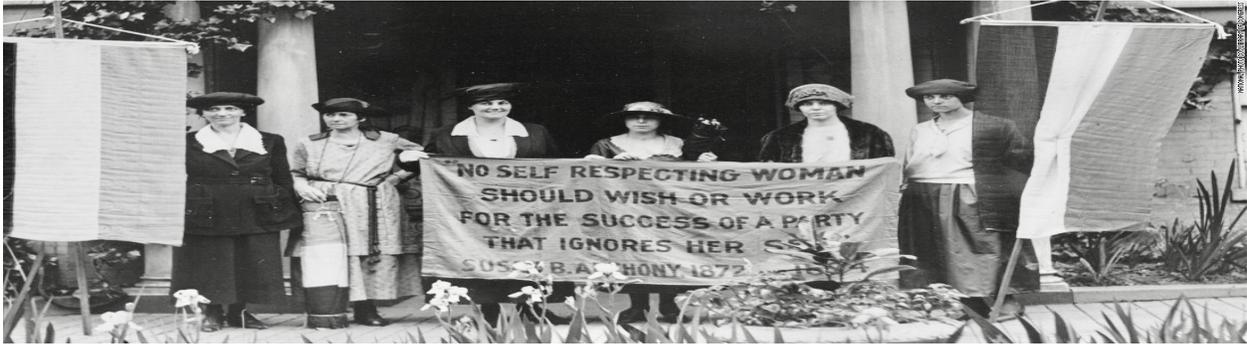


2020: Hindsight Or Foresight

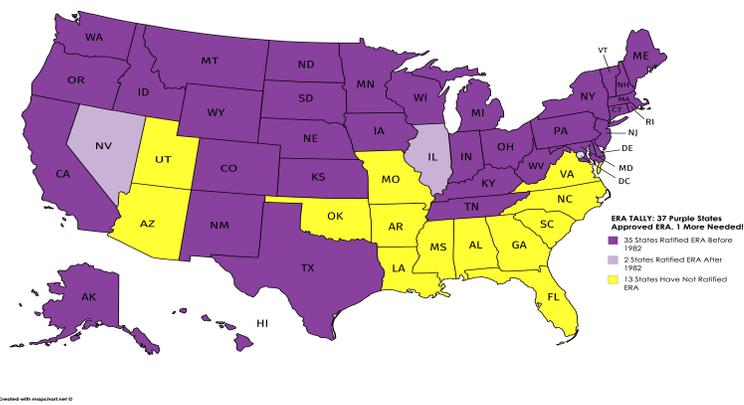
People say 20/20 is perfect vision. The operative question is will we have perfect foresight or perfect hindsight?

As we approach the 100th anniversary year of the passage of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution which granted women the right to vote it is appropriate to review women's progress in America and to recognize how far we have come (hindsight). As early as the writing of the Constitution, women like Abigail Adams were admonishing men not to forget the ladies. But the framers of the Constitution would not acknowledge half the population; rights were not to be granted to anyone except propertied white men. Despite organizing, petitioning and picketing for the right to vote, there would be 42 years between the introduction in Congress and the passage of suffrage rights for women.



Militant suffragists used tactics like parades, vigils and hunger strikes. Fierce resistance meant heckling, beating and jail were their lot. While some individual states granted women voting rights, by 1916 the women suffragists had united behind the goal of a constitutional amendment. New York adopted woman suffrage in 1917 and President Wilson came to support an amendment by 1918. Congress passed the amendment on June 4, 1919 and it was ratified on August 18, 1920 when TN became the 36th state giving the amendment its required $\frac{3}{4}$ ratification. The face of the American electorate was changed forever.

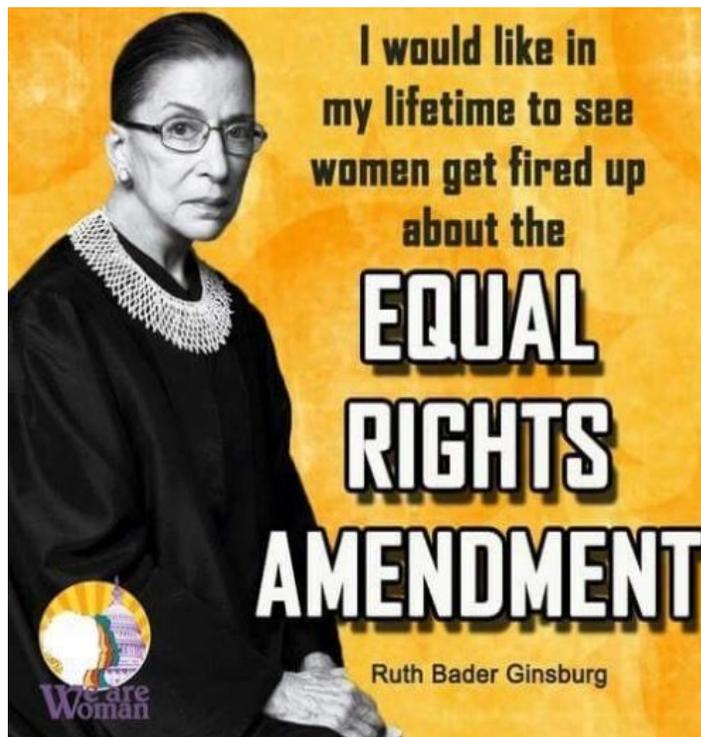
Today the EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT, or ERA, is just one state shy of putting women's rights into the Constitution. 2/3, or 38 states, must ratify the measure for it to become an official constitutional amendment. Illinois was the 37th last year and the pressing question is which state will 'bring it home'? Congress passed it in 1972 but over the years the debate has become a broader culture clash war over gender equality and sensitive issues. Several states are paused to address the issue including AZ, NC, Utah, GA and FL.



However, the amendment remains controversial: unpopular among conservatives and strongly supported by progressives. Other states like VA, AL, AK, LA, MI, MO, NC, SC, OK could be the one to 'bring it home' but seem less likely. Electing an increasing number of women to these state legislatures is changing the prospect of ratification but is far from assured.

The fight in the states has its own controversies: Congress originally gave states seven years to reach the 38 state threshold (1972-1979) but then extended the deadline to 1982 but has never addressed it since. There are bipartisan bills to fix that but none has come to a vote.

Some argue that after 230 years the US should have ensured equal rights to all Americans regardless of sex; that there would be federal protections enshrined in its supreme law just as other industrialized nations have done. As women continue to change the political discourse in America, with the Women's March, the rise of #MeToo, #TimesUp and other issues at the forefront of discussions, there is renewed interest in ratification, and the feminist message "Every Issue Is A Woman's Issue"; also diverse candidates running for office at every level of government... and only one state is needed! 2020 may be THE YEAR IT ALL HAPPENS FOR WOMEN. The key is at the ballot box.



The political parties are gearing up on both sides for partisan battles over everything. The essential variable on both sides is TURNOUT. And the critical factor is FEMALE. Virtually every issue will be determined by how women vote. More women are voting than ever before. More women are running for office than ever before. More women are engaged, informed and influencing their peers than ever before. If, as some say, 'The future is female' it is because women are tired of waiting to be *given* their rights and ready to seize them. American women have broken *the glass ceiling* in the trades, professions and most political arenas. They are not prepared to wait another 100 years for the full realization of inclusion and actualization of their full potential. 2020 could be perfect *foresight* of the completion of the dream our ancestral giants hoped to achieve.

