

**Collins, Mary Jean** (1939 – ) (also known as Mary Jean Collins-Robson) NOW leader, director of the Illinois ERA campaign and deputy director of Catholics for a Free Choice, Collins joined NOW in 1967, was active through 1975, and remains (2005) a member. An officer of the Milwaukee chapter in 1967, she moved to Chicago in 1968 and was elected president of the Chicago chapter. In 1970, Chicago NOW held an employment conference; hosted the national conference of NOW; was involved in activities and pickets related to discrimination in higher education; and sponsored the Women's Strike for Equality, which brought 15,000 people to Daley Plaza in downtown Chicago. Also in 1970, Collins was elected Midwest regional director: In 1972, Chicago NOW entered the fight against AT&T for discriminating against women employees. Again in 1972, the Twin Cities chapter of NOW filed formal charges of sex and race discrimination against General Mills, and urged a boycott of its products. In 1980, Collins was again elected president of the Chicago chapter and helped direct the last days of the ERA campaign. She served for two years, then was elected national action VP in 1982. She served in that capacity until 1985. Collins also served as deputy director of Catholics for a Free Choice from 1985 – 1993. She is VP and national political director for People for the American Way (2005). Archives: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, MA; the University of Illinois, Chicago; and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI. (ABS)