

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6413

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, January 17, 2008

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

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

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Keiser, Franklin, Murray, King and Parlette.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development:1/15/08, 1/17/08 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Franklin, Hewitt, King, Murray, and Prentice.

Staff: Kathleen Buchli (786-7488)

Background: Since 1983, state law requires that all statutes be written in gender-neutral terms, unless a specification of gender is intended. In 2007, the Legislature passed ESB 5063, an act relating to removing 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 Legislature directed the Code Reviser, in consultation with the Statute Law Committee, to develop and implement a plan to correct gender-specific references in the code. The Code Reviser must make annual legislative recommendations so that the code will be completely gender-neutral by June 30, 2015.

Summary of Bill: Gender-specific terms and references are made gender-neutral in several Titles of the RCW. For example, references to "man" or "men" are changed to "person" or "persons," "councilman" is changed to "councilmember," and "chairman" is changed to "chair." Titles relating to local and state government and insurance are included and are made gender-neutral throughout. Other code sections are included, such as sections that contain business regulations, to modify specific references to "man" or "men."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill comes about from legislation that was requested last year by female fire fighters who were referred to in statute as men. It was discovered that a huge number of changes in the code would have to be made to make the code gender-neutral.

OTHER: The Code Reviser's Office was assigned the task of putting the bills together. Thousands of sections of code have not been amended in the last 40 years and, consequently, do not contain gender-neutral language. The Code Reviser's Office searched the code and worked with committee staff to find appropriate alternatives to gender-specific language contained in some sections of the code.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Kyle Thiessen, Code Reviser's Office.