



City of Seattle

Mike McGinn, Mayor

Seattle Office for Civil Rights

Julie Nelson, Director

For Immediate Release:

January 24, 2011

Contact: Nolan Lim
Enforcement Manager
206-684-0207

Elliott Bronstein
Public Information Coordinator
206-684-4507

Seattle City Council approves updates to civil rights code

Seattle City Council has approved amendments to Seattle's civil rights ordinances that clarify several definitions and make the City's code consistent with state and federal law.

The update brings consistency between Seattle's Municipal Code and state and federal laws, such as the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, adds protections based on genetic information, clarifies the definition of a service animal and expands the statute of limitations for filing housing cases. The legislation now goes to the Mayor, who will sign it into law.

"These changes bring Seattle's civil rights ordinance into closer alignment with federal and state law," said Councilmember Bruce Harrell, who chairs the Energy, Technology and Civil Rights Committee. "It also recognizes the need to provide protection for people in emerging civil rights arenas such as the use of service animals by people with disabilities and genetic information in employment situations."

The amendments approved by Council:

- Update the City's definition of "disability" to conform with current Washington state law;
- Simplifies the definition of "service animal" to make it easier to understand, as well as to align with the federal definition used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD);
- Include "pregnancy" as part of sex discrimination to comply with the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act;
- Extend the statute of limitations for HUD cases to one year to be equivalent to the federal Fair Housing Act;
- Clarify the definition of "reasonable accommodation" in employment discrimination;
- Incorporate the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act's standard for discrimination in compensation in employment;
- Include genetic information in employment discrimination to incorporate protections included in the federal Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act.

"These updates bring greater simplicity and clarity to our current laws for businesses, housing providers and the community," said Julie Nelson, director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. "With these changes, Seattle has strengthened our protection of the fundamental civil rights of people who live, work and visit our city."

810 Third Avenue, Suite 750, Seattle, WA 98104-1627

Tel: (206) 684-4500, Fax: (206) 684-0332, TYY (206) 684-4503, website <http://www.cityofseattle.net/civilrights/>
An equal opportunity - affirmative action employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities provided upon request.

Council's action marks the first major revision of Seattle's civil rights ordinance in more than ten years. The City added protections for "veteran or military status" in 2009. The Seattle Office for Civil Rights filed 225 cases alleging illegal discrimination in 2010, and fielded more than a thousand inquiries from the public on civil rights issues.

Click [here](#) for the full text of the ordinance changes is available or visit www.seattle.gov/civilrights. The authorizing legislation is contained in SMC 1404, 1406, 1408 and 1410.

###