Reader gets some answers on the ERA

By Abigail Van Buren

DEAR ABBY: I read that you were all for the Equal Rights Amendment. Can you tell me why women need it? Use plain language, please. I only went through the 9th grade.

Confused in Elgin, Ill.

No one explained it better than Shana Alexander, when she debated columnist James. J. Kilpatrick two months ago on CBS's "60 Minutes" TV program.

She said: "Under the law today, women are not being treated as equals with men. Examples:

Social Security Laws: Divorced women don't get a fair share of their husband's earnings even if they were married 30 years.

Divorce Law: A man can divorce a wife on the grounds of drunkenness and adultery, but in some states, a woman cannot divorce her husband on those grounds.

Property Tax Law: In all 50 states the husband owns the farm. When he dies, his widow must pay inheritance tax - even if she has to sell the farm. But when the wife dies, he pays no inheritance tax!

Physical Abuse: In most states, a wife can't

sue her husband for beating her up.

Negligent Injury: If the wife is injured, her husband can sue for loss of her 'services,' which

Dear Abby

includes sex, because under the law, he has a legal right to companionship, sex and domestic services. (It's called 'consortium.') A woman has no such right.

Alimony: Most states don't allow it, which isn't so bad in wealthy families. But with poor couples, whose only assets are in the man's earning capacity, the woman comes out of a divorce dead broke!

As things stand now, the law is unfair to both sexes. (The Supreme Court says widows get an automatic property tax exemption; widowers

The court says pregnancy discrimination is not necessarily sex discrimination. It isn't? When's the last time you saw a pregnant man?

The Equal Rights Amendment would take these inequities out of the law and extend the law's protection to both sexes."

Correction

Architect Lenair Williams, who designed and executed a sculpture memorial to the father of television's Max Robinson, was incorrectly identified in last Wednesday's Portfolio section as William Lenair.

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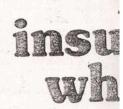


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