

ERA advocates embark on push for support



Nancy Glowacki and Lee Luebbe listen to another supporter of the ERA during a meeting Monday of the Fletcher Town Council.

- **Comments**

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FLETCHER — One by one, four women who support the Equal Rights Amendment stood up in public to share personal stories that showed the need for the ERA.

When she was 12, Nancy Glowacki told Fletcher Town Council members, “I was told there wasn’t room in a marriage for two egos. When I was 13, I was looked over by my young male friends as summer began and told, ‘Wow, you’re really developing.’ When I was 17 I was told, ‘you can’t go to vet school. They just take men and it would be a waste of money because you’ll just get married.’” When she became an occupational therapist in her 20s, her pay was so low “my husband said I needed to go into management to make working worthwhile.”

That wasn’t the end of the discrimination that Glowacki and the other three women — Lee Luebbe, Gayle Kemp and Princess Ferguson — described. All four urged the Fletcher Town Council to endorse a resolution from the ERA-NC Alliance supporting ratification of what would become the 28th Amendment to the Constitution.

It's been 99 years since women won the right to vote and 96 since Alice Paul drafted the ERA language. Sent to the states by Congress in 1972, the amendment won support of 35 of the 38 states needed by a June 30, 1982, deadline. The resolution supporting the ERA argues that Congress "can alter time limits" for ratification of amendments. Two states, Nevada and Illinois, have voted to ratify the ERA since 2017, meaning North Carolina, in the view of ERA supporters, could be the decisive 38th state. Fifteen cities across North Carolina have adopted resolutions in support of the ERA, including Asheville.

Fletcher became the first city in Henderson County to do so. The Flat Rock Village Council was next, voting unanimously to endorse ratification during its regular meeting Thursday morning. The Hendersonville City Council adopted the resolution during a special called meeting Thursday afternoon.

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex," the proposed amendment says.

"The ERA is for everyone — men, women and families," Glowacki said. "It ensures in the U.S. Constitution that every person in America receives equal footing under the eyes of the law."

The local ERA Alliance team hopes to present the resolution next week at Flat Rock, Laurel Park and Hendersonville board meetings and is trying to get on the agenda of the Henderson County Board of Commissioners. The proposed amendment faces an uphill climb bill in the state Legislature. ERA bills introduced in 2015, 2017 and 2018 have been dispatched to Judiciary or Rules committees and never emerged for a hearing.