

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5063

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Affairs

Title: An act relating to removing gender references.

Brief Description: Removing gender references.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Fairley, Rockefeller, Kline, Schoesler, Keiser, Parlette, Kauffman, Fraser and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 3/16/07, 3/20/07 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Replaces references to gender in statute with gender neutral terms.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Green, McDermott and Ormsby.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member and Kretz.

Staff: Colleen Kerr (786-7168).

Background:

Since 1983, state law has required that all statutes be written in gender-neutral terms unless the law in question is intentionally gender specific.

Summary of Amended Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Technical changes are made throughout the statute to broaden the use of gender neutral terms. For example, references to "firemen" are changed to "firefighters" and references to "policemen" are changed to "police officers."

The Code Reviser must recommend legislation correcting gender-specific references in all existing statutes by December 1, 2007, and advise the Legislature of gender-specific language changes that would result in substantive changes to law.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amendment removes the change from warehousemen to warehouse workers. Warehousemen is a defined term in Chapter 22.09 RCW that means a person who owns, operates, or controls a warehouse in the state. It does not refer to a person who works in a warehouse; changing the term to warehouse workers would change the policy and effect of the bill.

Statutory references from "materialmen" are changed to the gender neutral "material supplier."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 21, 2007.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The changes recommended in the bill reflect the make-up of the state's public safety officers. Many of the state's female firefighters and police officers who were some of the first women in their respective fields remember the terms "firemen" and "policemen" being used as taunts against them by male firefighters and police officers to indicate that these women did not belong. The terminology changes made in the bill are more inclusive rather than exclusive, and are more representative of the people serving in these positions today. The change is a great sign of respect for these women in Washington.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.