

FINAL
Liz Hager

Hi, I'm Liz Hager.

You can tell now how enjoyable it was to work with Carol Pierce on that early Commission on the Status of Women!

AND, I got to sit next to Carol as we were both freshmen in the 1973 House of Representatives. It turned out to be Carol's only term in the House but, of course, I got hooked and served 12 more terms—26 years in all!

< MANY of you here today worked alongside me and Carol and beyond, and were a part of these 50 years of the Commission—would all former members of the New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women, both staff and Commissioners, please stand?>

<After applause, continue>

In the early 1970's, the Commission had planned to lobby for repeal of our abortion laws. When Roe was decided in 1973, we (falsely) believed that we didn't have to work so hard on choice any more. We really thought that abortion rights would be secure.

PAUSE

So we turned our focus to the Equal Rights Amendment.

The federal ERA had been voted on in March of 1972. New Hampshire was the second state to ratify it. **BUT WE BELIEVED NEW HAMPSHIRE NEEDED ITS OWN ERA.**

I ran for the 1974 Constitutional Convention and was honored to be named Chair of the Bill of Rights Committee! I was just 29 years old. I sponsored Resolution #96: relative to equality of rights. The resolution went to the Convention floor on June 6 of 1974, and after vigorous debate, it was adopted by a voice vote. It was placed on the ballot in November of 1974 and **WON** the necessary 66 and 2/3 percent of the vote.

Unfortunately, one of our Convention delegates asked for a recount. **WE WON THAT RECOUNT AND** in March of 1975, we were able to proclaim that the people of New Hampshire had amended our constitution to say EQUALITY OF RIGHTS WILL NOT BE DENIED OR ABRIDGED BY THIS STATE ON ACCOUNT OF RACE, CREED, COLOR, SEX OR NATIONAL ORIGIN!

PAUSE

In 1982, I was back on another Commission on the Status of Women, this one chaired by Susan Colwell. We felt the Commission should have a stronger voice in the New Hampshire Legislature. Our solution was to set up the NH Women's Education and Information Project.

We had to go before the Governor and Council to raise private money to hire a Director of the project. After a successful first year we all agreed that our Project would be better and stronger as a separate entity and the New Hampshire Women's Lobby was founded!

One of my greatest memories of the Women's Lobby was in the very beginning. We decided to put a bill in to make spousal rape illegal. We thought we were pretty forward thinking. We also didn't think we'd win.

Darned if it didn't get through the House! When it went before the Senate, I got a phone call at noon to get to the State House immediately **TO TALK TO** a Senator who said he could not support the bill. But, after he and I spoke, he had a change of heart and became the deciding vote for passage. We were the 7th state in the nation to address this.

PAUSE

Being on the Commission and the Women's Lobby in the 70's and 80's felt like being on the edge of an important time and important movement. I suppose it is similar to what young women must feel today. I love that a young woman is leading the international fight on climate change. Young women can step forward and really make a difference.

I see a new generation of women and girls carrying the torch and, as founding mothers, that is what we hope for. Thank you!