Name _____ Date _____

CHAPTER 23
Section 2

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: REGION

The Equal Rights Amendment

Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

In 1970 the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which had been introduced in every session of Congress since 1923, finally got out of committee and onto the floor. The time seemed right for an amendment guaranteeing equality of rights under the law without regard to sex. The House passed the ERA in 1971 by a huge margin, and in 1972 the Senate followed suit. Congress then sent the ERA to the states for approval, with the usual seven-year deadline for getting the necessary three-fourths majority—38 states.

Ratification seemed a foregone conclusion. Within three months, 20 states rushed to pass the ERA. Within a year, 30 states were in the fold. The bandwagon was rolling, with six years left to get only 8 more states' approval.

By 1973, though, major opposition had surfaced. Conservatives saw the ERA as a threat to family life and the traditional division of tasks between the sexes. They feared that current marriage, divorce, and child-custody laws would be thrown out under ERA provisions. They felt that existing laws already protected women's interests that needed protecting—hiring, promotions, and pay—so a "Stop ERA" campaign was organized.

In 1974 three states ratified the ERA, but in 1975 only one did. There were no ratifications in 1976; in 1977 one final state ratified the ERA. Thus, in 1979, the ERA became the first constitutional amendment ever to end its seven-year limit unratified. Backers were shocked.

Then, in a move without precedent, Congress extended the time for ratification by three years. The extra time did not help, though. In fact, five states tried to rescind—cancel—their ratifications, though Congress did not permit them to do so. Also, the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 confirmed a shift to conservative thinking in the nation.

Not one state passed the ERA during the extra three years, and in 1982 the second deadline expired. The issue died for good on November 12, 1983, when the U.S. House fell six votes short on a revival bill that would have created an ERA II.

The ERA Fails to Win Ratification