

Legislative Update January 14, 2001

Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

The legislative session began on Monday, January 8, 2001. Very few bills have been dropped into the legislative hopper this as legislators are finalizing bills for filing and obtaining sponsors.

Priority Message of the Week (If you can only do one thing, do this!)

Call your Senator and tell them you support SB 5029 with modifications. SB 5029 allows non-parents to petition the courts for visitation rights with a child. The bill should require individual seeking visitation to show that a relationship exists between them and child, and that denial of visitation would cause harm to the child. We shouldn't interfere in the parental decisions unless there is potential harm to child without intervention. The **Senate Judiciary Committee** will hear SB 5029 on **Tuesday January 16, 2001** at 8:00 AM.

Health Care

Assure equal access to quality affordable and accessible health care services for women and children.

1. Contraceptive coverage needs to be easily accessible to everyone in the state. Washington State NOW believes that any health care plan that covers prescription drugs must include contraceptive coverage as a part of that coverage.
2. WA State NOW supports access for all women to the full range of reproductive services. WA State NOW will defend a woman's right to choose, opposing any attempts to weaken the current law as passed by Initiative 120.

Economic Equity

WA State NOW supports economic equity for all women.

1. Welfare Reform
 - a) Washington State National Organization for Women is committed to achieving an economic equity reality for all women and supports changes in the WorkFirst program to assist families move up and out of poverty.
2. Child Care
 - a) NOW supports childcare support programs for low-income families. Families at or below the poverty level should not have to make co-payments and for those above the poverty level no more than 10 percent of their income should be allowed as co-payments
3. Family Leave
 - a) NOW supports expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act to create family friendly policies in the workplace.
 - b) NOW supports a Family Leave Insurance program that provide up to five weeks of partial wage replacement for workers on family or medical leave, and extend job protections to workers of any size company

Ending Violence Against Women

Washington State NOW supports efforts to end violence against women and their families in the areas of sexual assault and domestic violence

1. Modify WA State's unemployment compensation laws to allow claimant's to qualify for unemployment by adding a clause to the statute that would allow the individual to receive unemployment when they leave work due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.
2. Support modification to the Domestic Violence and Stalking laws as they apply to Protection and Anti-Harassment orders to:

- a) Add a “bubble standard” which would require the stalker or assailant to be no closer than a specified number of feet to the victim.
 - b) Close the gap to expand the coverage of Protection Orders on released prisoners so that the release orders and protection orders do not override and therefore vacate the protection order.
 - c) Allow minors to obtain anti-harassment orders
3. Protect domestic violence victims from eviction due to the violence and police visits.
 4. Pass legislation that provides privileged communication between domestic violence victim advocates and victims similar to what is already in the statute for sexual assault victims.
 5. Support use of surplus Welfare Reform funds to provide services for children who are in or have been in domestic violence situations and need help.
 6. Support the Sexual Assault programs request for state funding to support community sexual assault programs so to provide legal advocacy and therapeutic services for sexual assault victims and to fund a state-wide hotline for sexual assault victims.

The Attorney General’s Office has requested legislation that would codify into Washington State Law the ability for individuals to sue in civil court for gender-motivated violence. This bill was requested due to the US Supreme Court decision on May 15, 2000 in *Brzonkala v. Morrison* which overturned the civil remedies part of the Federal Violence Against Women Act citing that the US Congress overstepped its bounds in regards to allowing the civil remedy. The US Supreme Court ruled that this was a State’s rights issue and that it was a state’s responsibility to determine if victims could sue their attackers in a state’s court for damages. We expect to see this bill dropped in the hopper this week.

Privacy

Washington State National Organization for Women (NOW) supports legislation that assures individuals the right to privacy

1. Consumers should have the right to prevent financial institutions and businesses from giving or selling personal financial information to telemarketers.
2. Organizations conducting business on-line should be required to disclose how they collect and use personal data.
3. Confidentiality about medical records and decisions must be strictly maintained between the patient and his/her doctor.

Budget

NOW supports adjusting the 601 spending limit to eliminate re-basing and to change the spending cap formula to reflect the program growth that drives state spending (such as corrections and long term care, for example).

Other Bills:

See Priority Message of the Week – SB 5029 – “Regarding non-parental visitation rights”