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Senator Justus Presents Equal Rights Amendment to Rules Committee

Hopes Third Time is the Charm

JEFFERSON CITY - Senator Jolie Justus (D-Kansas City) today presented Senate Concurrent Resolution 3 to the Senate Committee on Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions, and Ethics. This resolution, offered for the third year in a row, urges Congress to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution. The ERA would guarantee equal rights to all Americans regardless of sex under the U.S. Constitution.

“The need for a constitutional amendment to protect the rights of women is too great to continue to ignore,” Sen. Justus said during today’s committee hearing.

First proposed in 1923 by activist Alice Paul, the ERA was not brought before Congress until 1972, where it was passed and sent to the states for ratification. The amendment, however, was approved by only 35 of the 38 states needed in order for it to be added to the Constitution. The ERA reached its time limit for ratification in 1982, with only three-fourths of the states’ approval, thus putting a halt to the 59-year struggle for the ERA.

“It is surprising how many people do not realize that the ERA is not actually a part of our Constitution,” Sen. Justus said. “We have made great strides when it comes to equality, but there are still many more obstacles to overcome.”

Women today may be able to attain the same positions as men in the workplace, but most women do not receive the same pay. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2007 women were paid only 77 cents for every dollar that men earned. For minority women, the numbers are even worse. African-American women are paid only 72 cents and Latina women only 60 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts. The significant difference in pay means that women lose \$23 from every \$100 worth of work that they do.

“A lifetime of \$23 less means \$38,500 and not \$50,000 or \$23,100 and not \$30,000 a year,” Sen. Justus said. “That is tens of thousands per year less for child care, groceries, housing, and other expenses.”

Senator Justus contends differences in pay are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to gender inequality.

“Sex discrimination against women occurs daily, and in most aspects of life,” she said. “Well-qualified women are passed over for employment/promotions while men with less experience and/or qualifications are given the opportunity to advance. Pregnant women, who work at companies not covered by the Family Medical Leave Act, may still have to use their sick and vacation hours to take time off during their pregnancy.”

The Family Medical Leave Act covers only those working in companies with 50 employees or more.

“Eighty-eight years ago, women won the right to vote,” Sen. Justus said. “Three years later, the struggle for equal rights for women began, and has yet to be accomplished. In a nation that takes pride in being one of the most advanced in the world, women should not have to wait almost an entire century to gain equal standing with men.”

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