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## Your View: It's Women's Equality Day, Aug. 26, and we still need the ERA

By Sarah Williams | Bristol, Virginia Aug 26, 2018

Would you believe that in 2018 the only right explicitly granted to women in the United States Constitution is the right to vote? In a survey commissioned by the ERA Coalition/Fund for Women's Equality and conducted in October 2015, 80 percent of respondents said that they believed that the Constitution contains a statement granting women equal rights under the law. Actually, it doesn't.

The Nineteenth Amendment, adopted in 1920, granted women the right to vote and remains today the only reference in the Constitution to any right explicitly granted to women as well as men. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia said in a 2011 interview, “Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn’t.”

Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment would prohibit government discrimination on the basis of sex. The amendment states: “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 ERA, passed by Congress in 1972, now has 37 of the 38 states needed for ratification, the latest two being Nevada (2017) and Illinois (2018). If Virginia ratifies the ERA, we will become the 38th and final state for ratification. Our Virginia lawmakers need to address this important civil rights issue.

Some people may believe that women’s current advancement in the workplace and in careers means we should forget this nonsense about a formal statement of equality. But equality and justice are foundational values, and historically they require formal recognition. The ERA would provide a durable statement that women share equality under the law in the United States.

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### Giving your view

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public interest.

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