

WA State NOW - Legislative Update March 3, 2001

Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

Legislative Calendar – Due to last Wednesday’s Earthquake, there is expected to be a slight adjustment in some of the cutoff dates.

In the Senate - It is expected that cut-off for policy committees will be Monday, March 5 for those committees which were originally scheduled on Wednesday after the quake. The cut-off for bills to pass out of the Senate Ways & Means Committee committees will be most likely extended to Thursday, March 8th.

In the House – the deadline for passage out of the policy committee was Tuesday, February 27th. Any House bill not out of the original policy committee is now dead. The cut-off date for House bills to pass out of the House Appropriations Committee will most likely be extended to Thursday, March 8th.

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

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. Its now on the senate floor calendar and is ready for a vote. Call your senator to support SB 5189 to allow victims of domestic violence or stalking to qualify for unemployment.

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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

SB 5186 Modifying department of social and health services' family planning services (SUPPORT). 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 on the Senate floor calendar and can be voted on at any time. Call your Senator to support SB 5186 and to pass it out of the Senate and on to the House.

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 Appropriations and on to the Rules Committee.

SB 5820 – Relating to medical assistance for breast and cervical cancer treatment for low-income women. (SUPPORT) This bill is the Senate version of SHB 1058. It has passed out of the Health & Long Term Care Committee and has had a public hearing on in Senate Ways and Means. Call your Senator and request support to move SB5820 out of Ways and Means and on to the Rules 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 and is on the Senate calendar ready for a vote. **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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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 in the House Children & Family Services Committee. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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 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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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 had a public hearing in Senate Ways and Means on Wednesday, February 21st. Call your senator to support SSB 5201 and move it out of the Ways and Means Committee and onto the Rules Committee for a vote by the entire Senate.

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 House Children and Family Services Committee. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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 had its public hearing in Children and Family Services. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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. It had a public hearing on Monday, February 26. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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 had a public hearing. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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) See Priority Message of the Week.

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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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 passed out of the Senate Education Committee and is now in Senate Rules. Call your senator and encourage support for SB 5528.

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 in the House Education Committee. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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.

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. It's expected to come out of committee next week and go to Ways & Means. Has passed out of committee and is in Senate Rules.

SB 5029 Relating to nonparental visitation rights. (SUPPORT WITH MODIFICATIONS) This bill was heard in the Senate Judiciary. 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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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. **This bill did not pass out of committee and is dead.**

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.