Baton Rouge, La. (AP) — Advocates of equal rights for women got the word Saturday—"they’d better start rounding up votes now if they expect consideration in Louisiana’s new constitution."

“Take the message out,” one of the convention’s delegates, Kendall Vick, advised. “You’ve got a lot of work to do.”

Vick, from New Orleans, offered his suggestion after a two-hour debate on the issue before the convention’s committee on bill of rights and elections.

No decisions were made, but sentiment, at least among some of the committee members, was that an equal rights provision as a part of the constitution itself would be a risky business at best.

Better Course

An equal rights for women provision as an alternative to the voters might be a better course, some members suggested.

Representatives of the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization of Women and Women In Politics appeared before the panel to pitch for the equal rights amendment.

The consensus was clear. The equal rights backers want it in the constitution—and not as an alternative.

“Justice and fairness is all I’m asking you to consider,” Karline Tierney of Baton Rouge, appearing for Women In Politics, told the 10-member panel.

Any Right

“Is there any right or principle of citizenship any of you believe should be denied because a person is a man or a woman?” she asked.

Debra Millenson, a New Orleans attorney, said a “progressive, forward-looking document” would include an equal rights provision as a basic principle.

She rejected the alternative approach as a “cop-out.”

“If it’s defeated as an alternative,” she said, “that leaves me a non-person in the state.”