. If Illinois had changed General Assembly rules to allow for a simple majority to ratify amendments, what would have been the fate of the ERA nationally?

10. Why did the United States fail to ratify the ERA?