



DALLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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## Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. collection

### Finding aid

#### Descriptive Summary

**Creator:** Dallas Historical Society

**Title:** Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. collection

**Dates:** 1957-1974

**Quantity:** 2 boxes, (.625 linear ft.)

**Abstract:** Hermine Tobolowsky, a Dallas attorney, lobbied for 25 years before legislative committees for equal rights for Texans, earning the nickname "Mother of the Texas Equal Rights Amendment." She also lobbied for the homestead exemptions amendment and for the amendment or repeal of more than 30 other discriminatory laws.

**Identification:** A.86.48

**Language:** The materials are in English.

**Repository:** Dallas Historical Society

#### Biographical Sketch

Hermine Dalkowitz Tobolowsky was born in San Antonio, Texas on January 13, 1921, and died in Dallas on July 25, 1995. Tobolowsky was an activist attorney and is known as the "Mother of the Texas E.R.A." She was the daughter of Maurice and Nora (Brown) Dalkowitz. Her father, a Lithuanian immigrant, had observed some of the problems women had in their dealings with businessmen and urged his daughter—who had demonstrated a gift for argument and persuasion—to become a lawyer. Tobolowsky attended Incarnate Word College in 1938-39 and Trinity University in 1939-40 in San Antonio, completing her bachelor's degree requirements in only two years.

She entered the University of Texas, School of Law in 1943, one of only eleven women among the entering class of 350 and one of only two women in the class to graduate. According to Tobolowsky, a law professor gave her a list of eligible bachelors to consider in hopes she would not take up a man's space in the law school, she assured him she would be there on graduation day. She received her LL.B. degree with honors in 1943, graduating in the top ten of her class. She was admitted to the Texas bar the same year. Tobolowsky refused a job offer from a large Houston law firm, whose recruiter informed her that clients would never see her and or know that her work came from a woman. She interviewed with the chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court for a law

clerk position, and he told her he did not believe any woman had sense enough to clerk in the Supreme Court. Instead, Tobolowsky went to work for the law firm Lang, Cross, Beard, and Ladon in San Antonio, but only on the condition that she be hired on the same terms as their male attorneys.

She was with the firm for four years, then established her practice. On August 19, 1951, she married Hyman Morris Tobolowsky, the credit manager of E. M. Kahn Company department store in Dallas, where she moved her law practice and residence. They had no children, and he preceded her in death in 1968. Beginning in the 1940s, Tobolowsky became active in organizations fighting Texas laws that discriminated against women. The first cause she pursued was working to allow women to sit on juries, which was not legal in Texas until 1953.

By 1959 she was president of the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women and was legal counsel for the federation's national organization. She began to lobby the Texas legislature to change forty-four laws she had researched and identified as discriminatory. The first bill she introduced allowed women in Texas to control separate property owned by them previous to marriage or acquired by inheritance, known as the Separate Property Law. Tobolowsky faced stiff opposition-including ridicule by several legislators-so she, as part of a coalition of women's groups, decided instead to champion a blanket equal rights amendment to the Texas constitution.

The amendment was introduced in 1959 and was presented at every subsequent legislative session until it finally passed and was ratified by voters on November 7, 1972. This is how Tobolowsky became known as the mother of the Texas Equal Rights Amendment. She traveled around the country lecturing, lobbying, and helping several other states ratify similar amendments. In addition to her work in getting the Texas E.R.A. passed, Tobolowsky was responsible for the repeal or amendment of thirty-three discriminatory Texas laws and the passage of several other civil-rights laws. Including laws extending the homestead exemption to singles and equal custodial rights to fathers. She was chosen Texas Women's Political Caucus woman of the year in 1975 and was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame in 1986.

Source: *Handbook of Texas Online*, Natalie Ornish, "TOBOLOWSKY, HERMINE DALKOWITZ," accessed July 18, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fto49>.

### **Scope and Contents Note**

The collection ranges from 1957, which began Hermine Tobolowsky's career with the Equal Rights Amendment, to March 22, 1972, when the Senate passed the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution, to November 1972 when the Texas voters endorsed the state equal rights amendment. The collection includes resolutions, speeches, press releases, reports, newspaper clippings, printed materials, research notes, correspondence with the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Texas

Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, as well as signatures and correspondence for the U.S. and Texas State Representatives and Senators.

