

WA State NOW - Legislative Update February 17, 2001

Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

Tuesday, February 27 is the dead line for House bills to move out of the committee of origin.

Wednesday, February 28 is the deadline for Senate bills to move out of the committee of origin.

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

SB 5451 - Relating to actions for crimes of violence motivated by gender (SUPPORT) - This bill would codify into Washington State Law the ability for individuals to sue in civil court for gender-motivated violence. This bill was requested by the Attorney General's office 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. Passed out of committee and is in Senate Rules. Call your Senator to support and vote for SB 5451.

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 Jan 24th. 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 Jan 22nd. 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. Has passed out of committee and is in Rules and is ready to be placed on the floor. Call and request the Rules Committee to send SB 5186 to the floor of the Senate for a vote.

SHB 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 has passed out of the House Health Care Committee and is now in House Appropriations. Call your Representative and request support to move SHB 1058 out of committee.

SSB 5416 – Relating to drug affected infants. (SUPPORT WITH MODIFICATIONS) This bill has passed out 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. NOW's concern with the mandatory section of this bill is that drug affected mothers would not seek pre-natal care or post-natal care due to the mandatory testing. 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 modifications to remove the clause that allows a provider to opt out of providing family planning services and to remove the mandatory testing. We support the program components of the bill. Bill is in Rules. Call your Senator and tell them you support floor amendments to remove the conscience clause and make the testing voluntary.

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 modifications to remove the clause that allows a provider to opt out of providing family planning services and to make the testing voluntary. Call your representatives and request the committee to remove the conscience clause and to make the testing voluntary.

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) 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. This bill had a public hearing and is ready for an executive session in the House Children & Family Services Committee. Send a message to the House Children & Family Services committee to pass out HB 1144 out of committee.

SB 5172 - Relating to rental payments to landlords from public assistance (OPPOSE). 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.**

HB 1145 - Relating to rental payments to landlords from public assistance. (OPPOSE) This is the House version of SB 5172. It has had a public hearing in House Local Government and Housing Committee. **Leave a message for the House Local Government and Housing Committee to not pass HB 1145.**

SSB 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. SSB 5201 has passed out of the Senate Higher Education Committee and is now in the Ways and Means Committee. SSB 5201 has a public hearing scheduled in Senate Ways and Means on Wednesday, February 21st at 3:30 PM. Call your senator to support SSB 5201.

HB 1372 – Increasing access to education for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). (SUPPORT) This is the House version of SSB 5201. HB 1372 had a public hearing on Feb 8 in House Children and Family Services Committee. Call and leave a message for your representative to support and pass HB 1372 for the Children & Family Services Committee.

HB 1507 – Relating to temporary assistance for needy families program requirements. (OPPOSE)

This bill requires an applicant for TANF who is not currently enrolled in an educational institution to prove that she/he has a high school diploma or equivalent to qualify for benefits. HB 1507 is scheduled for a public hearing on Thursday, Feb 8 at 1:30 PM in Children and Family Services. Leave a message for the House Children and Family Services Committee to oppose HB 1507.

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 Senator Margarita Prentice, Chair of Committee to put SB 5420 on the Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions Committee agenda for a vote.

HB 1520 – 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 with a matched amount from the employer at the rate of 1 cent per hour worked per week up to a maximum of forty hours per week. This is the House version of SB 5420. House Commerce and Labor Committee has scheduled a public hearing for Feb 14 at 10:00 AM. Calls are needed to the House Commerce and Labor Committee to support the HB 1185 and pass it out of committee. Call the hotline and leave a message for Representatives Steve Conway & Jim Clements, co-chairs, to put HB 1520 on House Commerce & Labor Committee agenda to pass out of committee.

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 statewide 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 passed out of the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee and is now in the Rules Committee. 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 had a public hearing on February 14. Call and leave a message for members of the Commerce & Labor committee to pass HB 1248.

SB 5528 - Requiring policies prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and bullying on school grounds and at school activities. (SUPPORT) This bill requires schools to develop policies to prohibit harassment, intimidation, and bullying on school grounds and at school activities. SB 5528 has had a public hearing in the Senate Education Committee and is ready for an executive session. We expect this bill to pass out of committee this week. Call your senator and encourage support for SB 5528 and that it pass out of committee.

HB 1818 – Improving Student Safety (SUPPORT) Declares an intent to improve the student learning environment by helping school districts implement comprehensive safe school plans that assist schools in providing a safe learning environment. This is the House version of 5528. This bill has had its public hearing and is ready for an executive session. Call your representative to support HB 1818.

SB 5402 - Sentencing of hate crimes. (SUPPORT) SB 5402 adds hate crimes to the list of aggravating circumstances that can be used to impose an exceptional sentence for convicted offenders. Hate crimes are defined as those crimes that 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 and had a public hearing on February 5th. We expect this to pass out of committee this week. Call your senator to support and pass SB 5402 out of committee.

HB 1663 – Sentencing of hate crimes. (SUPPORT) This is the house version of SB 5402. It is currently in House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee. HB 1663 and had a public hearing on Friday, Feb 16th. Call and leave a message for the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee to support and pass HB 1663.

SB 5451 - Relating to actions for crimes of violence motivated by gender (SUPPORT) – See Priority Message of the Week above

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) SB 5236 is in the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee and has had its public hearing.

SB 5029 Relating to nonparental visitation rights. (SUPPORT WITH MODIFICATIONS) 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 require the 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.

HB 2065 Relating to petitions for visitation for persons related to the child or acting in a parental role. (SUPPORT) This bill is in the House Judiciary Committee. This bill is similar to SB 5029. HB 2065 is the better of the two bills and provides better protections. It revises the standards for petitions for visitation for persons related to the child or acting in a parental role. Call your representative and the Judiciary committee to support and pass HB 2065 out of committee.

HB 1524 Relating to the jurisdiction of the Washington human rights commission (SUPPORT) This bill Expands the jurisdiction of the human rights commission to include sexual orientation discrimination. HB 1524 had a public hearing in House Judiciary on February 8th. Call your representative to support HB 1524.

SB 5232 Relating to the eligibility of individuals for public employees' benefits board insurance benefits (OPPOSE) If passed, this bill would put a referendum on the November 2001 ballot to reverse the December 2000 Public Employee's Benefit Board decision to extend benefits to the domestic partners of state employees. The bill also declares an intent that eligibility for these benefits is limited to the lawful spouse and dependent children of state employees only. This bill was written as a referendum because the sponsors know the Governor Locke would veto it. Bill is in Ways and Means. Call your senator to oppose SB 5232.