

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6095

As Passed House:
February 29, 2012

Title: An act relating to making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

Brief Description: Making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

Sponsors: Senator Kohl-Welles; by request of Statute Law Committee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 2/9/12, 2/20/12 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/29/12, 66-32.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes gender-specific terms to gender-neutral terms in several Titles of the Revised Code of Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Pedersen, Chair; Goodman, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Hansen, Kirby, Nealey, Orwall, Rivers and Roberts.

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

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

Since 1983 state law requires that all statutes must be written in gender-neutral terms unless a specification of gender is intended. In 2007 the Legislature passed Engrossed Senate Bill 5063, an act relating to removing gender references. The Legislature directed the Code Reviser, in consultation with the Statute Law Committee, to implement a plan to correct

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gender-specific references throughout the entire Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The Code Reviser must make annual legislative recommendations to make the RCW gender-neutral by June 30, 2015.

Summary of Bill:

Gender-specific terms and references are made gender-neutral in several Titles of the RCW. For example, chairman is changed to chair, ranchman is changed to rancher, clergyman is changed to member of the clergy, policeman is changed to police officer, and the phrase "his or her" is used. In a few sections, other technical changes are made to correct cross-references, misspellings, and grammatical errors, and to update terminology.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This is a project that has been going on for five years. The Code Reviser asked for approximately eight years to make all of the changes, but the project will likely be finished next year. Most of the work on this is done during slow times or during the interim after the code has been updated. There are 3,000 sections in the code that have gender-specific references that need to be updated, mostly changing "he" to "he or she." Gender-neutral terminology has been used since 1983, so these bills are fixing older references. The Washington Supreme Court regards these changes as truly technical, so the corrections do not even have to match a bill's title. Thus, these issues can be addressed whenever they arise.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Kyle Thiessen, Office of the Code Reviser.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.