

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6239

As Passed House:
February 28, 2010

Title: An act relating to making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

Brief Description: Making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Gordon and Fraser; by request of Statute Law Committee).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 2/19/10 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/10, 85-10.

<p>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporates gender-neutral terms to statute.
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Flannigan, Miloscia and Taylor.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

Dating back to 1891, the rules for the construction of statute include provisions whereby words importing the masculine gender are extended to females. Legislation enacted in 1983 required that all statutes, memorials, and resolutions enacted, adopted, or amended by the Legislature be written in gender-neutral terms, unless a specification of gender is intended.

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.

In 2007 the Legislature enacted a bill to correct gender references. The act changed gender-specific terms to gender-neutral terms in several chapters of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), including those chapters dealing with firefighters, police officers, bondspersons, and material suppliers. The bill also directed the Code Reviser, in consultation with the Statute Law Committee, to develop and implement a plan to correct gender-specific references in the entire RCW by June 30, 2015.

Summary of Bill:

Gender-specific terms and references are made gender-neutral in several titles of the RCW. Titles relating to criminal procedure, probate and trust, district and juvenile courts, aeronautics, agriculture, state government, motor vehicles, public highways and transportation, insurance, labor, unemployment compensation, industrial insurance, fire protection districts, port districts, public utility districts, boundaries and plats, and landlord and tenant are included and are made gender-neutral throughout.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except section 9077, relating to making gender neutral changes in laws related to traffic infractions, which takes effect July 1, 2010.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill making gender-neutral changes last year was referred to a different committee, and it will likely take another two to three years to complete changes to all statute. In 1983 the Legislature enacted a law that required future laws to be written in gender neutral language, but it did not make any changes prior to 1983. This project will correct all statute.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; and Kyle Thiessen, Statute Law Committee.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.