



City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Seattle Office for Civil Rights

Patricia Lally, Director

Date: May 17, 2017

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

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 May 23, 2017, the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development, and Arts Committee will have its first briefing and discussion on the Commission Expansion Legislation. The legislation proposes amendments to the Seattle Municipal Code, including:

- The Seattle Human Rights Commission, Seattle LGBTQ Commission, and Seattle Commission for People with disAbilities will expand from 15 to 20 members, along with the Seattle Women's Commission which already is composed of 20 members.
- The four Commissions will have more appointing authority, and will each appoint four members to their respective Commissions. The Mayor and City Council will each appoint eight members for each Commission and the Get Engaged Program under the Mayor's Office appoints one youth Commissioner.

Background

Currently, the Seattle Human Rights Commission, Seattle LGBTQ Commission, and Seattle Commission for People with disAbilities have 16 members. Of these, seven are appointed by the Mayor, seven by City Council, one by the Commission itself, and an additional 16th member is 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 a 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 thus, have limited capacities when balancing with the other necessary aspects of life. The Commissioners are responsible for running their social media, taking minutes, community engagement, drafting letters of recommendation and policy, and other important tasks. Adding a few



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more members – without any additional costs to the city – 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 and fill the needs of the commission—such as selecting a policy work on a particular topic. This is particularly true if the additional seats are commission-selected as requested.
- **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.

This change will also allow more Seattle residents and workers to become engaged with city government, and will diversify the voices at Commission meetings.

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).