### Arrangement

Collection is in one series, two boxes, and oversized materials.

### Restrictions

#### Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research use.

#### Use Restrictions

**Publication Rights:** Permission to publish materials must be obtained from the staff of the Dallas Historical Society.

**Copyright Statement:** It is the responsibility of the user to obtain copyright authorization.

**Sensitive Material Statement:** Manuscript collections and archival records may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in this collection without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications for which the Dallas Historical Society assumes no responsibility.

### Index Terms

#### Subjects (Persons):

Birckhead, Mary A. [local]  
Cabell, Earle, 1906-1975. [lcnaf]  
Carr, Waggoner, 1918-2004. [lcnaf]  
Collins, James Mitchell (Jim), 1916-1989. [local]  
de la Garza, Kika, 1927-2017. [lcnaf]  
Dowdy, John V. (John Vernard), 1912-1995. [lcnaf]  
Farenthold, Frances Tarlton, 1926-. [local]  
Finnell, Charles. [local]  
Fisher, Ovie Clark, 1903-1994. [lcnaf]  
Gambrell, Herbert Pickens. [lcnaf]  
Greenhill, Joe R., 1914-2011. [lcnaf]  
Griffiths, Martha Wright, 1912-2003. [lcnaf]

Haynes, Jr., Clyde, 1924-1994. [local]  
Hawkins, Jack R., 1905-1988. [local]  
Herring, Charles Ferguson, 1914-2004. [local]  
Hogg, Elizabeth. [local]  
Hudson, Hubert R., 1928-1993. [local]  
Johnson, Jacob Edgar, 1931-2006. [local]  
Kaster, James Jay, V, 1933-2005 [lcnaf]  
Kazen, Abraham, 1919-1987. [lcnaf]  
Kilgore, Joe Madison, 1918-1999. [lcnaf]  
Kubiak, Dan, 1939-1998. [lcnaf]  
Leonard C. Margery, 1929-1990. [local]  
Longwell, Marjorie R. [lcnaf]  
Mattox, James Albon, 1943-2008. [lcnaf]  
McKnight, Joseph, 1925-2015. [local]  
McSwain, Jr., Angus S., 1923-2011. [local]  
Mutscher, G.F. (Gus), 1932-. [local]  
Nugent, James E., 1922-2016. [local]  
Parkhouse, George Marshall. [local]  
Patman, William Neff, 1927-2008. [lcnaf]  
Patman, Wright, 1893-1976. [lcnaf]  
Pickle, J.J., 1913-2005. [lcnaf]  
Pool, Joe Richard, 1911-1968. [lcnaf]  
Price, Robert Dale, 1927-2004. [local]  
Purcell, Jr., Graham B., 1919-2011. [local]  
Ramsey, Ben, 1903-1985. [local]  
Robinson, Mary Lou, 1926-2019. [lcnaf]  
Secrest, Jarrard, 1915-1966. [local]  
Semos, Chris Victor, 1936-2004. [local]  
Shafer, William O., 1917-1992. [local]  
Smith, Cyril J., 1932-2016. [local]  
Smith, Preston, 1912-2003. [lcnaf]  
Traeger, John A., 1921-1994. [lcnaf]  
Uher, Donald Ray (Tom), 1937-2019. [lcnaf]  
Wallace, James Price, 1928-2017. [local]  
Willis, Doyle Henry, 1909-2006. [local]  
Yarborough, Ralph W., 1903-1996. [lcnaf]

**Subjects (Organizations):**

Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women (U.S.) [lcnaf]  
Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. [local]  
Texas Federation of Women's Clubs--History. [lcnaf]  
Texas Women's Hall of Fame. [local]  
Texas Women's Political Caucus. [local]  
University of Texas, School of Law. [lcnaf]

**Subjects:**

D.D. Williams v. Mabel S. McKnight. [local]  
 Equal rights amendments—Texas. [local]  
 Mother of the Texas Equal Rights Amendment. [local]  
 Separate Property Law—Texas. [lcnaf]  
 Texas Women’s Political Caucus. [lcnaf]  
 Texas Women’s Hall of Fame. [lcnaf]

**Titles:**

Manuscripts collection

<b>Administrative Information</b>
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**Preferred Citation**

Collection of the Dallas Historical Society, Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. collection.

