

“Although I come from a family that gave its women the same educational opportunities that the men got, society made it pretty difficult to capitalize on that education to the same extent that men could,” says Dunn. So it was not surprising that on August 26, 1970, she was thrilled to join the march organized by the Eastern Massachusetts chapter of NOW to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. Dunn eventually became president of MA NOW (1978 – 1980), fighting for the ERA extension. She joined national NOW as a member of the political staff working for Molly Yard and Ellie Smeal in Washington, D.C., Oklahoma and Florida during the final year of the ERA ratification campaign.

“It was while I was compiling a publication called ‘Women Can Make The Difference’ that I coined the phrase Gender Gap,” says Dunn. “It was first cited by columnist Judy Mann in the Washington Post, October 16, 1981.” At the end of the ERA campaign, Dunn returned to Boston and became State House lobbyist for MA NOW. Since 1972, she has been active in electoral and party politics.

Seeing the value of a party position to advance feminist goals, she twice ran for the Democratic State Committee before winning a seat over the opposition of the governor. She has been on the platform committee every two years in order to first promote and then protect the abortion plank, and “have finally even been entrusted with writing it.” Dunn has a B.A. from Vassar College (1946) and an M.P.A. from the JFK School of Government, Harvard University (1981). Archives: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, MA.