

O'Neill Doubts Panel Will Deal ERA Setback

Associated Press

House Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr., said yesterday he does not expect the Rules Committee to require a two-thirds vote for House approval of a time extension for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

"I doubt it," the Massachusetts Democrat said in response to a question.

The House Judiciary Committee approved last week a resolution extending the deadline for ratification of ERA from next March 22 to June 30, 1982.

The committee refused to consider a proposal that the extension, like the original constitutional amendment, require a two-thirds majority for approval. This is expected to be brought up again in the Rules Committee or on the floor.

Meanwhile, organizations supporting the extension are staging a daily lunch-time vigil outside the Capitol. The groups' members said they will be outside the House daily until it has acted and then will move to the Senate side.

Senate Minority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.) told reporters yesterday he believes a two-thirds majority should be required.

"I would oppose the extension by a simple majority," Baker said. He also said he was not sure he would support the extension in any event.

The ERA, which would outlaw discrimination based on sex, has been approved by 35 states and must be ratified by three more by next March 22 to become part of the Constitution. Four of the 35 states that have ratified the measure have since rescinded approval, but the validity of that move still is in question and the Justice Department has said it is up to Congress to decide.