

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS24320

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Idaho Constitution to affirm the equal application of the Constitution to all persons regardless of their sex. The Equal Rights Amendment was written in 1923 by Alice Paul, suffragist leader and founder of the National Woman's Party. After women's right to vote was guaranteed by the 19th Amendment in 1920, she proposed the ERA as the next step in confirming "equal justice under law" for all citizens. The ERA was introduced into every Congress between 1923 and 1972, when it was passed and sent to the states for ratification. In 1972 when Congress sent the ERA to the states for ratification, Idaho was very supportive of the bill and passed it. However, five years later, Idaho rescinded the amendment by changing the rules from a 2/3rd majority to a single vote in a closed-door session. In 2015 the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWP) released its "Status of Women in the States" report where Idaho received an "F" on our report card, ranking 50th among the states and D.C. Among the rankings, Idaho receives F and D grades in employment and earnings, reproductive rights, political participation, and poverty and opportunity. On pay alone, if the current trend continues, women will not see equal pay until 2074. The purpose of this bill is to affirm equal protection so all of our citizens can thrive. We need creative solutions that fully invest in Idaho's future, of which women are vital to its growth. We want to ensure that women earn equal pay; that women are equally represented in elected positions and board appointments; that women experience a welcoming place in the workforce free of sexual harassment; that women experience increased access to reproductive health care and maintain control over their reproductive health care choices; and that we create compassionate communities where women will not experience the same epidemic rates of violence.

FISCAL NOTE

There is no immediate direct impact to the general fund. However, it is difficult to be specific on actual long-term impact as adjustments could be made based on inequitable salaries, for example. If it were found that state employees were not earning equal pay for equal work, there would be additional impacts on general fund.

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