

THE COURIER

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Remain prepared for hurricane season

We have made it more than a month into hurricane season now, but no one is fooled by the lack of storm activity to this point.

Later in the summer is when we will experience the traditional height of the season. This is still fairly early. In fact, we haven't even had much rain in recent weeks – a fact confirmed by the state of many brown lawns across our region.

But we cannot confuse what has happened so far for a promise that storms won't threaten at all this year.

National forecasters have said they expect an average year in terms of the number and strengths of storms. That is fine, until one develops and threatens our coast.

We don't have to see 12 named storms or five major hurricanes to feel major effects from storm season. In past years, we have been inundated with water by storms that never came even close to hitting us.

Slowly, we have been able to build up some storm protection, but we still lack an adequate system of levees, natural barriers and other structures that can help block us from the worst of Mother Nature. In fact, with each successive storm, our natural protections have been damaged or washed away entirely.

So many of us are understandably apprehensive as we look toward another long hurricane season, not know what this one will bring. With any luck, it will remain consistent with recent years and keep us out of harm's way. But we cannot afford to assume that will be the case.

We know all too well how quickly a storm can form and how soon it can stir us into action.

So do what you can to prepare now for the storm that might come – even as we hope it never does.

Get together a plan that will keep you and your family members or anyone else who might be depending on you informed about what everyone will be expected to do.

Make sure you have a kit packed that will allow you to have what you need if it is necessary to evacuate.

And don't forget coming up with a plan for your pets. They are helpless in emergencies, and they depend on you to take care of them.

We don't have to dwell on the negative possibilities that come with this time of the year, but it would be foolish to ignore them. Let's get ready.

Editorials represent the opinion of the newspaper, not of any individual.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Friday, July 5, the 186th day of 2019. There are 179 days left in the year.

On July 5, 1954, Elvis Presley's first commercial recording session took place at Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee; the song he recorded was "That's All Right."

In 1811, Venezuela became the first South American country to declare independence from Spain.

ANOTHER VIEW



Are you watching Sunday? Me either



Mike Gorman

The U.S. Women's National Team will take on the Netherlands Sunday morning, with the Women's World Cup title on the line.

Many across our great land will tune in to root for the Red, White and Blue. They will cheer for Megan Rapinoe, Alex Morgan and the rest of the American team. And that team, even if it should lose, is on a historic run of dominance that is rarely seen in any sport.

It has won world championships and Olympic gold. So its fans are justified in taking pride in the play on the field. But win or lose Sunday morning, I won't be cheering for this bunch.

No, I wasn't moved against this team by Rapinoe's recent Twitter spat with President Trump. And while her boisterous celebration of a goal scored during a 13-0 win over Thailand in the first round this year did cement my dislike, the root of it goes back years.

First, though, a bit about the celebrations. Morgan scored five goals during that match. Five. And she said afterward that not scoring so many goals would have been disrespectful to the Thai team. OK. I don't mind that the U.S. team utterly destroyed the Thai team. But is it too much to expect people who are representing their nation to show just the slightest bit of class while doing so? Apparently so.

But this is a team with a long history of using questionable judgment and mocking good taste.

It gave in to the selfish tantrums of Hope Solo in 2007 when she viciously criticized her coach and the woman who replaced her in goal during the loss. After her teammates voted to exclude her from the next game, the coaching staff restored her in the starting lineup going forward.

And Solo's arrest on domestic abuse charges following a fight with her sister and nephew didn't hold back her soccer career. The team did suspend her for one game, then welcomed her back with open arms – even as the rest of the sports world was feigning shock over the soft treatment of Ray Rice and Adrian Peterson following domestic abuse cases that rocked the NFL.

It's amazing that people who beat women and children – regardless of their own gender – are allowed by professional sports organizations such as the U.S. Women's National Team to go unpunished.

And now, the women's team is fighting a legal battle to be paid on par with the men's national team. The female players claim that the differential in pay is the result of gender discrimination. That may well be, but it is not as cut and dried as they would have the courts believe.

Their claim is that they are being paid less for the same work the men do. They contrast their recent records with the exceedingly modest records of the men's team. In the world of women's soccer, they are much more successful than are the men in their respective field.

But let's say the Saskatchewan

Roughriders go undefeated this season and win the Canadian football championship. Would those players deserve more pay than the Atlanta Falcons, or whoever else goes 0-16 this year? Of course not. The pay of both groups is driven primarily by television revenue. As players in the NFL, the Falcons are paid out of the gobs of money generated from TV networks and other marketing deals. The Canadian league, well, not so much.

