

**The original documents are located in Box 10, folder “7/1/76 - National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year” of the Sheila Weidenfeld Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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Date Issued 6/29/76By P. Howard

Revised \_\_\_\_\_

# FACT SHEET Mrs. Ford's Office

Event Presentation Ceremony/ Reception/ Open House Tour  
 Group National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year  
 DATE/TIME Thursday, July 1, 1976 3:30 p.m.  
 Contact Jeanne Holm (Karen Keesling & Zora Brown) Phone 2715 or 2663  
 Number of guests: Total 700 to 800 Women x Men x Children x  
 Place East Garden - South Lawn - Ground and State Floors  
 Principals involved President and Mrs. Ford  
 Participation by Principal yes (Receiving line) no  
 Remarks required yes  
 Background --

## REQUIREMENTS

Social: Guest list yes (Jeanne Holm's office will distribute)  
 Invitations no Programs no Menus no  
 Refreshments yes - Punch and Cookies  
 Entertainment no  
 Decorations/flowers yes  
 Music yes  
 Social Aides yes  
 Dress Business Suits - Short Dresses for the Ladies Coat check DRR (if need ed)  
 Other --

Press: Reporters yes  
 Photographers yes  
 TV Crews yes  
 White House Photographers yes Color yes Mono. yes  
 Other --

Technical Support: Microphones yes PA Other Rooms no  
 Recording yes  
 Lights no  
 Transportation walking, cars, taxi cabs (entering thru E. Gate & SW Gate)  
 Parking Limited amount on South Drive  
 Housing --  
 Other -- (Risers, stage, platforms) yes

Project Co-ordinator Pat Howard Phone 2927

Site diagrams should be attached if technical support is heavy.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 29, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: BOB ORBEN  
DAVID BOORSTIN

FROM: BOBBIE GREENE KILBERG *B.K.*

SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks to the National  
Commission on the Observance of  
International Women's Year

I think the first draft of the speech which the Counsel's Office received is generally good and is sensitive to the women's rights issues involved. I have a number of comments which I hope will be helpful:

(1) Page 5, paragraph 4:

This ERA statement should be stronger. I suggest using a paragraph similar to the following:

"And let me say a few words about the Equal Rights Amendment. As long as women are excluded from our basic national document, we are all, women and men, diminished. The ratification of the ERA is essential as a cornerstone for the achievement of full equality for women before the law." (from Elly Peterson's draft speech at Tab A)

(2) Page 5, paragraph 5:

I am very concerned about the statement that "... injustice cannot wait upon politics, nor upon the lengthy public discussion which befits a constitutional amendment." [emphasis added.] The anti-ERA forces have used the "necessity" of lengthy public discussions to delay passage of the ERA in a number of critical states. Their strategy has been to take the momentum out of ERA ratification and thus block it permanently. The Amendment passed the Congress in 1971, must be ratified by 1979, and has

already been subject to 5 years of "lengthy public discussion." Any further delays in the ratification process might kill it.

(3) Page 7, paragraphs 3 and 4:

I would eliminate these paragraphs because their intent could easily be misread.

(4) The speech needs more substantive content and I attach for your consideration five pages of data put together by Elly Peterson (Tab A). Elly also has given this summary to Dick Cheney. Elly collated this information from my speech material, which material I have used very successfully before women's groups.

cc: Jeanne Holm  
Sheila Weidenfeld ✓  
Elly Peterson

457-1944  
54

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

JUNE 28, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

KEN LAZARUS

FROM:

ROBERT T. HARTMANN .

SUBJECT:

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS TO THE NATIONAL  
COMMISSION ON THE OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S YEAR, JULY 1, 1976

I would like your priority attention and personal response on the  
attached draft (even if you approve it as is) by

11:00 AM TOMORROW 6/29

Please return your comments to Bob Orben in the Editorial Office  
in Room 115, OEOB (Ext. 6573).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please check one box and sign below:

( ) I approve the draft without changes.

☒ Suggested revisions are noted on the  
draft or attached separately.

Initials: BRH


PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE  
OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, JULY 1, 1976

Let me start by thanking you, Jill, and all the members of the Commission. Your hard work and dedication have helped identify the barriers which block women's full participation in our Nation's economic, social, cultural and political life.

