

WA State NOW - Legislative Update April 3, 2001

Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

Legislative Calendar – In order for any bill to be currently alive, it must have passed out of all committees and be in the Rules Committee of the opposite house from the origin. All bills other than budget must pass out of the opposite house by Friday, April 13th. After this date the only bills that can still be heard by the legislature are the budget and bills that passed each house but in different versions. The session ends on Sunday, April 22nd.

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

ESSB 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. SSB 5528 has passed out of the Senate and is now in the House Education Committee. ESSB 5528 has had a public hearing in the House Education Committee and is ready for an executive session. Negotiations are going on between the Republicans, Democrats and advocates to see if an agreement can be reached on the bill. If an agreement is reached, then a procedural motion can be made to pull the bill for a vote by the entire House. Call your representatives, especially leadership and urge them to take action on this important bill - ESSB 5528.

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 5186 Modifying department of social and health services' family planning services (SUPPORT). THIS BILL IS DEAD. 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.

2SSB 5820 – 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. SSSB 5820 has passed out of the Senate and is in the House Health Care Committee. Because it is addressed in the Senate Budget, it is still technically alive. Call your Representatives to support 2SSB 5820.

SSB 5416 – Relating to drug affected infants. (BILL NEEDS MODIFICATIONS) THIS BILL IS DEAD. 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. We support the program components of the bill but not the mandatory testing or the conscious clause that allows providers to opt out of the family planning services. SSB 5416 died in the House Children and Family Services Committee.

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

All Family Leave bills are 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) THIS BILL IS DEAD. 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.

ESSB 5528 - Requiring policies prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and bullying on school grounds and at school activities. (SUPPORT) See Priority Message of the Week.

SB 5451 - Relating to actions for crimes of violence motivated by gender (SUPPORT) - THIS BILL IS DEAD. 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.

SSB 5309 – Providing funding for local government criminal justice (SUPPORT). SSB 5309 would increase traffic fines and fees, which are paid into the Public Safety and Education Account. This would make additional funds available for crime victims and sexual assault programs. SSB 5309 is in House Rules. Call your representatives to support SSB 5309 and to pass it out of the House.

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:

SSB 5236 Relating to the safety of newborn children (SUPPORT). THIS BILL IS DEAD. This bill applies to abandoned babies and exempts from criminal liability persons who abandon them into the custody of a qualified person.