

Legislative Update January 21, 2006

Legislative Hotline 1(800) 562-6000

Call to leave a message for your elected officials

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

Contact your Senator and ask them to support HB 2661 which would expand the jurisdiction of the state Human Rights Commission to cover lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals and transgender individuals.

Health care

Establishing minimum labor standards for certain large employers as related to health care services expenditures (FAIR SHARE) – HB 2517 & SB 6356 SUPPORT Tier 1

This bill would require that large employers (with 5000 or more employees) either provide adequate health insurance to their employees OR pay into a fund that would expand access to the state's Basic Health Plan

Status: HB 2517 is in the House Commerce & Labor Committee. Public hearing was held on Jan 19. Bill is eligible for executive session

SB 6356 is in the Senate Labor, Commerce, Research & Development Committee. A public hearing was held on Jan 19. Bill is eligible for executive session

Action: Leave a message for the House Commerce & Labor Committee and ask them to pass HB 2517 out of committee.

Also leave a message for the Senate Labor, Commerce, Research & Development Committee asking them to support and a pass SB 6356 out of committee.

Granting the insurance commissioner the authority to review and approve individual health benefit plan rates – HB 2499 & SB 6233 SUPPORT Tier 2

This bill is part of the "Fair Share" package of health insurance bills. It would give the Insurance Commissioner the authority to review and approve individual health benefit plan rates.

Status: HB 2499 is in the House Health Care Committee. A public hearing was held on January 17. Bill is eligible for executive session

SB 6233 is in the Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee and is eligible for a public hearing.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Care Health Committee and let them know you support HB 2499

Requiring health carriers to report certain information – HB 2500 & SB 6232 SUPPORT Tier 2

This bill is part of the "Fair Share" package of health insurance bills. It requires that each health care coverage provider provide data annually to the insurance commissioner for 5 categories of recipients (total, individual contracts, small group contracts, large group contracts, & government contracts). The insurance commissioner on a searchable web site will then make this data available to the public.

Status: HB 2500 is in the House Health Care Committee. A public hearing was held on January 20. Bill is eligible for executive session

SB 6232 has passed out of the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee. SB 6232 is now in the Rules Committee and is eligible to be passes to the floor of the Senate for passage.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Health Care Committee and let them know that you support HB 2500.

Call and leave a message for your Senator and let them know that you support SB 6232

**Requiring surveys of health professions work force supply and demographics. – SB 6193
SUPPORT Tier 2**

This bill is based on recommendations from the Joint Select Committee on Health Disparities established by the 2004 legislature, which looked at disparate health impacts on persons of color, and to a lesser extent on women. The committee identified a need to develop a workforce that is representative of the diversity of our state's population. In order to accomplish this relevant and accurate data on health care professionals, students in health care professions, and recipients of health care services must first be collected. This bill requires a voluntary, confidential survey of health care providers and students enrolled in training programs to collect at a minimum data related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, area of practice, zip code of practice location, years in practice, and type of facility where a provider practices.

Status: SB 6193 has passed out of the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee and is now in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Ways & Means Committee and ask them to pass SB 6193 out of committee.

Requiring multicultural education for health professions – SB 6194 SUPPORT Tier 2

This bill was also based on recommendations from the Joint Select Committee on Health Disparities. A multi-cultural health course would be required as part of basic education preparation for programs with a curriculum for training health professionals. Training in multi-cultural health would be included as part of continuing education programs required for health professionals.

Status: SB 6194 is in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee. Public Hearing was held on January 12. Bill is eligible for executive session.

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee and ask them to pass SB 6194 out of committee.

Requiring health impact assessments – SB 6195 SUPPORT Tier 2

This bill was also based on recommendations from the Joint Select Committee on Health Disparities. This bill requires a systematic review a legislative or budgetary proposal or other public policy, program, or practice to determine the extent to which such proposal, policy, program, or practice improves or exacerbates health disparities. Such an assessment can be initiated by any member of the legislature or a member of Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities

Status: SB 6195 is in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee. Public Hearing was held on January 12. Bill is eligible for executive session

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee and ask them to pass SB 6195 out of committee.

Creating the governor's interagency council on health disparities – SB 6197 SUPPORT Tier 2

This bill is related to SB 6195 and creates the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. The Council must design an action plan to eliminate health disparities in Washington State by 2012 and present progress reports to the Legislature every two years beginning on January 15, 2008, until completion of the plan in 2012.