I also thank the many other women and men from private and public life who contributed to this report. I know that many of you are in the audience today. Let me say I will study your report with the same care you took in preparing it.

Jill, I regret you are unable to continue as Presiding Officer of the Commission, after 15 months of leadership and participation. But I am pleased we will still have the benefit of your talents as a member of the Commission.

This afternoon it is my privilege to announce the appointment of Elizabeth Athanasakos as the new Presiding Officer of the Commission. In addition to her work as a practicing attorney and a former municipal judge, Betty has served as Chairperson of the HEW Advisory Committee on the Rights and Responsibilities of



Women, and as a member of the President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities.

Betty will be ably assisted by the two vice presiding officers -- Ersa Poston, President of the New York State Civil Service Commission, and \_\_\_\_\_.

Today, the Commission enters a new phase. Under a law I signed last December, you are now charged with a new duty: planning and convening a National Women's Conference, preceded by 56 State and territorial conferences.

Let me add a personal note of thanks to those Commission members who are unable to continue serving. You have already served six months past your original commitment, and I know this has been difficult for many of you.

You can be proud of what you have accomplished -- and confident that your work will be carried on in the same spirit of dedication by the \_\_\_\_ new members whose appointment we announced this morning.

Let me address a few words to those involved in the past and future work of this Commission:



Your work is not just for women, but for the whole United States. I say that because this Nation is founded on the principle that all citizens share the same rights -- and what affects the rights of one affects the freedom of all.

The job before us, in which you will play such an important role, is to bring our national life into harmony with our national philosophy. That is an awesome task -- but we have faced such tasks before.

America faced such a task one century ago. We had to eliminate a shameful contradiction between our political philosophy -- which proclaimed all persons equal -- and our Nation's daily life -- in which four million men and women were slaves.

Many of America's early crusaders for women's rights were active in the abolitionist movement. It was there they learned to organize, to speak out in public, and to develop a philosophy of their own basic rights.

It is a bitter irony of American history that when the Fifteenth Amendment was passed in 1870, it gave the vote to black men -- former slaves -- but not to women, either black or white.





That was to wait another fifty years.

More than half a century after women's suffrage became law, much still remains to be done. Not just compassion, but justice and logic dictate that we remove the inequities that still exist.

We must remove the injustices suffered by those like Mrs. Mary Heath, who is here with us today. For 33 years, she worked with her husband, side by side, building a Nebraska farm to pass on to their children.

In 1974 her husband passed away. And Mrs. Heath learned she might have to sell that farm to pay off the inheritance tax. If she had died first, her husband would not have been faced with such a painful choice. But according to tax law, her years of work counted for nothing. Unless she could prove she had contributed money to the purchase or improvement of the ranch, it belonged entirely to her husband -- and she was no better than a stranger on her own land.

This problem is not unique to farm women. It is nothing more or less than a widow's tax, and it is nothing more or less

than a gross injustice.

Last March I submitted legislation to eliminate that injustice -- legislation that still awaits action by the Congress.

That proposal was part of this Administration's efforts along a broad front. Since becoming President I have supported and signed into law legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in housing and credit, in employment and education.

Some of the laws discriminating against women appear petty or even ridiculous. But the fact is, they are all equally unjust -- all equally demeaning to Americans -- and all equally inconsistent with the American philosophy of equality.

There are different ways to approach this problem. One would be to await the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. As you know, I am in favor of the ERA, and I hope to see it part of our Constitution before long.

But injustice cannot wait upon politics, nor upon the lengthy public discussion which befits a Constitutional amendment.

The time to act is now. Therefore, I have today directed the Attorney General to develop, in consultation with affected

Federal agencies, a plan to review the entire United States Code.

The purpose will be to determine the need for revising sex-based provisions that are not justified in law nor supported by wise policy.

I encourage the Governors of all the States to initiate a similar review of all State laws -- to bring them into harmony with our American philosophy of absolute equality under the law.

Many outdated laws and statutes have already been identified -- and many of you here today have taken part in that effort. I am sure you will agree that the time has come for a massive Federal effort. I am also confident that the State conferences to be held by your Commission will help in this process.