**Acquisition Information:**

A gift from the family of Hermine Tobolowsky, 1974.

**Processing Information:**

Collection processed by Penny Castillo.

<b>Description of Series</b>
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**Series Title: Hermine Tobolowsky E.R.A. collection.**

Box #	Folder #	Title/Description	Date
1	1	Resolutions, For the Business and Professional Women’s Club, the Texas Constitution, and precinct conventions.	1958, undated.
	2	Speeches, Speeches on education, discrimination laws, community property, equal rights. One speech as the House Constitutional Amendments Committee. Speech read by Senator Parkhouse.	1957-1958, 1963, 1967.
	3	Helmcamp, Clifford,	November, 1970.

		“How Should Working Women in Houston Continue to Support the ‘Equal Pay for Equal Work’ Movement?”	
	4	Press Releases, Article for Cuff Notes, contribution announcements, radio announcements, campaign ads, newspaper releases: “A Matter of Simple Justice,” and “When is a House a Home?” press release for Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs.	1963, 1971-1973, undated.
	5	Legislative papers, Several repeals and amendments of law’s regarding discrimination in the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Texas Penal Code, election bulletins, Joint Resolution 208, 410, 1159, drafts and memorandums regarding community property	1961, 1966-1967, 1970-1971, undated.
	6	Legal brief, D.D. Williams v. Mabel S. McKnight. A case of marital property law after the death of McKnight’s husband. McKnight is suing the executor.	Undated
	7	Research notes, Excerpts from letter from county and district attorneys about crimes between men and women.	1963, 1970
	8	Newspaper clippings, Equal Legal Rights Advocate Honored at Hall of State with Herbert Gambrell.	1960, 1965, 1968, 1974
	9	Reports, Documents from the Tex. Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, Inc.	1958-1973
	10	Literary production, Briefs, memorandums, analysis, several skits on Equal Rights.	1962, 1973, undated.
	11-12	Printed material, “Keeping in Touch with Our Legislators,” check lists, bulletins. “Know Your Friends”	1957, Undated
	13	Printed material, TFBPWC discussion panel material, play, “Sorry Sister, It’s The Law,” B&PW election information.	1958
	14	Printed material,	1959

		Flash News, Spread The Word-Hearing of Our Legal Rights Amendment, Steering Committee for TFBPWC, Inc.	
	15	Printed material, Regarding story in the Saturday Evening Post, Bulleting News.	1960
	16-17	Printed material, Bulletin on Senate hearing, Legislative bulletins, pamphlet. "Last Change for Justice"	1961-1962
	18	Printed material, "What are the Laws Concerning Women?" Election Bulletin, TFBPWC workshop paperwork, program information.	1968
	19	Printed material, Legislative Digest, legislative bulletin, FYI reports of pending bills.	1963
	20	Printed material, List of bills introduced to legislation, letter, articles.	1965
	21	Printed material, Legislation bulletins.	1967
	22	Publication, Texas Lawyers Weekly Letter.	1964
	23	Printed material, Memos and bulletins to the TFBPWC.	1969
	24	Printed material, Election Bulletins, <i>Congressional Record</i> , "Explaining the Proposed Equal Rights for Women Amendment."	1970
	25	Printed material, "The Status of Women," "Women for Equal Justice Under the Law," articles, bulletins, "Support of the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution."	1971
	26	Printed material, Letters written the TFBPWC group-some could be speeches, Legislative bulletins, club materials, list of organizations supporting the E.R.A., information on the Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women.	1972
	27	Printed material, Legislative bulletins, club correspondence.	1973
	28	Printed material,	1974

