

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2759

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
State Government, Elections & Information Technology

**Title:** An act relating to establishing the Washington state women's commission.

**Brief Description:** Establishing the Washington state women's commission.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Doglio, Jinkins, Senn, Pettigrew, Dolan, Hudgins, Stanford, Chapman, Kagi, Appleton, Gregerson, Tarleton, Santos, Kilduff, Pollet, Macri, Frame and Bergquist.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government, Elections & Information Technology: 1/30/18, 1/31/18 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Washington State Women's Commission in the Office of the Governor.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Appleton, Gregerson, Johnson and Pellicciotti.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives McDonald, Ranking Minority Member; Kraft, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Irwin.

**Staff:** Desiree Omlie (786-7105).

**Background:**

In 1971 the Washington State Women's Council (Women's Council) was created by executive order. The Women's Council was comprised of approximately 15 members appointed by the Governor. The Women's Council was directed to consider appropriate questions pertaining to the rights and needs of women in contemporary America and to make recommendations to

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the Governor and any state agencies regarding changes in program and law. The Office of the Governor, or other state agency subsequently designated, was required to provide staff assistance. Through the executive order, state departments were requested to provide appropriate and reasonable assistance to the Women's Council, and local government officials and private citizens were requested to cooperate with the Women's Council, as needed to accomplish the council's goals. In 1978 the Women's Council was discontinued through executive order after Referendum 40 was defeated when voters decided not to replace the Women's Council with a statutory Women's Commission.

In 1963 the Interagency Committee for State Employed Women (ICSEW) was established by the Governor. The Governor most recently affirmed the ICSEW by executive order in 2016. The ICSEW examines and defines issues pertaining to the rights and needs of women employed in state government and makes policy recommendations to the Governor and state agencies with respect to desirable changes in programs, policies, and laws. The areas of focus include education, training, career development, and other conditions of employment. The ICSEW also advises state agencies on the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated policies, plans, and programs focusing on the issues and needs of women in state government. The membership consists of state department and agency representatives with a maximum number of 60 members, with the leadership of each agency appointing the members. The Office of the Governor designates one of the executive policy advisors as its committee liaison and staff person.

There are 40 commissions to which the Governor appoints members. For example, the Commission on African American Affairs, Arts Commission, and Sentencing Guidelines Commission.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

The Washington State Women's Commission (Women's Commission) is established in the Office of the Governor. The Governor will appoint an executive director (Director) to administer the Women's Commission. The Director will employ staff for the Women's Commission.

#### Membership.

The Women's Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Governor with advice and consent of the Senate. There are an additional four advisory members as follows:

- two members of the Senate, one from each of the two major political parties appointed by the President of the Senate; and
- two members of the House of Representatives (House), one from each of the two major political parties appointed by the Speaker of the House.

The Governor must consider nominations for membership based on maintaining a balanced and diverse distribution of ethnic, geographic, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, and occupational representation.

The initial members serve for staggered terms: three serve for one year; three serve for two years; and three serve for three years. Subsequently, members serve for a three-year term unless reappointed by the Governor. Advisory members serve for a two-year term.

Nonlegislative members are reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for subsistence, lodging, per diem, and mileage allowance. Similarly, legislative members may receive an allowance to reimburse certain expenses.

#### Duties—Director.

The Director must:

- monitor state legislation and advocate for legislation affecting women;
- work with state agencies to assess programs and policies that affect women;
- coordinate with the minority commissions and human rights commission to address issues of mutual concern; and
- work as a liaison between the public and private sector to eliminate barriers to women's economic equity.

#### Duties—Women's Commission.

The Women's Commission must:

- recruit and maintain a list of names of qualified women to fill vacancies on various boards and commissions;
- provide information regarding state and federal legislation as it relates to the Women's Commission's purpose;
- identify and define specific needs of women of color and provide recommendations in a biennial report to the Legislature and the Governor;
- consult with state agencies regarding the effect of agency policies, rules, and practices on the unique problems and needs of women, and advise state agencies on the development of comprehensive and coordinated policies that focus on those problems and needs;
- provide resource and referral information to agencies and the public;
- hold public hearings to gather input on issues related to the unique problems and needs of women and include recommendations in its biennial report to the Legislature and the Governor;
- advocate for the removal of legal and social barriers for women;
- review best practices for sexual harassment policies and training and provide recommendations to state agencies; and
- submit a biennial report to the Legislature and the Governor detailing the Women's Commission's activities.

State agencies must provide appropriate and reasonable assistance to the Women's Commission as needed, such as gathering data, to assist the Women's Commission in carrying out its purpose.

#### Powers—Women's Commission.

The Women's Commission may:

- receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public or private sources and require the Director to report the funds received to the Office of Financial Management;

- establish relationships with public and private institutions, local governments, private industry, community organizations, and other segments of the public as needed to promote equal opportunity for women; and
  - adopt rules as necessary.
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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Since 1966 the National Organization for Women has been dedicated to leading societal and policy change, promoting critical dialogue, eliminating discrimination, and advancing the social, political, and economic rights of all women and girls. These policies and practices allow women to actively determine the conditions of their lives, their choices, and their future. The core policy areas that the Women's Commission would focus on under the bill are important, specifically those that keep women safe from violence, ensure economic access for women, and ensure the equal rights and opportunities for all by valuing diversity and seeking to identify and eliminate unfair practices that marginalize and disenfranchise individuals. There is particular interest in having the Women's Commission review best practices in sexual harassment policies and training and make recommendations to agencies based on the best practices.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Jessie Turner, National Organization for Women of Washington State.

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