

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2663

C 175 L 04

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Requiring use of respectful language in the Revised Code of Washington regarding individuals with disabilities.

Sponsors: By Representatives Haigh, Armstrong, McCoy, Holmquist, O'Brien, Boldt, Morrell, Jarrett, Wallace, Delvin, Moeller, Priest, Darneille, Conway, D. Simpson, Kagi, Hunter, Clements, Wood, Sullivan, Dickerson, G. Simpson, Hunt, Skinner, Cody, Ormsby, Chase, Hankins, Pettigrew, Kenney, Tom, Nixon, Kessler, Miloscia, Linville, Romero, Roach and Hudgins.

House Committee on State Government
Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care

Background:

The Revised Code of Washington and the Washington Administrative Code both contain extensive references to various individuals with disabilities. With the exception of language used as a specific term of art for purposes of the criminal code and criminal sentencing, these references are generally not essential to describing the circumstances of the particular individual.

In some statutes, "mentally retarded" is used as a term of art and is specifically defined in the statute addressing sentencing for aggravated murder. Another chapter discusses developmental disabilities and specifically defines "developmental disabilities." This definition is also used in the chapter concerning procedures for the criminally insane.

Most recent legislation has adopted terms that emphasize the individuality of people, no matter what their physical characteristics. Older legislative language utilized terms appropriate to the moment, some of which are neither appropriate nor specifically necessary for the law.

Summary:

The Code Reviser is directed to avoid references to certain words that, frequently used to describe individuals with disabilities. The specific terms are disabled, developmentally disabled, mentally disabled, mentally ill, mentally retarded, handicapped, cripple, and crippled.

These terms are to be avoided in future laws as well as to be replaced in existing statutes as those statutes are amended by law. The replacement terms are individuals with disabilities, individuals with developmental disabilities, individuals with mental disabilities, individuals with mental illness, and individuals with mental retardation.

Agency orders must also reflect the changes in language. Agencies must use respectful language in creating new rules or amending old rules.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	95	0
Senate	48	0

Effective: June 10, 2004