

ERA RESOLUTIONS

A module



ERA-NC ALLIANCE

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A note.

The language of this module is centered around passing a resolution through your city council in North Carolina, but similar steps can be applied to any number of organizations, including county commissions, parties, or other entities in other states.

Introduction: Why do I want to pass a resolution?

If you're reading this, we bet that you're definitely interested in the Equal Rights Amendment and want to do your part to help get it ratified in your state. At the same time, you might be wondering something along the lines, "Why should I want to pass a city resolution to support the ERA? Shouldn't I be worried more directly about state legislators? Maybe I should go lobby in the Capitol, personally?"

Passing a city resolution to support the ERA is a form of lobbying in itself. It serves the purpose of educating lawmakers about the Amendment itself, as well as the need and desire for its passage in their districts. In addition, resolutions passed at the municipal level will be sent to state legislators, further demonstrating to them that ratification is a priority for many of their constituents. It also raises broader public awareness for the social, political, and cultural need for ratification not only in your district, but to other cities within your state.

So, we've established that passing a resolution is important, which brings us to the next question: How do I do this? Where do I even start?

Thankfully, you don't have to figure out how to do so through blind trial and error. The following is a guide of helpful steps based on ones taken by activists who have successfully passed resolutions in their own districts.

PLANNING



Step 1: Research Council Operations.

Like all good plans, one to pass a city resolution starts with the critical step of research. A city council is a very distinct entity with its own rules and procedures. In order to effectively dialogue with your council representatives and, by extension, other members of your community, you should familiarize yourself with them.



- a. Review how the city council operates.
- b. Use the council website to track meetings. Determine when the council meets and opens the floor for public comment.
- c. Talk to Clerks for tips on signing up to speak and securing meetings with the council leaders.
- d. Watch past meetings and planning sessions online. Many meetings are taped and archived.

Step 2: Outreach

It's easier to get a city resolution passed if the citizenry believes in the value of the ERA. While it's highly improbable that you'll have every citizen's backing, it's very likely that any number of people and organizations share your views. All you have to do is educate them about what you're doing and invite them to join you.

- a. Identify other allies in the local area that would support the resolution. This would include ERA-NC Alliance Lead and Member organizations, non-profits and local businesses.
- b. Utilize the ERA-NC State Action Team Network. Contact your Action Team District Coordinator to assist you in recruiting allies.
- c. Determine if there are sister organizations with issues before the council. Coordinate activity.

Step 3: Write ERA Resolution

Legalese is a challenge for most people who don't have a law degree, and while you don't have to be a lawyer to write a resolution, you do have to make sure that your resolution both is in compliance with Council rules and says what you actually intend for it to say. Here are a few tools you can use to accomplish both of those things:

- a. Use the format accepted by the council.

- b. Consult the ERA-NC Alliance Resolution Templates and also refer to the wording of ERA Resolutions passed by other councils. <http://www.era-nc.org/counties-and-municipalities/>

- c. Study local resolutions and proclamations that have passed, especially those that pertain to women and women's rights. You may be able to cite the resolves of those resolutions to personalize your ERA resolution.

Step 4: Identify Lead Sponsors

You'll need lead sponsors on city council in order to get your resolution heard. Thankfully, since your work is in your city, those sponsors are definitely within your reach to contact.

- a. Resolutions are usually introduced into council sessions by a council member. The member will often take the lead in shepherding the resolution through the process. The resolution may be required to be heard first by a legal department or the City Attorney's office. It may also filter through working or planning sessions of the council before it is presented to the entire council.

- b. Network with council members you know for advice on who should sponsor the resolution. You want the most respected member(s) to support your efforts. If the member sponsoring the resolution has a confrontational reputation with other members, the resolution process may encounter unnecessary obstacles.

- c. The resolution may be added to the consent agenda as the result of the work of a Lead Sponsor. However, be prepared for a public hearing by the council if it becomes debatable. Study archived videos of ERA testimony to other councils. http://durhamcounty.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=3&clip_id=972

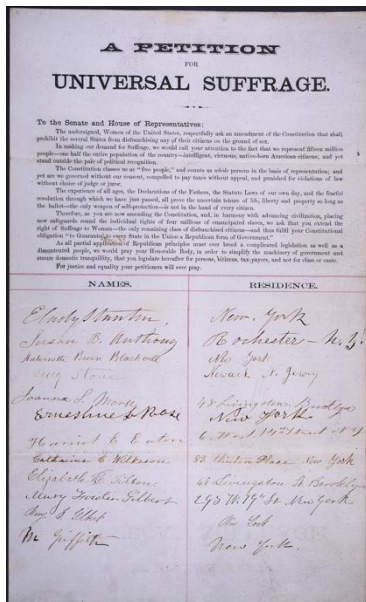
Step 5: Advocate with Council Members.

It's good to have more than one advocate on the council, and it's also good to have council members other than those who are directly sponsoring your resolution advocating from your corner. Be sure to network with plenty of other council people to educate them and seek their support.

- Write, call, meet with council members.
- Ask to appear before the council to make a presentation.
- Share copies of petitions, letters. Make sure addresses and names are completely legible.
- Hold a special showing of Equal Means Equal for members or provide members with a schedule of showings they can attend.



Step 6: Coordinate a public campaign



This is the digital age, and a political campaign for your resolution is only a few clicks away. At the same time, good ol' fashioned letter writing and stumping can be just as effective. Here's how you can do both:

- Establish a Facebook Event and Twitter Campaign. Use Podcasts to seek the support of the public.
- Circulate petitions, hold letter writing campaigns and schedule letters to the editors of your local papers.
- Coordinate a press release about your campaign with the Alliance.
- Invite the public to any hearings on the resolution. Encourage supporters to sign up to speak in support of the resolution.

Step 7a: Follow up on Victories

You won! Awesome, go ERA, go women and men, and go you! There's only one more thing to do: Let the world know.

a. If the resolution passes, coordinate a press release with the Alliance. Give interviews and write letters to the Editor announcing that the resolution passed.

b. Send the adopted resolution to the appropriate legislative bodies.

c. Send thank you letters to the Council members and your allies.

d. Identify other entities that may pass the ERA Resolution and start a new campaign.

e. Forward any media coverage you receive to the Alliance.



Step 7b: Follow up if you need to try again.

As Churchill once put it, "Success is not final; failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." Sometimes, no matter how hard you push, or how well thought out your actions were, you still might not be able to get your resolution passed.

That's okay; activists have been trying and trying again to ratify the ERA because it's that important, and the steps in this module certainly weren't determined through one perfect attempt.

Here's how you can follow up if you don't succeed in getting the resolution ratified:

a. Thank the council members for considering the resolution.

b. Identify obstacles to passage.

c. Revamp plan to address the weak areas and build stronger coalitions with allies.

d. Introduce the resolution for the council's consideration again if the Lead Sponsor feels the obstacles have been mitigated.

e. Identify other entities that may pass the ERA Resolution if the council is not yet ready to pass it. Notify the council members as other entities pass the resolution.

f. Always leave the door open for the members to revisit their decision.

g. Learn more at: www.era-nc.org

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