

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1835

---

As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, March 19, 2009

**Title:** An act relating to using respectful language in state laws.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the use of respectful language in state statutes.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Angel, Rolfes, Hinkle, Anderson, Haler, Short, Parker, Johnson, Bailey, Pedersen and Warnick.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/27/09, 94-0.

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 3/18/09, 3/19/09 [DPA].

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Fairley, Marr, Murray and Parlette.

**Staff:** Rhoda Donkin (786-7465)

**Background:** The Revised Code of Washington and the Washington Administrative Code both contain extensive references to individuals with disabilities. In 2004 the Legislature passed House Bill 2663 which required the Code Reviser to change references to certain words frequently used to describe individuals with disabilities. Terms like developmentally disabled, crippled, handicapped were identified as disrespectful to persons with disabilities. These terms were to be avoided in law and replaced with terms that placed the individual first in the term preferred. These changes included terms like "persons with disabilities" and "individuals with developmental disabilities," for example.

**Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments):** The preferred term to be used in statutes, memorials, and resolutions is changed from "individuals with mental retardation" to "individuals with intellectual disabilities." The Code Reviser must replace the term "mental retardation" with the term "intellectual disability."

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments):** Clarification is made giving the Code Reviser direction to prepare a bill, by December 1, 2009, that removes the phrase "mental

---

*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.*

retardation" from the Revised Code of Washington and replace it with the phrase "intellectual disability."

**Appropriation:** None

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill:** PRO: Language in our state law should reflect the respect we have for all people. It is insulting to be called retarded. We feel hurt and upset when we hear the "R" word. We would like a more respectful term used in statute.

OTHER: We need additional authority to review each section of law where the term "retarded" appears and make sure we make necessary changes so there are no unintended consequences, such as conflicts with federal law and other references in statute that might conflict with this change.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Angel, prime sponsor; Robert Warndell, Heather Harper, Mike Raymond, Michael Rogers, Self Advocates of Washington; Diana Stadden, ARC of Washington State; Scott Boettcher, Isabel Boettcher, citizens.

OTHER: Kyle Thiessen, Washington State Code Reviser's Office.