Another problem I would suggest for your attention at those conferences is the widening earnings gap between men and women. This has very serious implications, not just for women being denied the wages they deserve, but for the entire American economy.

Therefore I have directed the Secretary of Labor to call a White House Conference early next year to discuss the probable causes of this earnings gap, and to explore ways in which the

government and American business can reverse the trend. This will have to be the beginning of a cooperative, long-term effort.

The two programs I have proposed this afternoon represent a firm commitment on my part. I speak now not only as President, but also as the husband and father of two women whose individuality and independence I prize. I want to ensure that Susan has the same freedom of opportunity as Mike, Jack and Steve.

As the United States enters its third century, we can ill afford to disregard the rights of American citizens -- just because they happen to be women.

And we can ill afford to neglect the strengths and talents of one-half our population -- just because they happen to be women.

There is no such thing as "women's rights." There are only the rights of all Americans -- to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Women's rights should not be granted as an act of charity.

For those rights are theirs already. By eliminating the barriers to freedom, we are doing no more than fulfilling a promise made two hundred years ago.

A



Let me take this opportunity to review with you the status of women in the federal government and some of the steps my administration has taken in this area.

There are now over 65 women holding Presidential appointments in Federal Government. That is a higher number and a higher percentage than ever before in our history. They include women I have appointed to the Cabinet, to subcabinet positions in several executive departments; to Ambassadorial posts; as Commissioners at the Interstate Commerce, Consumer Product Safety, Federal Power, Civil Service, and Equal Employment Opportunities Commissions; a member of the National Transportation Safety Board; and the Chairman of the National Labor Relations Board.

While I take pride in the fact that during my administration we have appointed a higher percentage of women than any Administration before us, still we recognize the need to do more. These women are serving their government with great distinction-- and we intend to increase their numbers.

On my own White House staff, exactly 50%-- $\frac{1}{2}$  of those who earn an annual salary of \$19,000 and above---are women. Of the 109 senior professional employees on my staff, 47 are women.

In the Civil Service I can report to you that the percentage of women in the higher grades has continued to increase over the past two years. In March 1975 I issued a directive to the heads of all Departments and Agencies designed to insure that all persons, regardless of sex or race, have a fair and equal opportunity to compete for employment and promotion.

There are now approximately 100,000 women holding professional positions in the government at Grade 9 and above. The numbers and the percentage of women, especially at the highest levels in the Civil Service, continues to be disappointingly small.

But I assure you that we will continue to press throughout the government for the hiring and promotion of more and more qualified women into positions of greater responsibility and remuneration in every agency and department.

I would also like to share with you some of the activities and results of negotiations and court suits undertaken during my Administration on behalf of women by the Labor and Justice Departments and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission---

--in February it was announced that several steel companies and the United States Steelworkers Union had consented to pay 46,000 women and minority employees \$31 million in back pay and to make wide ranging adjustments in the seniority system which will accelerate the employment and advancement of women and minorities;

--In the last two years enforcement of the Equal Pay Act has resulted in:

--The collection and distribution of over \$5,000,000 for women custodial workers and hospital aides, plus wage increases to those women of up to \$1.10 an hour;

--Additional large amounts of back pay and wage increases have been recovered and

secured for women----

- bank tellers who also received weekly wages increases of up to \$25;
- production workers whose hourly wages were also increased up to \$2.15;
- salesclerks, whose hourly wages were increased up to \$1.57;
- radio announcers whose weekly wages have been increased up to \$50;
- new<sup>2</sup>editors and reporters whose weekly wages were increased up to \$70.

In addition, settlements at 9 universities have resulted in back wage payments to women faculty members of \$1.4 million, with some of these women receiving yearly salary increases of \$3,000 to \$4,000.

During the last fiscal year alone, \$15.2 million has been collected in restored income for women under the Equal Pay Act; in addition over 150 suits were filed under the Act and several investigations begun in various industries and educational institutions.

We will continue our vigorous enforcement of the Act to the benefit of working women in all categories of employment.



Since becoming President I have supported and signed into law legislation:

- prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in housing and mortgage credit lending;
- providing funds for the development of curricula and textbooks related to equality in education;
- prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex and marital status in the granting of consumer credit;
- permitting women to be eligible for appointment and admission to the service academies; and
- directing the IWY Commission to plan and convene a National Women's Conference next year following conferences in every state.

