


A rally for equality



A throng of nearly 100,000 women and men crowded in sweltering 90-degree heat into Washington on Sunday to rally for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The huge gathering came none too soon. The ERA, which forbids discrimination on the basis of sex, is in serious trouble. Proponents have only until March 22 of next year to persuade three more states to adopt the amendment or lose out altogether because of the seven-year deadline.

Last weekend's warriors, however, placed their emphasis on Congressional extension of the seven-year limit. The ERA campaigners argue that they need more time to take their case to state legislatures. The deadline, they say, is an artificial creation of Congress, not a Constitutional requirement.

We are not persuaded by this brief. We think the seven-year period remains a wise and realistic method to protect the Constitution from amendment by endurance. If ERA secures an extension, then other amendments, pushed by special interests, could claim the same treatment. Surely ERA backers would not view with equanimity the extra years for enactment gained by the zealous forces urging an anti-abortion amendment.

In endorsing the ERA, we believe instead that the amendment should win allegiance by traditional means. We think its supporters can still mount a successful drive over the next eight months. Rallies like the one in Washington will aid immeasurably in the movement. We hope ERA activists will now channel their energies toward the upcoming legislative battles in the critical states.