

Legislative Update January 26, 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 AGAIN.** The work-shop is scheduled for the **John O'Brien Building – Conference area between Hearing Rooms A & B.** We had to change location because a legislative committee needed to add an additional meeting.

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!)

SB 5201 – Increasing access to education for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). (SUPPORT) This bill is also known as the HELP (Higher Education for Lifelong Progress) bill. This bill would give parents on public assistance the tools they need to secure careers and move themselves out of poverty. A recipient could receive up to two years of higher education and training. Clients in the HELP program are not subject to additional TANF work requirements: full time participation in the HELP program counts as their work, and is a statutory work activity. Ask you senator to have the Senate Higher Education Committee schedule this bill for a hearing and to pass it out of committee.

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 had 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. Call the hotline and ask that a message be left for the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee to pass SB 5074 out of committee.

SB 5186 Modifying department of social and health services' family planning services (SUPPORT). In the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee and had 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. Call the hotline and ask that a message be left for the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee to pass SB 5186 out of committee.

HB 1058 – Relating to medical assistance for breast and cervical cancer treatment for low-income women. (Support) This bill allows low-income women to receive medical assistance for the treatment of breast and cervical cancer. The bill is scheduled for a public hearing in the House Health Care Committee on Tuesday, Jan 30th at 1:30 PM. Call your representatives and ask them to support the bill.

SB 5416 – Relating to drug affected infants . (SUPPORT WITH MODIFICATIONS) This bill has been heard in the Senate Human Services Committee. This bill sets up procedures for identifying and screening pregnant and lactating women to determine whether an infant is at risk of drug affected due to the mother’s use of non-prescriptive addictive drugs. Mothers of drug affected infants can agree to treatment which as a condition that can defer a dependency action. The conditions vary depending on the number of drug-affected infants the mother has had. Mothers must also be offered family planning services. Providers (both individuals and agencies) may choose not to provide family planning services. Imposing barriers to contraception thwarts the very purpose of the family planning services proposed in this bill. NOW supports this bill with a modification to remove the clause which allows a provider to opt out of providing family planning services. Call your Senator and request the committee the remove of this clause of the bill.

HB 1206 – Relating to drug affected infants. (SUPPORT WITH MODIFICATIONS) in House Children & Family Services Committee and has not been scheduled for a hearing. This is the house version of SB 5416. This bill has the same provisions as the Senate version. NOW supports this bill with a modification to remove the clause which allows a provider to opt out of providing family planning services. Call your representatives and request the committee to remove this clause of the bill.

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. Pass out of committee.

SB 5172 - Relating to rental payments to landlords from public assistance (OPPOSE) Call your senator and tell them that you oppose SB 5172. This bill allows direct payments of rent to landlords for public assistance recipients. This bill had 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. Leave a message for the Senate Labor, Commerce and Financial Committee to not pass this bill.

SB 5201 - Increasing access to education for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). (SUPPORT) 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

SB 5420 – Establishing family leave insurance. (SUPPORT) This bill establishes a Family Leave Insurance program to pay up to 5 weeks of family leave benefits. Funds for the family leave insurance would come from each employee’s paycheck at the rate of 1 cent per hour worked per week up to a maximum of forty hours per week. This bill is the Senate Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions Committee. Call the hotline and leave a message for the Senate Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions Committee asking that they schedule the bill for a public hearing and pass it out of committee.

HB 1185 – Establishing family leave insurance. (SUPPORT) This is the House version of SB 5420. The House Commerce and Labor Committee scheduled a work session on the issue of family leave insurance for Friday, Jan 26th. Calls are needed to the House Commerce and Labor Committee to request that HB 1185 be scheduled for a public hearing.

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.

SB 5189 - Allowing victims of domestic violence or stalking to receive unemployment insurance benefits. (SUPPORT) This bill allows individuals to qualify for unemployment insurance when the unemployment is necessary to protect the claimant or a member of their immediate family from domestic violence or stalking. SB 5189 has a public hearing in the Labor, Commerce, & Financial Institutions Committee on Thursday Feb 1st at 10AM. Call your senator to support SB 5189 to allow victims of domestic violence or stalking to qualify for unemployment.

HB 1248 - Allowing victims of domestic violence or stalking to receive unemployment insurance benefits. (SUPPORT) This is the house version SB 5189. The bill is in House Commerce & Labor Committee and has not been scheduled for a hearing yet. Call the House Commerce and Labor Committee to request HB 1228 be put on the calendar for a public hearing and to pass it out of committee.

SB 5285 – School violence reduction and emergency preparedness act. This bill encourages schools to develop emergency management plans to respond to emergencies and disasters (including school violence) and to develop

education plans for students, staff, volunteers, and parents about its plan. SB 5285 is scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Education Committee on Jan 29th at 1:30 pm. Call you your senator and encourage support for SB 5285.

SB 5402 - Sentencing of hate crimes. (SUPPORT) SB 5402 adds hate crimes to the list of aggravating circumstances which can be used to impose an exceptional sentence for convicted offenders. Hate crimes are defined as those crimes which are committed due to an offender's perception of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap. SB 5402 is in Senate Judiciary Committee. SB 5402 has not been scheduled for a hearing yet. Call the Senate Judiciary committee and request a public hearing and passage of the SB 5402 out of committee.

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.

There are still discussions going on about Privacy legislation. We don't have any bills to report yet

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. Calls need to go to House Judiciary to pass it out of committee.