

*Prepared by Dick, 11/21/78 for
The Northwest Airlines Passages
Magazine.*

DOLE'S POSITION ON ERA

I supported the Equal Rights Amendment when it passed Congress in 1972. I supported it as a member of the Republican Platform Committee in 1976, and I support its principles today. As the centerpiece of our fight against discrimination based on sex, it would be an important addition to our Constitution.

Of course, ERA has become a hotly debated public issue with very vocal advocates and opponents. Many opponents feel as they do out of fear that it will damage the fabric of American society. While I respect that view, I do not feel that our commitment to equality can do anything but improve and strengthen America. There should be no discrimination based on race, religion, age, handicap, or sex.

Originally, Congress imposed a deadline of March 22, 1979 for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. However, it has become apparent that the required number of states will not have ratified it by that date. Therefore, a number of colleagues who support ERA managed to pass a measure in Congress extending the deadline. Since that measure did not include a provision expressly allowing states to rescind their prior ratification of the amendment, it had the effect of changing the rules without allowing state legislators to change their minds. In my view, that is fundamentally unfair. I supported a change that would have expressly permitted rescissions. When that did not pass, I had to vote against the extension itself.

Support for a measure on its merits does not logically require support for all procedural matters designed to keep the measure alive. America's commitment to fairness is the bulwark of our democracy and lawmakers have a duty to defend that principle. However, my concern about the procedural aspects of the extension do not, in any way, dim my support for the principle of ERA.