Status: SB 6197 is in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee. Public Hearing was held on January 12. Bill is eligible for executive session

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee and ask them to pass SB 6197 out of committee.

Modifying basic health plan preexisting condition limitation requirements - HB 2455 MONITOR

If the Basic Health Care Plan rules include a pre-existing condition limitation, the rule must allow the enrollee to credit a period of continued participation in a community based program established to provide care for uninsured individuals.

Status: HB 2455 is in the House Health Care Committee and had a public hearing on January 19. It is now eligible for an executive session

Action:

Regulating Body Piercing – HB 2335 MONITOR

This bill requires the Secretary of Health to establish sterilization and disease prevention standards for body art and body piercing procedures.

Status: SHB 2335 has passes out of the House Health Care Committee and is in the Rules Committee and is eligible for a vote by the House.

Action:

Reproductive Rights

Insuring victims of crimes – HB2481 SUPPORT Tier 1

HB 2481 is designed to try to protect businesses, such as the Olympia women’s clinic, from being unable to acquire reasonably priced liability insurance because they have been victimized by a crime, such as arson.

Status: HB 2481 was heard in the House Financial Institutions committee on January 19th. Bill is eligible for executive session.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Financial Institutions Committee and let them know that you support HB 2481.

Equal Protection Under the Law

Expand the jurisdiction of the state Human Rights Commission to cover lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals and transgender individuals – HB 2661 Tier 1

This bill would expand the jurisdiction the state Human Rights Commission to include discrimination due to an individual’s sexual orientation.

Status: HB 2661 has passed the house and is now in the Senate. It is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Financial Institutions, Housing & Consumer Protection committee on Tuesday 24 January at 3:30 PM. HB 2661 is expected to be the first bill heard during that meeting,

Action: Call, email or write your own Senator and ask them to vote yes on HB 2661!

Revising the privilege for sexual assault advocates - HB 2454 & SB 6479 SUPPORT Tier 2

HB 2454 will clarify that the privileged communication between a sexual assault victim and her sexual assault program advocate is protected when the advocate is communicating with the victim NOT just when the victim is communicating to the advocate

Status: HB 2454 was heard in the House Judiciary Committee on January 18th. Bill is eligible for executive session.

SB 6479 was heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee and is eligible for an executive session.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Judiciary Committee to ask that they vote in favor of HB 2454.

Call and leave a message for the Senate Judiciary Committee to ask that they vote in favor of SB 6479.

Extending retirement benefits to domestic partners – SB 6218 Tier 2

This bill extends retirement benefits to domestic partners of the judiciary in Washington State.

Status: SB 6218 is in the Senate Ways and Means Committee & is eligible for a public hearing.

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Ways & Means Committee and let them know that you support SB 6218.

Creating sexual assault protection orders – HB 2576 & SB 6478 SUPPORT Tier 2

This bill allows for a sexual assault protection order to be filed by a victim of sexual assault or on behalf of a minor child, vulnerable adult or any other adult who because of age, disability or health or inaccessibility cannot file for his or her own protection order. This would create a useable protection order for victims of stranger rape and would not require that the individual have been prosecuted.

Status: HB 2576 was heard in the House Judiciary Committee on January 18th. Bill is eligible for executive session.

SB 6478 was heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee on January 17. The bill is eligible for an executive session.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Judiciary Committee and ask that they vote YES on HB 2576.

Call and leave a message for the Senate Judiciary Committee and ask that they vote YES on SB 6478.

Urging adoption of a treaty fighting discrimination against women. – HJM 4034 SUPPORT

This bill requests that President Bush and the Secretary of State place the United Nations “*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*” in the highest category of priority in order to accelerate the treaty's ratification by the Senate. It also urges the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee to pass this treaty favorably out of Committee and by the full Senate.

Status: HJM 4034 is in the House Judiciary Committee and is scheduled for a hearing on Wednesday, January 25 at 1:30.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Judiciary Committee and let them know that you support HJM 4034

Economic Equity

Modifying the Family and Medical Leave - SB 6185 & HB 2392 SUPPORT Tier 1

This bill would re-institute a state law on family leave to insure our state can maintain a strong benefit, even if the federal administration follows through with their proposed rule changes that would make utilizing this unpaid leave benefit much more difficult. The bill also expands the number of employers covered by applying it to those who employ 25 or more (the current law covers only those with 50 or more employees). In addition, the bill extends the right to take unpaid family leave to domestic partners.