I am today directing the Justice Department to identify all Federal statutes which need to be revised to conform with the Equal Rights Amendment and to propose whatever corrective legislation is required to accomplish that.

And let me say a few words about the Equal Rights Amendment. As long as women are excluded from our basic national document, we are all, women and men, diminished. The ratification of the ERA is essential as a cornerstone for the achievement of full equality for women before the law.

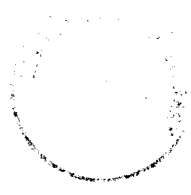
I want you to know, as you continue to work for ratification of the Amendment, that I support you and the ERA 100%.

It seems to me that the Equal Rights Amendment is but the latest step along the road of the American Revolution that our people have traveled so courageously for 200 years.

Indeed, the uniqueness of this great nation is that the American Revolution is not just an event in our history which occurred in 1776. What happened in 1776 was the beginning. As each generation of Americans has sought in its own time to enlarge the frontiers of freedom and opportunity, the country has advanced another step toward the fulfillment of the ideals embodied two centuries ago in those documents which are the foundation of our liberty.

This is the context in which I view the Equal Rights Amendment. Two hundred years have now passed and still one-half---or more than one-half---of our people do not have full equality and opportunity. We must not let another year go by without achieving this goal.

Surely, as always in our history, our collective wisdom and fundamental sense of fairness will be our sure guide---and we will, in our time, once again reaffirm the vitality of the American Revolution.



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

To: Sheila Weidenfeld  
From: Bobbie Kilberg

Please Read & Comment  
To Speech office tomorrow -  
as early as possible.



PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE  
OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR, JULY 1, 1976

Let me start by thanking you, Jill, and all the members of the Commission. Your hard work and dedication have helped identify the barriers which block women's full participation in our Nation's economic, social, cultural and political life.

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Women, and as a member of the President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities.

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Many of America's early crusaders for women's rights were active in the abolitionist movement. It was there they learned to organize, to speak out in public, and to develop a philosophy of their own basic rights.

It is a bitter irony of American history that when the Fifteenth Amendment was passed in 1870, it gave the vote to black men -- former slaves -- but not to women, either black or white.

That was to wait another fifty years.

More than half a century after women's suffrage became law, much still remains to be done. Not just compassion, but justice and logic dictate that we remove the inequities that still exist.

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Federal agencies, a plan to review the entire United States Code.

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UP - 151

(BETTY)

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- BETTY FORD, CHAMPION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT, WAS ABSENT TODAY WHEN THE PRESIDENT HOSTED A RECEPTION FOR THE COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR.

SHEILA RABB WEIDENFELD, THE FIRST LADY'S PRESS SECRETARY, SAID MRS. FORD HAS HAD A "FLARE UP" OF HER CHRONIC ARTHRITIC NECK AILMENT.

FORD TOLD THE GATHERING THAT HIS WIFE WAS RESTING AFTER BEING ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL IN HIS BEHALF.

"AS HUSBAND AND FATHER," FORD SAID, "I PRIZE THE INDIVIDUALITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE TWO WOMEN IN MY FAMILY. I AM PROUD THAT BETTY HAS BECOME A LEADER IN HER OWN RIGHT AND I WANT TO ENSURE THAT OUR DAUGHTER SUSAN WILL HAVE THE SAME FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY AS OUR SONS."

UPI 07-01 06:04 PED



Star 7/27/74

# Levi to Look Through the Statutes Ford Orders Sex-Biased Laws Corrected

By Isabelle Shelton  
Washington Star Staff Writer

President Ford has ordered Atty. Gen. Edward Levi to review federal laws, with the aim of eliminating sex-based provisions that are "not justified by law nor supported by wise policy."

"Some of the laws discriminating against women appear petty or even ridiculous," Ford said yesterday. "But the fact is they are all equally unjust — all equally demeaning to Americans — and all equally inconsistent with the American philosophy of equality."

A congressional expert who has looked into the subject says there are at least 250 such federal laws, and the President encouraged state governors to begin a similar review of state laws, too.