		Legislative bulletin, Luncheon invitation honoring Mrs. Tobolowsky, (Dr. Gambrell accepts historical materials.)	
2	29	Correspondence, Homestead Amendment, letter in support of Jack B. Strong for state senator, letter to the San Antonio Express, to the General Counsel of the EEOC, TFBPWC correspondence.	Undated
	30	Correspondence, Correspondence Lt. Gov. Ben Ramsey.	1957
	31	Correspondence, Resolution adopted by the TFBPWC, annual report, correspondence with Margery C. Leonard. Printed material from the Legislative Steering Committee.	1958
	32	Correspondence, Tex. Senator George Parkhouse, Honorable Joe Greenhill, Tex. Senator Doyle Willis, Tex. Senator Hubert R. Hudson, Tex. Senator Jarrard Secrest, Tex. Senator Bill Wood, and Cyril J. Smith	1959
	33	Correspondence, Tex. Senator Joe M. Kilgore, letters to the TFBPWC from Hermine, the Saturday Evening Post re: article on Texas laws discriminating against women.	1960
	34	Correspondence, Letters to TFBPWC re: Rep. Franklin Speers, and other officials running for seats during this election.	1961
	35	Correspondence, Letter to W.V. Chapman-who ran for Tx. Senate, Letter to TFBPWC, McCall's Magazine, Tex. Senator Herring, Tex. Senator Abraham Kazen, Jr.	1962
	36	Correspondence, Correspondence written by Hermine regarding the Equal Legal Rights Amendment, letter to Tex. Rep. James Nugent, letter from Tex. Attorney Gen. Waggoner Carr,	1963
	37	Correspondence, Letters from TFBPWC, letter from US Rep. Earle Cabell, letter from Lt. Gov. Preston Smith, Letter to Prof. Joseph McKnight.	1965
	38	Correspondence,	1966



		Letter from Prof. J. McKnight with a proposed draft for the Rights of Spouses, letter to Judge Mary Lou Robinson, letter from US Rep. Joe Pool.	
	39	Correspondence, Legislative bulletins, letters sent to Gov. Connally and Jack Hightower, letters sent Tex. Speaker of the House Ben Barnes, letter to Tex. Rep. Felix McDonald, to US Sec. of Treasury Honorable Henry Fowler, from Pres. of State Bar of Texas W. O. Shafer, from National Women's Party Chairman Mary A. Birckhead, Dean of Baylor School of Law Angus S. McSwain, Jr., US Rep. Graham Purcell.	1967
	40	Correspondence, Record of the Legislative Steering Fund, forms, Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to Article I.	1968
	41	Correspondence, TBPWC correspondence, correspondence from Lt. Gov. Preston Smith, Tex. Rep. Frances Tarlton Farenthold, Tex. Rep. Jack R. Hawkins, Tex. Rep. Dan Kubiak, Tex. Rep. D.R. (Tom) Uher, Tex. Speaker of the House G.F. (Gus) Mutscher.	1969
	42	Correspondence, Memo to ERA Committee, letter from the Order of the Eastern Star, from US Rep. Kika De La Garza, US Rep. John Dowdy, US Rep. Wright Patman, US Rep. James M. Collins, US Rep. JJ Pickle, US Rep. O.C. Fisher, US Rep. Martha W. Griffiths, Senator Ralph W. Yarborough. Telegraph to Hermine that the Equal Rights Amendment had passed.	1970
	43	Correspondence, From Tex. Rep. John A. Traeger, list of members who signed the Equal Rights Amendment, handwritten letter from Tex. Rep. Charles Finnell, Tex. Rep. Chris Victor Semos, , Tex. Rep. James J. Kaster, Marjorie R. Longwell, Tex. Rep. Jake Johnson, Tex. Rep. Clyde Haynes, Jr., Tex. Sen. Jim Wallace, US Rep. Bob Price, and the Houston Dem. Women's Club.	1971
	44	Correspondence,	1972

		From TBPWC, letters of and for support for the Nov. 7 election for the passage for the ELRA.	
	45	Correspondence, From the Legislative Steering Committee, from the Dallas Times Herald Women's News Dept. thanking Hermine, Tex. Rep. Jim Mattox, Tex. Sen. Bill Patman.	1973
	46	Correspondence, To Dr. Gambrell from Elizabeth Hogg, a copy of the resolution signed by the Texas Rep. that voted for the ERA.	1974