THE PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY REPORT

35 Years After the Defeat of ERA

by John and Andy Schlafly

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The Equal Rights Amendment died thirty-five years ago, on June 30, 1982, as its opponents gathered at a banquet with Phyllis Schlafly to celebrate its demise. The Supreme Court subsequently ruled that the time for its ratification had expired, and efforts to revive the amendment have gone nowhere.

Our Nation can be grateful for this victory in avoiding the unisex society that ERA unsuccessfully attempted to impose. The obligation to register for the military draft still applies only to young men, and Defense Secretary James Mattis has sensibly delayed entry by so-called transgendered individuals into our military until the impact on combat readiness can be fully evaluated.

Many of the arguments made by Phyllis Schlafly in the 1970s against ERA were ridiculed by liberals at the time, yet here we are today dealing with court-imposed same-sex marriage, transgender bathrooms, and taxpayer-funded abortion. Bill and Hillary Clinton put ERA's most prominent advocate on the U.S. Supreme Court, but Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has never been able to persuade a majority of the Court that our Constitution requires mindless gender equality.

Thirty-five years without ERA, we have thriving single-sex sports teams, sororities, fraternities, and even some flourishing public schools and classrooms that are all-boys or all-girls. As bad as judicial activism is now, if the Equal Rights Amendment were in the Constitution, federal courts would be spending their time deciding if Johnny has a constitutional right to play on an all-girls' field hockey team, or if an all-boys public school is unconstitutional.

The defeat of ERA had an immense cultural impact in addition to these obvious legal and political benefits. It made it socially acceptable for mothers to spend time away from the workforce to raise their children, during a moment in our history when feminists were demonizing that traditional role.

During the 1970s, mothers were increasingly herded into the workforce and misled to think that was the only way they could have a fulfilling life. ERA was going to "seal the deal," and render it impossible for our society ever to have a respectable role for the stay-at-home mom with a working husband.

Feminists even tried to restructure Social Security to eliminate the provisions that allow wives and widows to benefit from their husbands' earnings. Those provisions were made sex-neutral in 1983, but homemakers still draw most of the benefits which their husbands earned.

The feminist ideology behind ERA sneered at any woman who would choose to stay at home while her husband advanced his career in the workplace. With the media and universities pushing this agenda hard alongside ERA, the percentage of stay-at-home moms with employed husbands did steadily decline.

But Phyllis Schlafly's defeat of ERA permitted a new culture to emerge for the stay-at-home mom. Phyllis even instituted the innovative Homemaker Award in 1985 to honor a woman each year who exemplified this tried-and-true approach.

Her award was ridiculed by feminists, but like many of Phyllis' ideas it is increasingly praised and imitated today. County fairs in states as diverse as Maryland, New York, Michigan, Wisconsin and Oregon give homemaker awards, and our First Lady Melania Trump is a homemaker who initially declined the glamour of the White House to stay at home while her son completed his school year.

By the mid-1980s the decline in the percentage of stay-at-home moms with working husbands began to level off, and remains today at about the same level it was then. Nearly a third of women with children and working husbands choose to stay at home rather than be employed, as made respectable by the defeat of ERA.

Many of those women do what Phyllis Schlafly herself did back more than half-century ago: give their children a head start on school by teaching them to

read with phonics. Our society depends on homemakers to produce the next generation of inventors, writers, artists, teachers, and leaders.

This 35-year anniversary of the defeat of ERA commemorates an additional milestone: the emergence of the modern conservative movement, built on social values as much as economic and national security ones. The election of Donald Trump, which Phyllis Schlafly foresaw and supported from the beginning, was a triumph over feminist political correctness.

State authority over family and marriage would have been totally subsumed within federal law, if ERA were ratified. Everyday issues of divorce and custody could have become federal cases as Congress would have been empowered by ERA to pass new laws concerning custody and divorce.

Stopping a media-promoted constitutional amendment once it is presented to the states for ratification is as impossible as installing brakes on a runaway freight train. Our values and national security today owe much to the stunning defeat of ERA 35 years ago.

John and Andy Schlafly are sons of Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) whose 27th book, ***The Conservative Case for Trump****, was published posthumously on September 6.*