FORD MADE the announcement at a White House ceremony at which he accepted the final report of the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year.

Addressing some 1,000 guests — mostly women — gathered in the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden, Ford also pledged to make the widening earnings gap between men and women "a matter of priority for this administration."

"This has extremely serious implications, not just for women being denied the wages they deserve, but for the entire American economy," the President said.

The commission, winding up 14 months of work by more than 200 persons, presented Ford with a 382-page report, including a 115-point program aimed at ending what it called "sexism still so rampant throughout our country."

The commission's life was extended under a bill recently passed by Congress, so that it can run women's conferences in each state and territory, and finally a national women's conference.

FORD YESTERDAY announced the resignation of Jill Ruckelshaus,



Regina Zymantas of the Baltic Women's Council lets her tee-shirt do her talking while she attends a reception in the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden at the White House yesterday.

presiding officer of the IWY commission, who is moving to Seattle with her family. She will remain a member of the commission.

In her place the President named Elizabeth Athanasakos of Florida, an attorney and former municipal judge, who previously was head of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Advisory Committee

on the Rights and Responsibilities of Women. Ersa Poston, past president of the New York State Civil Service Commission, was named assistant presiding officer.

Reiterating his support for the Equal Rights Amendment, Ford said he hoped "to see it part of our Constitution before long."

"But injustice cannot await upon politics, nor upon the lengthy public discussion which has already delayed ratification of the Constitutional amendment," Ford said, adding that the delay on ERA was the reason he was ordering a review of the statutes.

RECOMENDATIONS of the IWY commission included revision of state divorce laws to provide for more equitable division of property, maintenance, child custody and support, and enforcement of support orders; combining of rape and other "sexual" crimes of violence into one legal category that would apply regardless of sex, and changing rape trials so that corroborative evidence would not be required and rape victims' past sexual conduct would not be made an issue.

Other proposals called for creation of a Cabinet-level office to be responsible for many existing federal programs for women, faster and broader enforcement of sex-discrimination prohibitions already enacted, "more voluntary child care programs and services to fill the needs of all working parents, regardless of income," and expansion of the concept of "equal pay for equal work" to "equal pay for work of equal value."

Still other proposals called for prompt ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, revision of laws to reflect the principle "that a homemaker's contribution is equal in value to the contribution of the spouse who works outside of the home," and support of the Supreme Court's recent decisions allowing abortions.





R W

AM-WOMEN 7-1

BY HELEN THOMAS

UPI WHITE HOUSE REPORTER

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- PRESIDENT FORD, SAYING THERE IS "NO SUCH THING AS WOMEN'S RIGHTS" BUT ONLY "THE RIGHTS OF ALL," THURSDAY ORDERED A REVIEW OF THE ENTIRE U.S. CODE TO ELIMINATE UNFAIR SEX-BASED PROVISIONS.

THE PRESIDENT ALSO SAID HE WILL PUT A TOP PRIORITY ON THE PROBLEM OF THE "WIDENING EARNINGS GAP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN."

"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS WOMEN'S RIGHTS. THERE ARE ONLY THE RIGHTS OF ALL AMERICANS TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS," FORD SAID AT A ROSE GARDEN RECEPTION HONORING THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR.

HE SAID HE HOPES TO SEE THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT BECOME PART OF THE CONSTITUTION SOON, BUT THAT "INJUSTICE CANNOT WAIT UPON POLITICS, OR UPON THE LENGTHY PUBLIC DISCUSSION WHICH HAS ALREADY DELAYED RATIFICATION."

"I HAVE ... DIRECTED THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO DEVELOP, IN CONSULTATION WITH AFFECTED FEDERAL AGENCIES, A PLAN TO REVIEW THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES CODE," FORD SAID.

"THE PURPOSE WILL BE TO DETERMINE THE NEED FOR REVISING SEX-BASED PROVISIONS THAT ARE NOT JUSTIFIED IN LAW NOR SUPPORTED BY WISE POLICY."

"SOME OF THE LAWS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST WOMEN APPEAR PETTY AND EVEN RIDICULOUS," FORD SAID. "BUT THE FACT IS, THEY ARE ALL EQUALLY UNJUST -- ALL EQUALLY DEMEANING TO AMERICANS AND ALL EQUALLY INCONSISTENT WITH THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY OF EQUALITY."

