

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6568

As Passed House:

March 3, 2004

Title: An act relating to directing the institute for public policy to develop a proposal for establishing a Washington state women's history center or information network.

Brief Description: Directing the institute for public policy to develop a proposal for establishing a Washington state women's history center or information network.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, Winsley, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Jacobsen, B. Sheldon, Spanel, Keiser, Franklin and Thibaudeau).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/24/04, 2/27/04 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/04, 95-1.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Direct the Washington Institute for Public Policy to study and make recommendations regarding the development of a Washington State Women's History Center.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Condotta, Jarrett, McCoy, Morrell and Ormsby.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Boldt.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

There are a number of state historical resources, including the State Historical Society, the State Museum, and various regional and local historical organizations. There is, however, no formal designation of a state women's history center or information network.

Among Washington's most historically noteworthy women are Belle Culp Reeves, Secretary of State in 1938, and a member of the House of Representatives for 16 years; Reba Hurn, elected as Washington's first woman senator in 1922, and the first woman admitted to the Washington State Bar Association in 1913; Bertha Knight Landes, Seattle Mayor elected on a platform of law enforcement, reform, and morality in 1926; and Dr. Dixie Lee Ray, Washington Governor from 1977 to 1981. The percentage of women in Washington Legislatures since 2000 has ranked among the highest of all the 50 states, and in 2003 Washington topped all other states for the percentage of its legislative positions held by women.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) will undertake a study and make recommendations regarding development of a state women's history center or information network, or both. Goals of the center, network, or both are to:

- 1) Systematically collect, preserve, maintain, and provide public access to historically valuable records pertaining to women's history in Washington;
- 2) Develop an outline of the locations of historically significant records and artifacts;
- 3) Encourage citizens to preserve and make accessible records and artifacts;
- 4) Encourage development of educational programs and displays;
- 5) Encourage development of learning opportunities for K-12 students and students in higher education institutions;
- 6) Actively promote collection of oral histories;
- 7) Encourage research; and
- 8) Encourage private donations of funds and donations of records and artifacts for public access.

The WSIPP may create an advisory committee and consult with state, regional, and local governmental and private entities. The recommendations are due to the Legislature December 1, 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Washington gets a good deal of attention regarding women and women's rights in almost every sector of life, including business, education, sports, labor and politics. This reflects the state's attention to opportunities for women. It is important to know how Washington earned this distinction, but we may lose this ability to coordinate the history of the state because we have no central collection point for the valuable records and artifacts that

exist. Since Washington has such a rich history of women's rights and achievements, a museum would be very appropriate. It would be meaningful to students, researchers, and the general public to know the role of women in the history of the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Fraser, prime sponsor; Senator Winsley, co-sponsor; Ann Simons, Washington Women United; and Dorothy Young Sale, League of Women Voters of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.