

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5172

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to establishing a University of Washington center for human rights.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a University of Washington center for human rights.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Shin, Hobbs, Kastama, McAuliffe, Jarrett, Pridemore, Brown, Keiser, Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles and Kline).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 3/18/09, 3/20/09 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill  
(As Amended by House)**

- Establishes the University of Washington Center for Human Rights (Center).
- Requires that the Center aligns with the founding principles of the United States and engages faculty and students in service to enhance the promises of life and liberty outlined in the Preamble of the United States Constitution.
- Requires the Center to report by December 1, 2010, and biennially thereafter regarding the Center's activities and accomplishments.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Wallace, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Anderson, Ranking Minority Member; Schmick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Carlyle, Driscoll, Grant-Herriot, Haler and White.

**Staff:** Andi Smith (786-7304)

**Background:**

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The University of Washington (UW) currently offers a minor in Human Rights at all three of its campuses. The Human Rights minor is typically interdisciplinary in nature, as it involves study in a variety of disciplines from sociology, political science, and economics to women's studies, philosophy, and psychology.

The UW houses the Comparative Law and Society Studies Center (CLASS), which promotes interdisciplinary research and teaching as well as community service regarding law, justice, and human rights throughout the world. The Human Rights Education and Research Network (HRERN) operated on all three campuses of the UW from 1998-2007 and focused on promoting human rights scholarship, training graduate students for human rights education, and cultivating ties between the UW and other local, national, and international human rights organizations.

Many other public and private universities in the United States and abroad have centers for human rights, including Duke University, the University of Iowa, Princeton, Harvard, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of California, Berkeley. Each center has a different focus but generally the centers provide an interdisciplinary location for research, policy analysis, and dialogue on human rights. Some of the centers have internship, community service, or advocacy components. Most of the centers are located in a law school or a public policy school, but a few are located in other areas, such as international programs. Most rely on private donations, at least in part, to carry out the mission of the centers.

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### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

The UW Center for Human Rights (Center) is created. The mission of the Center is to expand opportunities for Washington residents to receive an education in human rights, generate research data and expert knowledge to enhance public and private policymaking, and become an academic center for human rights teaching and research in the nation. The Center must align with the founding principles and philosophies of the United States of America and engage faculty, staff, and students in service to enhance the promise of life and liberty as outlined in the Preamble of the United States Constitution.

Key substantive issues for the Center include: the rights of all persons to security against violence; the rights of immigrants, Native Americans, and ethnic or religious minorities; human rights and the environment; health as a human right; human rights and trade; the human rights of working people; and women's rights as human rights.

The Center must report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2010, and biennially thereafter regarding the Center's activities and accomplishments in community service, improving human rights outcomes related to the issue areas outlined in the bill, and engagement with human rights organizations outside of the UW.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board may solicit, accept, receive, and administer federal or private funds to support the Center.

### **Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Additional direction was added regarding alignment with the founding principles and philosophies of the United States. Direction to engage faculty and students in service to enhance the promise of life and liberty as outlined in the Preamble of the United States Constitution was also added. The amended bill also contains a biennial reporting requirement regarding the Center's activities and accomplishments.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Before the late 20th century, nations did not discuss human rights. America is a leader in this area. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech was the beginning of the human rights discussion and it has grown into a global conversation. The UW has a chance to be a pioneer in this area and address questions like: "Why are human rights necessary?" and "How can human rights improve relations among nations?" This is an opportune moment to create this Center and become pioneers.

The genesis of this was a foundation gift to establish an endowed chair and what we discovered in the process was that the chair represented the culmination of 15 years of scholarly work. Creation of this Center is the next step and the culmination of both an internal effort and external effort with support from places like the Everett Chamber of Commerce. This Center would help knit together different threads of work into a unified fabric. Given that we will be supported by private donors, they won't have patience for self-involved pondering. It is key that the Center remain nonpartisan and concentrate on practice as much as theory.

Washington is a center for special expertise on human rights. Not only does the UW house a highly respected law and society center, there is also excellent scholarship taking place. Having personally experienced the violations of human rights in studies abroad, the existence of the Center makes students want to learn more and do more. Giving back to the community and engaging in public service is critically important. The Center will attract students and serve as a "one-stop-shop" for fellowships and other assistance that might enable students who are passionate about human rights to receive financial assistance to enable them to go into public service without tremendous debt. The Center will also serve as a connection point for the work going on on all three campuses.

Nonprofit agencies would also benefit from the existence of the Center. Our organization goes to war zones and brings people back to Olympia to figure out how to deal with the various traumas that occur in these places. Often times there are multiple human rights being violated. The people we bring to Olympia help us figure out what interest group should prevail in a dispute with another interest group. That is why it is so important that the Center

happen within the academy. Good analysis of which rights should prevail is critical. This moves the argument away from interest group versus interest group. The Center will also inform legislative issues, as 90 percent of the issues you address in some way deal with human rights. The Center will enhance public policy-making and will be complimentary to other local and state efforts.

The Center would consolidate, coordinate, make efficient and coherent the work from three campuses of the UW. The term "human rights" has been made into a slogan but what we need is thoughtful analysis. This Center would be unique and draw upon interdisciplinary work. This is also about reaching out beyond the UW community.

There is broad support from many local community groups. The Center will also help attract private donations and my personal story is an example. Just knowing that the endowed chair at UW existed prompted me to raise \$60,000 to support an endowment for a student studying human rights.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Peter Jackson, Henry M. Jackson Foundation; Amanda Fulmer, Netsanet Tesfay, Bruce Kochis, and Adrienne Melrondahl, University of Washington; John Van Eenwyk, International Trauma Treatment Program; Luis Moscoso, Snohomish County Citizens for Human Rights; and Gunnell Clark.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.