FORD ALSO SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGING GOVERNORS IN ALL THE STATES TO INITIATE A SIMILAR REVIEW OF STATE LAWS "TO BRING THEM INTO HARMONY WITH OUR AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY OF ABSOLUTE EQUALITY UNDER THE LAW."

"WOMEN'S RIGHTS SHOULD NOT BE GRANTED AS AN ACT OF CHARITY FOR THOSE RIGHTS ARE THEIRS ALREADY," HE SAID. "BY ELIMINATING THE BARRIERS TO FREEDOM, WE ARE DOING NO MORE THAN FULFILLING A PROMISE MADE IN PHILADELPHIA TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO."

"MORE THAN A HALF CENTURY AFTER WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE BECAME LAW, MUCH STILL REMAINS TO BE DONE," FORD SAID. "NOT JUST COMPASSION, BUT JUSTICE AND LOGIC DICTATE THAT WE REMOVE THE INEQUITIES THAT STILL EXIST."

FORD ALSO ANNOUNCED THE APPOINTMENT OF ELIZABETH ATHANASAKOS, ATTORNEY AND FORMER MUNICIPAL JUDGE, AS THE NEW PRESIDING OFFICER OF THE COMMISSION, SUCCEEDING JILL RUCKELSHAUS.

DUPLICATE TO B-WIRE POINTS

UPI 07-01 08:42 PED



UP -139

(COMMISSION REPORT)

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR PRESENTED PRESIDENT FORD WITH A DETAILED PROGRAM TODAY DESIGNED TO COMBAT THE "WIDESPREAD" EXISTENCE OF SEX DISCRIMINATION IN THIS COUNTRY.

THE 115-POINT PROGRAM, INCLUDED IN A FINAL REPORT GIVEN FORD, URGED PROMPT RATIFICATION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT AND PRAISED SUPREME COURT DECISIONS UPHOLDING A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO ABORTION.

IT ALSO ASKED THAT NEW LAWS ADHERE TO THE CONCEPT THAT A "HOMEMAKER'S CONTRIBUTION IS EQUAL IN VALUE TO THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SPOUSE WHO WORKS OUTSIDE THE HOME."

"USING PERSONAL TESTIMONY AND CAREFULLY RESEARCHED DATA, THE COMMISSION WORKED TO DOCUMENT THE WIDESPREAD EXISTENCE IN OUR COUNTRY OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEX," SAID COMMISSION PRESIDENT JILL RUCKELSHAUS.

ESTABLISHED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER IN JANUARY, 1975, THE 35-MEMBER PANEL SPENT NEARLY 12 MONTHS STUDYING ISSUES AFFECTING WOMEN, AND RECOMMENDED "REALISTIC, REASONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT," MRS. RUCKELSHAUS SAID.

THE PANEL ALSO SAID IT WAS TIME TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN POLICYMAKING POSITIONS, IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OLDER WOMEN AND THOSE OF MINORITY GROUPS, CHANGE DIVORCE LAWS TO ENSURE EQUITABILITY, AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

THE COMMISSION SAID IT ALSO WAS SEEKING A CABINET-LEVEL OFFICE TO SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

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(BETTY)

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- BETTY FORD, CHAMPION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT, WAS ABSENT TODAY WHEN THE PRESIDENT HOSTED A RECEPTION FOR THE COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR.

SHEILA RABB WEIDENFELD, THE FIRST LADY'S PRESS SECRETARY, SAID MRS. FORD HAS HAD A "FLARE UP" OF HER CHRONIC ARTHRITIC NECK AILMENT. FORD TOLD THE GATHERING THAT HIS WIFE WAS RESTING AFTER BEING ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL IN HIS BEHALF.

"AS HUSBAND AND FATHER," FORD SAID, "I PRIZE THE INDIVIDUALITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE TWO WOMEN IN MY FAMILY. I AM PROUD THAT BETTY HAS BECOME A LEADER IN HER OWN RIGHT AND I WANT TO ENSURE THAT OUR DAUGHTER SUSAN WILL HAVE THE SAME FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITY AS OUR SONS."

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