

## JANETTE DEAN

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**May 20, 2023**

House Rules and Administration Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Senate File 37 “Constitutional amendment providing for equality under the law.”** (see: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/bill.php?f=SF37&b=senate&y=2023&ssn=0>)

Dear Honorable Chair Long, Vice Chair Hollins and Committee Members:

Our state of Minnesota ratified the much-needed and long-awaited Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) during the last century on February 8, 1973 as the 26<sup>th</sup> state to do so and is proudly among the 38 required states who have finally together completed ratifying the ERA this century after Nevada, Illinois and Virginia’s widely-welcomed ratifications in 2017, 2018 and 2020, respectively.

I was part of those efforts as the lead grassroots organizer in Nevada during 2014-2017 while completing my Political Science and Sociology degree there and asking Nevada’s Honorable Senator Spearman to help Nevada become the very first state to ratify the ERA since 1977. I have also acted as an advocate nationally urging Equal Rights Amendments ratifications, votes and actions in other states and by Congress, the Executive Branch and the Supreme Court in Washington D.C.

I also thank and appreciate my own home state of Minnesota for its legislators’ timely ratification and leadership in 1973. I and others across generations have too frequently had to lament the continued setbacks and hardships that many have suffer across the five full decades since Minnesota’s welcomed ratification and decades earlier due to the ERA’s absence in our U.S. Constitution.

Those who are still trying to stall the ERA’s protections and publication are directly responsible for continuing the ongoing acute and chronic harms of inequality to so many Americans and residents’ pay and livelihoods, life opportunities and other necessities including their health, safety, and often their self-confidence due to harms and threats, including in more recent years, too, due to rollbacks in some levels of protection driven by the effects of deliberately spread sexism, misinformation and other forms of oppression by some, including the resulting social division, fear and despair that too many now feel due to inequality.

That is why I strongly thank and applaud those of you during this historic and impactful session who already helped champion and pass Minnesota’s urgent resolution within House File 197 that

formally urges Congress to immediately and responsibly recognize that the ERA has met all its requirements and should therefore be known as the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment which will then begin protecting all with U.S. constitutional equal rights (see the bill with its 35 allowed authors at: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/bill.php?f=HF197&b=house&y=2023&ssn=0> and its 5 allowed authors on the listed companion Senate bill, SF37).

Until and even after the ERA is within our published U.S. Constitution, I urge Minnesota's legislators to also utilize their power to responsibly help achieve constitutional equal rights in Minnesota itself in order to more permanently safeguard and further expand and reinforce the protections Minnesota already has in place at other levels.

Please therefore vote for passage of Senate File 37 authored by the Honorable Senators Mary Kunesh, Kari Dziedzic, Sandra Pappas, Erin Murphy and Jennifer McEwen and the 29 other Honorable Representatives including Kaohly Vang Her, Kristin Bahner and Melissa Hortman who are the many co-authors of its companion bill, House File 173 (see: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/bill.php?f=HF173&y=2023&ssn=0&b=house>).

Upon passage, I — as one of many — will be very elated and proud to vote yes in 2024 on the resulting ballot question which will be asked of us Minnesotans:

“Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended by adding a specific guarantee that equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by this state or any of its cities, counties, or other political subdivisions on account of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, ancestry, or national origin?”

*Not one person in Minnesota* who believes our constitutional republic, a very powerful form of democracy, which is pledged to be “one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” should tolerate or be satisfied with the lack of constitutional equal rights in Minnesota or our country.

It is certainly also *every generation's responsibility especially older generations'* to help stop the continuing social injustice being perpetrated by We the People as a whole through the failures of our various governments to more strongly protect U.S. citizens and state residents within our national and state constitutions equally through equal rights.

Without an ERA at the national level nor our state level presently, many of the harmful social problems and individual situations that sex discrimination and other discrimination still causes and can potentially cause will irresponsibly continue. Social justice is defined on the Oxford Reference website as:

“The objective of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest.”

Utilizing ethical human thought as well in its publication, the U.S.-based Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines social justice in a way that also strongly reveals the necessity of an Equal Rights Amendment in U.S. states and the United States through the definition of social justice:

“a state or doctrine of egalitarianism” and egalitarianism being “1: a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs, and 2: a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities among people.”

Social justice — plus the willingness to act for it — are indeed essential to human ethics, progress and democracy.

I, therefore, call upon all Minnesotans (including all legislators in the Minnesota Legislature) to help each other in many areas of needed social justice, including by helping to pass Senate File 37 as well as its 2024 General Election question which stipulates that essential and comprehensive equal rights will be added to Minnesota’s own constitution with an effective date of January 1, 2025.

Per the DFL Action Agenda that I and many others worked on through the submission of resolutions at our 2022 DFL caucuses and convention, our party (along with several of our fair-minded non-partisan allies and some allies in other parties):

“Supports banning discrimination on the basis of gender/sex by strongly advocating for the removal of the deadline for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and also for the passage of legislation to add an Equal Rights Amendment to the Minnesota State Constitution. (see: page 2 of the category of Civil, Human, Natural, & Constitutional Rights at: <https://dfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/DFL-Action-Agenda-2022-1-1.pdf>).”

Please therefore join our all-important effort this session that the State of Minnesota pass its own all-important and comprehensive state ERA to support and protect the equality of ALL Minnesotans.

Thank you,

*Janette Dean*

*Minnesota-raised Janette Dean is an environmental policy and human rights advocate and organizer who helped Nevada ratify the Equal Rights Amendment as the lead grassroots organizer there from 2014-2017 (see: <https://sites.google.com/view/nevadansfortheera/>). She currently lives and works in her home state of Minnesota. To see the beginning steps of the Equal Rights Amendment’s journey and Nevada’s steps to ratification victory, visit: <https://prezi.com/view/ClzKezAQEDP4lV9dBHb/>.*