



WASHINGTON STATE WOMEN'S COUNCIL

The Washington State Women's Council was established by Executive Order on October 20, 1971, charged with the function of considering "appropriate questions pertaining to the rights and needs of women in contemporary America and to make recommendations to the Governor and state agencies with respect to desirable changes in program and law."

Facing the 1972 extraordinary legislative session, the Council met to decide upon legislative priorities. Two measures were unanimously selected as Women's Council request bills during the 1972 session: a community property bill, which would equalize management powers between spouses; and a state Equal Rights Amendment, which would guarantee that women and men would enjoy equality of rights and responsibilities "under the law." Both measures passed.

The subsequent ratification by Washington citizens of HJR 61, the state Equal Rights Amendment, prompted the Women's Council to request a state Equal Rights Amendment implementation bill during the 1973 legislative session. This harmonized numerous Washington statutes with the Equal Rights Amendment. In addition to the implementation bill, the Women's Council sought the ratification of the federal Equal Rights Amendment in the 1973 session, which ultimately made Washington the 30th state to ratify the 27th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

In addition to the two Equal Rights Amendment measures, the Women's Council requested H.B. 404 in 1973, which expands the Washington State Law Against Discrimination in the following ways: (1) It adds "sex" and "marital status" to existing categories. In *employment* it is an unfair practice for any employer of eight or more persons to discriminate against anyone because of marital status, as well as the already-existing categories of sex, age, race, creed, color, or national origin, or to use any such designation in advertisements or application forms for employment, except under very limited circumstances as provided for in the law and the Human Rights Commission's rules. In *real estate* it is an unfair practice for any person or agent to discriminate because

of sex and marital status, in addition to the already existing categories of race, creed, color, or national origin, or to express any such limitation, specification or discrimination in published statements, advertisement, or signs. (2) H.B. 404 creates two new categories. In *insurance* it is an unfair practice for any person or agent to fail or refuse to issue or renew insurance to anyone because of sex or marital status, race, creed, color, or national origin. In *credit* it is an unfair practice for any person or agent to (a) deny credit, (b) increase charges or collateral, (c) restrict the amount or use of credit, or (d) attempt to do any of these things because of sex, marital status, race, creed, color, or national origin, or to require such designations (except marital status) on any document concerning an application for credit. Nothing in this law, however, prohibits consideration of the applicant's credit history or the application of the community property law to the individual case. (3) H.B. 404 authorizes two new enforcement procedures. In addition to filing a complaint with the State Human Rights Commission, one can bring a civil suit in court or request action by the Attorney General's office when sex discrimination occurs in trade or commerce.

All three Women's Council request bills passed in the 1973 session.

In the legislative arena the Washington State Women's Council stands second to none in the nation. In two areas, especially, it continually responds to requests for copies of legislation. (1) Washington is ahead of all other states in implementing a state Equal Rights Amendment. (2) Washington leads other states in credit legislation.

While the primary thrust of Women's Council activity has been in the legislative realm, it has certainly not been limited to this. In the summer of 1973 a series of educational hearings were sponsored by the Women's Council in the Tri-Cities, Vancouver, Bellingham, Spokane, Yakima, and Tacoma. These were meant to accomplish a dual purpose: to educate citizens regarding laws affecting women, and to hold hearings which would help the Council discover the concerns of women in various geographical areas of the State. The Women's Council is reviewing and evaluating all of these concerns, and using the data to determine its priorities for future activities.

Additional activities include co-sponsoring the Second Annual Community Conference on Child Care, "The New Federalism and Children"; sponsoring a state-wide legislative conference in the House Chambers, involving legislators, lobbyists, and the press; contacting all state newspapers containing sexigrated help-wanted ads, and urging them to comply with the law; testifying before numerous boards and commissions on a variety of topics, including maternity benefits before the Human Rights Commission, changes in salary ranges before the State Personnel Board, discriminatory life insurance policies in state agencies before the Insurance Board, assisting in the establishment of the Child Development Planning Project; promoting affirmative action in state government in a variety of ways, including a Council

member's serving on the Governor's Affirmative Action Evaluation and Review Committee.

Additional developments with which the Women's Council is involved will hopefully be accomplished by the time of this publication. Significant among these is the development of new job classifications by Public Service Careers to be adopted by the State Personnel Board. The three proposed paraprofessional series are designed to provide promotional opportunities into administrative and supervisory positions traditionally not available to women, and represent the first such "bridge" between clerical and professional positions in the nation.

Other activities in process include supporting the submission to the State Personnel Board of suggested changes in job titles to eliminate connotations of sex, which have frequently acted as a barrier to job opportunities by automatically screening out many women candidates. Additionally, the Women's Council has worked with the Asian American Advisory Council to eliminate the "traditional" six foot height requirement for state troopers, emphasizing that requirements be job-related, and not have a disparate effect on any sex or race.

In the summer of 1973 the Women's Council launched a campaign to boost the percentage of women appointed

to statutory boards and commissions by creating a Roster of Qualified Women. From this Roster eligible women will be recommended to the Governor immediately when an appointment is to be made. Currently women hold fewer than 15% of these positions, and more than 60% of these statutory bodies have no female members.

From its inception in 1971 until the end of the biennium in June, 1973, the Women's Council was funded from the Governor's Emergency Fund for operational expenses, with staff salaries provided through federal Emergency Employment Act monies. The 1973 legislature allocated \$8,000 to the Women's Council for expenditures from July, 1973 through January, 1974. The legislature stipulated that additional funding would be contingent upon the Council's becoming a statutory body. At the time of this writing the Council has submitted a bill to the legislature, H.B. 1059, which, if passed, would make the Women's Council a statutory body.

Members of the Women's Council realize that attaining legal equality is only the first step toward the achievement of practical equality. The Council's ongoing efforts, based upon the concerns expressed by women all over the State, will continue to be aimed at achieving factual as well as theoretical equality between women and men.