

FAQs for a Minnesota Constitutional Amendment For Equality



Q: What is the complete text of the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment for Equality?

A: Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged or denied by the state of Minnesota or any of its political subdivisions on account of gender. The legislature may enforce the provisions of this section by appropriate legislation.

Q: Is an amendment for equal rights to the Minnesota Constitution necessary?

A: While it is true that all gender issues (except adultery laws) in Minnesota statutes have been meticulously equalized. But legislation can be rolled back. The Legislature can repeal a statute with a simple majority vote.

A: We feel that to suggest legislation is enough is to say that equal rights between men and women are not important enough to be protected and upheld in the State Constitution. Other Constitutional amendments that currently exist include authorizing a state lottery, protecting hunting and fishing rights, dedicating money to the environment, and authorizing money to Vietnam and Persian Gulf Veterans. Few would argue that these provisions are more important than equal rights for all the citizens of our state.

Q: What is the strategy for securing equal rights in the Minnesota Constitution?

A: 1) The Minnesota Chapter of the National Organization for Women is inviting every Minnesota organization, business, nonprofit, labor union, faith group and individual to become a member of the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment For Equality Coalition (MN CAFE Coalition).

TO JOIN OUR EFFORTS PLEASE EMAIL US AT MNCAFECOALITION@GMAIL.COM

- 2) With a unified, diverse collaboration of members, the Coalition will mount an effective public relations campaign leading up to the 2010 Minnesota Legislative session, including public awareness polling.
- 3) The Coalition will develop an effective legislative strategy with House and Senate leadership to ensure passage out of both bodies during the 2010 session. A Constitutional amendment does not have to be approved by the Governor, so if a simple majority in both the House and Senate approves, the amendment can be placed on the ballot statewide in the elections on November 2, 2010.
- 4) Once placed on the ballot, a significant campaign to educate voters statewide will need to be mounted. Opposition is expected from anti-choice and anti-GLBT groups, therefore communications and public relations will be key to quickly strike down false statements and distortions.
- 5) YOUR HELP IS NEEDED! Spread the word and join the MN CAFE Coalition today!

Q: What is required to be a member of the Coalition?

A: For individuals: 1) Public support of the CAFE; 2) Public awareness through your personal contacts; 3) Volunteering either your time or your financial support (both will be accepted but both are not required).

A: For organizations, unions, businesses or other groups: 1) Public support of the CAFE and use of the name of your organization on our materials; 2) Public awareness through your members, customers, etc.; 3) An active member from your organization to be on the Coalition Board; 4) Assistance in fundraising, to be decided by the Board (which will be established at our first meeting listed above).

Q: Why call it the CAFE Coalition instead of an ERA Coalition?

A: Because the national Equal Rights Amendment has also not been added to our Federal Constitution, many mistake what we are working toward. So to differentiate our state amendment strategy from the federal amendment and those various strategies, we chose to identify our effort as the Minnesota Constitutional

Amendment For Equality. The founders of the Coalition believe that by working towards a state equality amendment, we will build awareness in Minnesota of the need for a Federal ERA as well.

Q: What is the history of the Minnesota ERA?

A: After the Federal ERA was defeated in June of 1982, Representative Phyllis Kahn and Senator Linda Berglin introduced House File 1 and Senate File 1 into the 1983 Legislative session. Because of an abortion law that was overturned in Pennsylvania that same year, a state with an ERA in their constitution, legislatures around the country began inappropriately associating equal rights with abortion laws. In Minnesota, the Legislature also withdrew the ERA from it's agenda. Since 1983, Senator Dick Cohen has introduced a Constitutional amendment for equality in every Legislative session. The last time the bill was brought up in a House or Senate committee hearing was in 2001 when Senator John Marty became the chair of the Senate Judiciary committee. Minnesota NOW testified at that hearing.

Q: Can I contribute financially to the MN CAFE Coalition?

A: YES! Please make checks payable to Minnesota NOW Foundation. If and when the coalition becomes a full fledged campaign to pass a ballot measure, we will re-evaluate the situation. In the meantime, the MN NOW Foundation, which is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, will be the official fiscal agent for the Coalition.

For more information, go to www.MnCAFEC Coalition.org or contact the MN CAFE Coalition at MnCAFEC Coalition@gmail.com