



City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Seattle Office for Civil Rights

Patricia Lally, Director

Date: June 7, 2017

To: Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development, and Arts

From: Seattle Women's Commission, the Seattle Human Rights Commission, the Seattle LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) Commission, and the Seattle Commission for People with disAbilities

Subject: **Commission Expansion Legislation**

Overview

On June 13, 2017, the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development, and Arts Committee will have additional discussions on the Commission Expansion Legislation. The legislation proposes amendments to the Seattle Municipal Code inclusive of:

- The Seattle Human Rights Commission, Seattle LGBTQ Commission, and Seattle Commission for People with disAbilities will expand from 16 to 21 members, along with the Seattle Women's Commission which already is composed of 21 members.
- The four Commissions are requesting more appointing authority, and will each appoint in addition to the one Commission seat they already have, are requesting three additional seats to their respective Commissions. The Mayor and City Council will each appoint eight members for each Commission and one Get Engaged Program Youth Commissioner under the Mayor's Office.

Background

The Seattle Human Rights Commission, Seattle LGBTQ Commission, and Seattle Commission for People with disAbilities, currently all have 16 members. Of these, seven are appointed by the Mayor, seven by City Council, one by the Commission itself, and one member appointed through the Get Engaged Program under the Mayor's Office. The Women's Commission already has 21 members—nine appointed by the Mayor, nine appointed by the City Council, two appointed by the Commission, and one Get Engaged member.

The Commissions believe by adding commission seats, it will increase their operating capacity and allow them to take on more pressing issues facing Seattle's residents and workers. The Commissioners are unpaid volunteers and have limited time in balancing work and other necessities of life. The Commissioners are responsible for running their social media, taking minutes, community engagement, drafting letters of recommendations, policy work and other important tasks. Adding a few more



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members doesn't seem to be asking too much and won't add any additional costs to the city, but will only help the Commissions to be more effective moving forward. This is particularly true given the rapid growth of the city's population and the fact that the SOCR commissions' membership totals have not changed. With this expansion, the Commissions hope to improve on the following:

- **Better plan the commissions' programming activities.** Each of the SOCR Commissions puts on events throughout the year, ranging from panels discussing important contemporary issues to annual events like the SHRC's Human Rights Day. Adding commissioners would allow organizers to delegate tasks and share the extensive work that predicated a successful event.
- **Improve commission skills and diversity by varying recruitment.** With additional seats, the Commissions will be better able to recruit for both its needs and areas for growth. The Commissions would like to better target underrepresented communities, which will be more possible if more seats are opened. In addition, the Commissions will be able to better gauge potential Commissioner skillsets, fill the needs of each Commission and select their policy work. This is particularly true if the requested seats are Commission-selected.
- **Better collaborate with city departments and officials.** The Commissioners' relationships with city departments and officials, including members of the Mayor's Office and City Council, are essential to moving their agendas forward and staying responsive to ever-changing policies. It is the hope of the Commissions that with additional commissioners they will be able to have increased capacity to meet with city officials and stay up-to-date on policies being considered.
- **Accountability to the Community.** The Commissions feel that it is crucial that they work with the Community on issues concerning them. They plan to reach out to the Community to get their input and expertise on issues that affect them. We need to be held accountable for our work and part of that is including the Community that we serve.

This change will only prove to be a positive move in the right direction as we work together with our community to make Seattle inclusive to all its residents by reaching out to the community and letting their voice be heard.

Next Steps

If you have any questions about the Commission Expansion Legislation, please contact Marta Idowu (marta.idowu@seattle.gov / 206.684.4540) or Erika Pablo (erika.pablo@seattle.gov / 206.684.4528).