Status: SB 6185 was heard in the Senate Labor, Commerce, Research, & Development Committee on Thursday January 12. It is now eligible for executive session

HB 2392 was heard in the House Commerce & Labor Committee on January 16. Bill is eligible for executive session.

Action: Leave a message for the House Commerce & Labor committee and ask them to support HB 2392 Modifying the Family and Medical Leave Act and move this bill out of committee as soon as possible. We need to have it passed and in law BEFORE the federal rule changes are made.

Requiring Living Wages on Public Contracts – HB 1527 SUPPORT Tier 2

This bill requires state contractors and subcontractors to pay their employees a living wage rate. It specifies that the living wage rate is \$10 per hour if health benefits are provided, or \$11.50 per hour if health benefits are not provided. It also requires that the living wage rate be adjusted annually for inflation.

Status: A Public Hearing in the House Commerce & Labor Committee was held on Wednesday, January 11. The bill is now eligible for an executive session.

Action: Contact your member on the House Commerce and Labor Committee and ask them to support and vote HB 1527 out of committee.

Providing Collective Bargaining for Family Child Care Providers – HB 2353 SUPPORT Tier 2

Declares that the purpose of this act is to improve access to and the quality of family childcare services. It also declares that in order to ensure that children receive the highest quality services from these providers, it is necessary to achieve and maintain a stable, well-trained work force.

To accomplish these goals, this bill would allow family childcare providers and licensees to have a voice in the development of childcare assistance and other programs through collective bargaining.

Status: This bill is in the House Commerce & Labor Committee and had a hearing on January 16. Bill is eligible for executive session

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Commerce & Labor Committee and tell them that you support passage of HB 2353.

Establishing work groups to periodically review and update the child support schedule – HB 2462 SUPPORT with some concerns Tier 2

This bill requires that every four years starting in 2008 that the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee or other committee designated by the legislature shall review and report on the child support schedule. The bill also requires that the Division of Child Support convene a work group to examine current laws, administrative rules, & practices regarding child support.

NOW supports the every four-year review but has some concerns with the 2nd part of the bill as it goes much further than the federal requirement for the review of the schedule itself.

Status: HB 2462 had a public hearing in the House Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee. Bill is scheduled for executive session on Tuesday, January 24.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee and let them know that you support the review of the child support schedule every 4 years as required in HB 2462 but that you also have concerns about the other requirements of the bill.

Expanding parenting provisions in the WorkFirst program – SB 6224 SUPPORT

This bill declares that work activity for the state's WorkFirst program shall include satisfactory participation in instruction or training which has the purpose of improving parenting skills or child well being.

Status: This bill is in the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee and is eligible for a public hearing.

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee and let them know you support SB 6224

Providing campaign contribution limits for candidates for judicial office – SB 6226 SUPPORT

This bill sets contribution limitations for candidates for judicial office. Currently the state has no contribution limitation for any candidate running for a judicial office including the state's Supreme Court.

Status: SB 6226 is in the Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee and is scheduled for a public hearing on Monday, January 23.

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee and let

them know that you support SB 6226.

Family Law

Encouraging shared parental responsibility in child custody arrangements – SB 6270 OPPOSE

This bill encourages shared parental responsibility in child custody arrangements. It would create a presumption that shared parenting was in the best interest of the child, change factors that are currently weighted regarding historical care taking roles and set aside state dollars to create pilots.

Status: SB 6270 is currently in the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee. It is scheduled for a public hearing on Thursday, January 26.

Action: Call and leave a message for the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee and tell them to vote NO on SB 6270.

Concerning visitation rights for grandparents – HB 2711

This bill creates an avenue for grandparents to seek visitation rights.

The state and national courts have been clear that the reasons for over ruling a parents rights in granting visitation to a third party must be based on compelling reasons (such as the person having acted in parental capacity and harm to the child if visitation is not granted) NOT just a particular legal relationship, such as grandparents

Status: HB 2711 is currently in the House Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee. It is scheduled for a public hearing on Friday, January 27.

Action: Call and leave a message for the House Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee and let them know that 2711 should be amended to provide avenues for all persons who can meet the Supreme Court standards to seek visitation (including same sex partners!)