

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 2759

As of February 20, 2018

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: Passed House: 2/13/18, 65-33.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/19/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

Background: Since 1963 the state of Washington has had numerous commissions or councils which concern women, created by the Governor, including: the Commission on the Status of Women; the Interagency Committee on the Status of Women; the Washington State Women's Council; and most recently, the Interagency Committee of State Employed Women (ICSEW).

The ICSEW began in 1989 and was most recently affirmed 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 a diverse group of state department and agency

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representatives with a maximum number of 60 members, with the leadership of each agency appointing the members who serve two-year terms. The Office of the Governor designates one of the executive policy advisors as its committee liaison and staff person.

Summary of Bill: The 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 must:

- employ staff for the Women's Commission;
- 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.

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, two members from the Senate and the House of Representatives, one from each of the two major political parties appointed by the President of the Senate and 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. 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 in accordance with statutory provisions for subsistence, lodging, per diem, and mileage allowance. Similarly, legislative members receive an allowance as provided under statute.

Duties. The Women's Commission must:

- recruit and maintain a list 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;
- consult and advise state agencies regarding the effect of agency policies, rules, and practices on the unique problems and development of comprehensive and coordinated policies to address them;
- 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;
- advocate for the removal of legal and social barriers for women;
- review best practices for sexual harassment policies and training; and
- provide staffing support to the ICSEW.

The Women's Commission must also submit a biennial report to the Legislature and the Governor detailing the Commission's activities and providing recommendations on the specific needs of women of color and issues related to the unique problems and needs of women. The first biennial report must also include an analysis of pay inequity based on gender among individuals employed in the Office of the Governor, and an analysis of pay inequity based on gender among employees included in the Washington Management Service.

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. The Women's Commission may:

- receive gifts, grants, and endowments from public or private sources which must be reported by the Director 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Washington has citizen commissions that help guide the state on numerous issues. In 1963 women began to understand that there was something not quite right, when the Governor established the Commission on the Status of women which made 40 recommendations to try to promote equality. This work continued into the 1970's with the work of the Women's Council. There are over 40 countries and seven states that have unique agencies that deal with women's concerns.

Women are underrepresented in the legislature and in the businesses that impact them significantly. Washington State has the worst average of women on corporate boards. There should be transparency in the number of women on corporate board and models of best practices for inclusion of women on corporate boards. This state led the fight for equal pay for women but women still don't have it. The review of the salaries should be inclusive of all or not done at all. In 1993 women were making 77 cents on the dollar when compared to a man and are now up to 79 cents. This bill would give the ability to collect the data to show whether or not there is disparity with regard to women.

It is time to take a serious look at the issues that need to be addressed, including best practices for sexual harassment training and best practices for state agencies. The Governor frequently turns to these commissions to help with management and decision making. The

work of this commission can provide the information that the state so desperately needs. Everyone in this state should enjoy the benefits of the Universal Human Rights.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Beth Doglio, Prime Sponsor; Senator Maralyn Chase; RaShelle Davis, Governor's Office; Ann Simons, Center for Women and Democracy; Cathy Allen, National Women's Political Caucus; Jessie Turner, National Organization for Women, Washington State Chapter.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.