So it goes with the national soccer teams. Men's soccer is the most popular and most widely watched sport in the world. The World Cup when it rolls around is watched with more fervor and in greater numbers around the world than is our Super Bowl.

The Women's World Cup? Not so much. Not even close. As a result, the revenue is not on the same pitch. According to Forbes, the Women's World Cup's four-year cycle of 2019-22 is expected to take in a \$131 million. The men's World Cup played in Russia last year, on the other hand, generated \$6 billion. Note: that last word starts with a B. So even the bottom tier of international men's teams take in much more money than their counterparts in the women's world.

Now, maybe that is a sign of gender discrimination. Do people just tune out of the women's competition because they are women? Maybe. But there are some solid reasons as well.

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Time to go for ERA: Re-launch the campaign



Kimberly Bartenfelder and Robert Weiner

Alive and well in the worst ways is an ongoing surge of gender discrimination. The biggest gender inequality, wage gap and many of the lowest-paying positions experienced in the nation are by the women of Louisiana. Confirmed by reports in USA Today in 2018, CBS and Forbes Magazine in 2019, Louisiana consistently falls at the bottom of all 50 states. The National Partnership for Women and Families in May 2019 reported that Louisiana women earn 69 cents for every dollar a man earns. The national difference in 2019 between male and female incomes was a median wage gap of \$10,169. They also reported in 2017 the median annual income of Louisiana women at \$33,832 while men earned \$49,730,

a difference of \$15,898.

In mid-May, presidential candidate Kamala Harris announced a proposal to eliminate the wage gap. However, equal pay is the springboard for larger discussion – full equality under the law for women.

This is where the Equal Rights Amendment comes in. It's time to re-launch the campaign for the full ERA.

On the first night of the Democratic presidential debates, Julian Castro supported ERA passage and got cheers.

After the 19th Amendment was passed by Congress in 1919 and ratified in 1920, the ERA was first introduced to Congress in 1923. However, Congress did not pass the ERA until 1972 – nearly 50 years later.

The Congressional Research Service in 2018 reported that the ERA is caught in a web of legal confusion. The original proposal stated a seven-year deadline for ratification of, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or

abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." Thirty-five of the needed 38 states ratified.

The ERA is needed now more than ever because women do not have full equality. The ERA ensures it.

The assumption that gender equality exists is a failure of the American legal system.

However, as much as it would be a pleasure to solely blame the patriarchy for gender inequality, we cannot. A STOP ERA figure was Phyllis Schlafly, a conservative activist pushing for the retention of women's rights in the home and no further.

More recently with abortion legislation in Alabama, it was female Gov. Kay Ivey who signed off. These women are why only blaming men is not a solution to female equality.

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a report card based on female Employment & Earnings, Political Participation, Poverty & Opportunity, Reproductive Rights, Health & Well-Being, Work & Family,

is given to each state. From each category in 2015, most of the country fell around "C". Louisiana however, fell far behind "C" in all criteria – "D" in four out of the six, failing one altogether.

Furthermore, gender discrimination happens regularly.

Pink Tax reports that, "it costs more to be a woman" because of consumer goods and services having a "gender-based price."

In 2016, CBS investigated, sending one female and one male producer to dry cleaners in New York City to see if women were paying more. They concluded that women paid grossly more.

In 2019, MarketWatch reported that, "Adding insult to injury, female-only mortgage applicants also get rejected at a higher rate than male-only applicants". Similarly, a 2017 survey featured in The Denver Post found that, "Many women will turn to personal savings, friends and family, credit cards and other alternatives," rather than apply for bank loans.

Additionally, the Office of Personnel Management reported that women have made some progress professionally – 14.6% are private sector executives and 34% are federal workforce executives. Also, in 2018 only 25 women were CEOs of Fortune 500 companies – including Mary Barra of General Motors, Ginni Rometty of IBM, Michelle Gass of Kohl's, among the other 22 women.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg said last year, "I have three granddaughters. I would like to be able to take out my pocket constitution and say that the equal citizenship stature of men and women is a fundamental tenet of our society."

The ERA can be a beacon of hope – and legal power – for the future of women.

Robert Weiner was a Clinton and Bush White House spokesperson, and for the House Government Operations Committee. Kimberly Bartenfelder is Gender Equality policy analyst for Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change.