

## Contentious Issues



(above) Marchers in support for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment  
*Courtesy of Business and Professional Women/USA; (left) ERA button  
 Courtesy of South Dakota State Historical Society*

Political and social issues that arose in the 1960s and 1970s agitated voters for decades. As Speaker, Murphy dealt with those issues in different ways. Sometimes he opposed head on positions that he disagreed with. Arguing that women were not “equal” to men but were actually above them,” Murphy led the House in voting down the Equal Rights Amendment in 1974 and 1982.

In other areas, Murphy felt compelled to moderate his negative stance. He originally opposed a state lottery, mandatory seatbelt laws, and tougher penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol, but in each case he eventually compromised.

Some potentially explosive issues, Murphy believed, were better avoided all together. He used his authority as Speaker to steer the House away from divisive debates over “hot-button” topics such as abortion, gun control, and the state flag.

**Deal-making at Capitol goes down to wire; Budget, gun control, other issues caught in House-Senate tug of war**

*Atlanta Journal-Constitution, March 15, 1994*



“No Sir, You Weren’t Speeding, Mr. Tom. I Just Wanted To See If You Were Wearing Your Seat Belt. We’ve Got A Little Pool Going Down At State Head Quarters...”

*Courtesy of the Boyd Collection at the University of West Georgia*

**Murphy keeps low profile during flag fight**

*Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 7, 2001*