

Legislative Update January 20, 2001

Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

NOW Lobby Day Schedule

January 29, 2000

Olympia, Washington

On the Capitol Campus:

10:00 -11 AM NOW Legislative Briefing. This workshop will include NOW's legislative agenda, issue papers and information, and tips on talking to your legislators. **PLEASE NOTE ROOM THE ROOM LOCATION HAS CHANGED.** The work-shop is scheduled for the John O'Brien Building – **Hearing Room D.**

11:00 -12:00 PM Meet with your legislators to talk about targeted bills. **Make appointments** before you come to Olympia (use the hotline). Meetings are usually for 15 minutes and can be scheduled alone or with a fellow constituent or NOW member.

12:00 - 1:15 Legislative Reception -Capital Rotunda

1:30 -4:00 PM Meet with your legislators to talk about targeted bills.

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

Call your senator and tell them that you oppose SB 5172. This bill allows direct payments of rent to landlords for public assistance recipients. Scheduled for a public hearing on Tuesday, January 23rd at 8 AM in the Senate Labor, Commerce & Financial Committee. We are opposed to this bill because a recipient under this program would no longer have the direct ability to use the rent payment to force the landlord to provide repairs for safe and adequate housing under the rental agreement.

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.

SB 5074 - Creating the Women's Health Advisory Committee (SUPPORT) – In the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee and is scheduled for a public hearing on Wednesday, Jan 24th at 1:30 PM. This bill establishes a committee to advise the Dept of Health & the Dept of Social & Health Services in regards to programs, policies, funding resources, and innovative responses to address women's health issues.

SB 5186 Modifying department of social and health services' family planning services (SUPPORT). In the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee and is scheduled for a public hearing on Monday, Jan 22nd at 1:30 PM. This bill creates a waiver to allow Medicaid coverage for contraceptive and sterilization services for persons with family incomes at or below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level.

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.

HB 1144 Modifying good cause reasons for failure to participate in the WorkFirst program.

(SUPPORT) Scheduled for a public hearing on Friday, Jan 25th at 1:30 PM in the House Children & Family Services Committee. This bill would modify the good cause reasons for failure to comply with work requirements if the recipient is a parent with a child under the age of one year. A parent may only receive this exemption for a total of twelve months, which may be consecutive or nonconsecutive. The current exemption is for only three months.

SB 5172 - Relating to rental payments to landlords from public assistance (OPPOSE) See Priority message of the week above.

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.

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:

SB 5236 Ensuring the health and safety of newborn infants who have been abandoned and exempting from criminal liability persons who abandon them into the custody of a qualified person. (SUPPORT) Scheduled for a public hearing on Friday, Jan 26th at 8 AM in the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee.

SB 5029 Relating to nonparental visitation rights. This bill was heard in the Senate Judiciary committee on January 16, 2001. It is now ready for an executive session. SB 5029 allows non-parents to petition the courts for visitation rights with a child. The bill should the 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. Call your Senator and tell them you support SB 5029 with modifications. Request that the committee substitute the language that is in HB 1054 for the language in SB 5029.

HB 1054 Relating to third party visitation. (SUPPORT) This bill was heard in the House Judiciary Committee on Friday Jan 19 and is now ready for executive session. Calls should go to your house member to request support for HB 1054. This bill is similar to SB 5029. HB 1054 is the better of the two bills and provides better protections.