Collection #
M 1208
OM 0600

ERA INDIANA MATERIALS, 1961-1993

Collection Information

Historical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	5 manuscript boxes, 1 half manuscript box, 1 half box photographs, 5 folders color photographs, 5 OM folders, 43 artifacts (1 t-shirt, 1 plaque, 1 keychain, 40 pins/buttons), 7 audio reels (housed in manuscript boxes)
COLLECTION DATES:	1961-1993
PROVENANCE:	Mendle E. Adams, Richmond Heights, OH
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Hoosiers for the Equal Rights Amendment, M0636; Joline Moore Ohmart Papers, M0610; Indiana NOW Collection, M0583
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2014.0297
NOTES:	

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Although the Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1923 and subsequent years, both houses of Congress did not pass the ERA until 1972. When the amendment was sent out to the states with a ratification deadline of March 22, 1979, thirty states ratified within the first year. However, in this time, opposition to the amendment also began to organize and solidify, most notably from Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum/STOP ERA. Hence, the needed eight more ratifications trickled in.

In August 1973, Hoosiers for the Equal Rights Amendment (HERA) was established to stir up public support and lobby lawmakers to pass the amendment. The organization disbanded in 1976, as publicity and advocacy efforts were taken over by operatives for the National Organization for Women, one of whom was Ruth Adams. The campaign was successful, and the ERA was ratified by the state of Indiana on January 24th, 1977, bringing the count to thirty five states. Chances of getting three more states by the deadline looked grim as tides turned more conservative, so NOW and other pro-ERA groups were able to lobby Congress for an extension. Congress granted an extension until June 30, 1982 and pro-ERA groups re-focused on targeting three more states for ratification.

After her success in Indiana, Ruth Adams was again recruited by NOW and sent to Oklahoma to serve as the Project Director of the Countdown Campaign. The Countdown Campaign was ultimately unsuccessful and the ERA continues to be reintroduced in Congress at every session, but the amendment has not picked up the momentum it had in the 1970s.

ERA advocate Naomi Ruth Williams Adams (October 10, 1938-January 29, 2014) was born in Portsmouth, OH to Rev. Jesse Clinton Williams and Lola Hardin Williams, one of five children. Ruth met Rev. Mendle Adams (July 1, 1938-) of Richmond, Indiana, son of Earl and Margaret Adams and the couple was married in 1957. Both Ruth and Mendle attended Marion College (now Indiana Wesleyan University) in the 1960s, and remained in Marion, Indiana, opening an insurance business. The couple was also involved in politics and in 1972, Mendle launched his first political campaign for State Representative. He was unsuccessful, but he ran again in 1974 and was elected as a State Representative, where he was a supporter of ERA ratification but is also remembered for his advocacy efforts on behalf of senior citizens. After one term as a State Representative, Mendle ran an unsuccessful campaign for State Senator. Ruth then took up the political mantle in the family, as she was recruited by NOW for the ERA campaign in Indiana, and later in 1980 in Oklahoma. Ruth also ran an ultimately unsuccessful campaign herself for State Representative in Kansas in 1984.

Ruth and Mendle were also active in the United Church of Christ, as Mendle ultimately abandoned politics and instead pastored churches in Indiana, North Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Kentucky and Ohio. The couple had four children: David, Brian, Josef and Vicki.

Sources: "The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment"
http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/history.htm

Ruth Adams Obituary. http://www.brown-forward.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=1229243

Ancestry.com

Materials in the collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains documents, clippings, artifacts and audio pertaining to the campaign for ERA ratification in Indiana, as well as other states in the union. There are also some documents specifically relating to the National Organization for Women (NOW) and their involvement with the fight for the ERA. Additionally, the collection contains personal and political documents from two individuals who experienced the ERA campaign in Indiana, Ruth Adams who ran the campaign and Mendle Adams who served in the Indiana General Assembly during part of the campaign. Ruth's papers also include correspondence relating to other causes and jobs she had, such as with arts organizations. Mendle's papers contain photographs of him on the campaign trail, some correspondence from his time in office and letters he wrote to Ruth in the 1980s when they were living apart due to separate employment situations.

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