

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6669

As Passed Senate, February 13, 1996

Title: An act relating to excessive charges for products and services because of the customer's sex.

Brief Description: Prohibiting excessive charges for products and services because of the customer's sex.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor, Commerce & Trade (originally sponsored by Senators Thibaudeau, Drew, Pelz, Smith and Kohl).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Trade: 1/29/96, 2/1/96 [DPS, DNPS].
Passed Senate, 2/13/96, 26-22.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & TRADE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6669 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Pelz, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Franklin, Fraser and Wojahn.

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senator Deccio.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: The state's law against discrimination directs the Human Rights Commission to investigate and eliminate certain unfair practices based on a person's sex. A person found to have committed an unfair practice may be ordered to stop the practice, to pay actual damages, and to pay up to \$10,000 damages for humiliation and mental suffering.

Among the unfair practices enumerated in the law, none explicitly prohibit the practice of charging different prices for a product or service based on the purchaser's sex. There is concern that the current law does not prevent this practice from occurring.

Summary of Bill: The Senate Labor, Commerce & Trade Committee must conduct an interim study to identify any services for which consumers in Washington are charged different prices based solely on their gender. Price differences based specifically upon the amount of time, difficulty, or cost of providing a particular service shall not be considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Studies suggest that this is a pervasive problem. The bill would clarify existing law to explicitly prohibit price discrimination based on gender. The bill is simply a matter of fairness. Women, who generally earn less than men, should not have to pay more for identical products and services.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Thibaudeau, prime sponsor; Idolina Reta, WA State Human Rights Commission; Majken Ryherd Keira, WA Women United; Lonnie Johns-Brown, WA State NOW; Judy Turpin, NW Women's Law Center.