

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 12, 1978

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

The following is the text of a letter from the President sent today to Congressman Peter Rodino, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and Congressman Don Edwards, chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights:

Next week, the Judiciary Committee will be voting on H.J. Res. 638, which would extend the time for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. I am writing to let you, and other members of the Committee, know of my strong support for an extension of the deadline beyond March 22, 1979.

The Equal Rights Amendment is a long overdue addition to our Constitution: it will guarantee equal rights for all Americans, regardless of sex. I commend you, and the Judiciary Committee, for your efforts in 1972 proposing the Amendment and your vital support, since then, for ratification.

I am hopeful that ERA will be ratified before the present deadline expires, and I am committed to doing whatever I can to help the ratification process. But I am concerned that the current deadline may be an unnecessary barrier toward ensuring more than a hundred million Americans their constitutional rights. I do not believe that, just as we move so close to ensuring those rights, the struggle for ERA must be ended because of an original seven year deadline.

There is no constitutional requirement that ratification occur within a seven year period, nor within the period originally established for ratification. Under the Constitution, in the opinion of the Justice Department, Congress is empowered to determine the period of ratification and can change, by resolution, any previously established ratification period.

I urge the Committee to exercise its authority to extend the ratification deadline for ERA.

Sincerely,

JIMMY CARTER

#