

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5045

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection, January 20, 2011

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

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

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Conway, Holmquist Newbry, Keiser, Kline, King and Chase;
by request of Statute Law Committee.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection: 1/18/11, 1/20/11 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & CONSUMER PROTECTION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kohl-Welles, Chair; Conway, Vice Chair; Holmquist Newbry, Ranking Minority Member; King, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hewitt, Keiser and Kline.

Staff: Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

Background: Since 1983 state law requires that all statutes be written in gender-neutral terms, unless a specification of gender is intended. In 2007 the Legislature passed ESB 5063, an act relating to removing gender references. The act changed gender-specific terms to gender-neutral terms in several chapters of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), including those chapters dealing with firefighters, police officers, bondspersons, and material suppliers. The Legislature directed the Code Reviser, in consultation with the Statute Law Committee, to develop and implement a plan to correct gender-specific references in the entire RCW. The Code Reviser must make annual legislative recommendations to make the RCW completely 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, references to man or men are changed to person or persons, councilman is changed to councilmember, and chairman is changed to chair. Titles relating to local and state government and insurance are included and are made gender-neutral throughout. Other code sections are included, such as sections that contain business regulations, to modify specific references to man or men.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We are over halfway through the Code. We may be able to finish this project in three more years. Since 1983 the Statute Law Committee has the directive to change terms to gender neutral terms. Some of the sections amended in this bill have been on the books since the 1800s. The first couple of sections take care of the Statute Law Committee statutes. At the end of the bill we made sure the references to warehousemen is corrected to warehouse operator. Since 1983 the Code Revisers Office tries to send out bills with gender neutral terms. By doing this bill during the interim, we are not using any extra staff time. If we tried to fix all 3000 sections at one time, we would have to print extra session laws and it would cost more money.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Kyle Thiessen, Statute Law Committee.