

Your City, Seattle

Executive Department -- Office of Women's Rights
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Because of the Initiative 13 ballot issue this year, the Office of Women's Rights has received many inquiries about Seattle's anti-discrimination Ordinances, sexual orientation protections, and the services provided by the Office. By state law, the OWR can neither promote nor oppose any ballot issue and the Office has no position on Initiative 13. We have prepared this information sheet to answer factual questions.

WHAT WILL INITIATIVE 13 DO?

Initiative 13 would repeal the existing Seattle Fair Employment Practices Ordinance (No. 102562, as amended) and the Seattle Open Housing Ordinance (No. 104839, as amended). It would then enact a new Ordinance entitled "The Seattle Fair Housing and Employment Practices Ordinance". This new Ordinance would be similar to the repealed Ordinances except that:

1. Sexual orientation protection eliminated. It would eliminate current protection against discrimination on sexual orientation in housing and employment opportunities within Seattle.
2. OWR enforcement removed. Sexual orientation discrimination would no longer be unlawful and OWR enforcement powers over sex and marital status discrimination would be removed and shifted to another agency, the Seattle Human Rights Department. Currently, OWR is empowered to receive and investigate discrimination complaints based on a person's sex, marital status or sexual orientation. If the Office finds that discrimination occurred, it can require employers and landlords to stop unlawful practices and to provide compensation to persons who have suffered from discrimination.
3. Prohibits future sexual orientation protection. It would create a prohibition against any City Official enacting a policy, program or office which would give minority-type status or protection to persons based upon their sexual orientation (Initiative 13, Section 10).

IF INITIATIVE 13 PASSES, WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECT ON THE OWR?

The OWR consists of three units: Enforcement, Program Development and Affirmative Action. The Enforcement Unit enforces the City Ordinances against discrimination. The Initiative would eliminate all protections against sexual orientation discrimination. The OWR Enforcement Unit would also be eliminated; its sex and marital status enforcement powers would be moved to the City's Human Rights Department, which already has a large number of cases filed on a variety of other bases (race, religion, color, creed, national origin, political ideology, age and handicap).

The Office would retain its Program Development and Affirmative Action units, responsible respectively for developing special programs to meet the needs of

women in our community, and for implementing the City's Affirmative Action program for women. These responsibilities are mandated under City Ordinance and by Mayoral Executive Order.

WHAT SPECIFIC SERVICES AND PROGRAMS ARE PROVIDED FOR WOMEN AT OWR?

In addition to enforcing City Ordinances prohibiting discrimination in housing and employment on the basis of sex, marital status and sexual orientation, OWR has two major missions: Program Development and Affirmative Action.

Program Development:

- o Conducts community outreach and education about women's rights and issues, including a speaker's bureau.
- o Implements the Women-Owned Business Program established by Mayor's Executive Order by identifying women-owned businesses in Seattle and assisting firms in obtaining City contracts. OWR is co-sponsor of the Women and Business '78 conference to be held on October 9 and 10 which will provide technical training to female business owners, managers and those interested in starting a business.
- o Sponsors workshops for City women on employment issues such as career assessment, upward job mobility and leadership training.
- o Provides staff support to the Seattle Women's Commission (SWC). The SWC acts in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and City Council and is responsible for developing programs to assure full and equal participation of women in the Seattle community.

Affirmative Action:

- o Helps City Departments to achieve their goals for hiring and promoting women into City jobs.
- o Monitors hiring to ensure that women are adequately represented in the City's workforce. Maintains up-to-date statistics regarding the status of women in City government.
- o Develops special training programs and recruitment procedures for women in non-traditional jobs, including management jobs.
- o Conducts sensitivity/human relations training for City Departments.
- o Works with private contractors doing business with the City to increase the number of women hired on contracts awarded by the City.

WHEN AND WHY WAS OWR CREATED? WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF ITS ACHIEVEMENTS?

OWR began on January 1, 1971, as the Women's Division of the Office of Human Resources, with the responsibility of providing staff support to the 15-member Seattle Women's Commission, a body advisory to the Mayor and City Council. In late 1972, the City Council passed an ordinance which created the OWR as a separate entity within the Executive Department, responsible for fulfilling a broad variety of functions within City government and the community. This was done in response to a need perceived and articulated by many women in Seattle who believed that women in our community should have an independent agency to serve their particular needs.

Achievements of the Office have included:

- o Secured remedies for victims of sex, marital status or sexual orientation discrimination in 145 cases, including total monetary awards of over \$155,000.
- o Received national attention for its success in increasing the number of women working on private contracts awarded by the City. For example, women tripled their share of well-paid jobs on construction projects between 1976 and 1977 - from 3% to 9% of the total.
- o National leadership role in providing equal opportunity for women-owned business enterprises. OWR administers a precedent-setting program to assist female business owners to acquire City contract awards.
- o Concerted efforts to increase the number of women in City government, resulting in a 19% increase in the representation of women in the City's workforce during 1977-78.
- o Increased numbers of women in non-traditional, high-paying jobs by conducting innovative recruitment programs and promoting the hiring of women into jobs such as firefighter, police officer, laborer, gardener and electrical lineworker.
- o Community outreach through providing speakers and resource material to organizations and individuals about women's rights in housing, employment, credit and insurance.