



# WASHINGTON STATE WOMEN'S COMMISSION

## **Plenary Meeting Minutes | April 14, 2023 9:00pm - 3:30pm | Olympia, WA & Hybrid**

### **Attendees:**

Kelly Wicker - Acting Executive Director  
Rituja Indapure - Commission Chair  
Quinn Dalan - Commission Vice- Chair  
Vicki Lowe - Commission Secretary (Virtual)  
Michelle Merriweather - Commission Past Chair (virtual)  
Chris Kobdish  
Anna Franklin  
Kasi Perreira (Virtual)  
Riddhi Mukhopadhyay  
Ann Simons  
Leah White - WSWC Staff  
Kate Sowers- WSWC Staff  
Isabell Murray - WSWC Policy Fellow  
Deirdre Bissonnette - ICSEW Chair  
Rep. Taylor - WSWC Legislative Advisor (Virtual)  
Rep. Dye - WSWC Legislative Advisor (Virtual)  
Dontae Payne - Governor's Policy Advisor & Commission liaison  
Morgan Wilson - Governor's Federal Policy Advisor (Virtual)

### **Opening:**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Women's Commission was called to order at 9:00 on 04/14/2023 in Helen Sommers Building by Chair Rituja Indapure.

## Approval of Agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved as distributed.

## Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved as distributed.

## Legislative Advisors Updates

### *Rep. Taylor*

- Session Focus on:
  - Housing for low-income individuals
  - Childcare, Childcare, childcare

### Priority Bill updates

- Sponsored a bill on child support passthrough - ESHB 1652
  - Did not make it through policy committee.
- 2SHB 1474 - Creating the covenant homeownership account and program to address the history of housing discrimination due to racially restrictive real estate covenants in Washington state.
  - 4/17 House concurred with Senate Amendments and the bill has passed both chambers.
  - Reparations like bill
  - First in the country

### *Rep. Dye* (joined virtually and audio was hard to hear)

- Men's Commission bill wasn't heard.
- Economics: all people on fixed and low-income; unsuccessful
- Working bipartisan on social issues less successful
- Admires Representative Taylor and respect her work.

## ICSEW Updates

### *Deirdre Bissonnette*

- Celebrating their 60-year anniversary
- Partnered with BRGs on their conference with a focus on racism and exclusion in the women's movement.
- ICSEW conference:
  - October 3-4, virtual
  - In-person networking possibly October 5th
  - 2024 conference will continue to focus on allyship.
- Looking for volunteers to work with the Thurston County food bank - helping with the gardens.
  - See about 250 families daily.
- May 13th Stamp out hunger - the mail carriers will pick up what is left out for donation.
- Legislative Focus:
  - Tracked 19 bills and resolutions.
  - Focuses on Reproductive Freedom, working connection childcare, Female Genital Mutilation, Free School Meals, Protection Order/Hope Cards, Breast Exam Cost Sharing, Working Families' Tax Credit

## **Governor's Office Updates**

### ***Federal Level Updates***

*Morgan Wilson*

- \$15B to account for school districts to be eligible for free/reduced school lunch.
- Comprehensive National Paid Family Medical Leave in the President's plan
  - Expanding the definition for what you can use that for such as
    - Military deployment issues for military spouses
    - Finding a safe space from domestic violence/stalking
- Maternal mortality is included in budgets specifically for rural areas.
- Violence Against Women Act (1 million)
- \$519 million Domestic Violence and focusing on the entire family.
- President Biden's statement of priorities/budget for this year. He is asking Republicans where their budget and priorities are.
  - We are getting close to where the debt ceiling will need to be raised in June; there will be questions about what the values are.
  - If we do see big cuts, that's a huge problem for the state. Congress is in recess for two weeks; when they come back, that's the huge state of play
- Rituja asks which programs are federally funded in Washington state regarding women?
  - We have a lot of organizations that are robustly funded in Washington than most other states, so many will be unaffected by federal budget cuts.
  - Services like Medicaid, however, will be deeply affected.
  - How can we as a Commission advocate and assess the situation?
- Riddhi asks about the Crime Victim cuts on the federal level (30%) as it would impact Child Advocacy Centers, Legal Aid, Domestic Violence support centers, etc.
  - Any advocacy right now is good advocacy; we are looking at the appropriations cycle. We don't have any draft budgets in the house/senate to compare to yet, but we have the President's budget, which is not realistic (more hopeful)
- Mifepristone/Abortion
  - Bottom line: almost certainly will head to the Supreme Court. Two rulings are conflicting, and the Circuit Court hearing only slightly works back the Texas ruling; in the national landscape, we don't see these attacks on blue states stopping.
  - There will be a lot of imaginative leaps in blue states to try to force a hand on working back reproductive rights.
  - This may work to eliminate the filibuster.
  - Be prepared that WA has played good defense and will keep having to.

### ***State Level Updates***

*Dontae Payne*

Senior Policy Advisor for Civil Rights and Racial Justice in the Governor's Office

- Mifepristone Debacle
  - 2 decisions at federal level in conflict with one another

- Department of Corrections has a “more flexible” pharmaceutical license to hold Mifepristone; senior policy advisor for the state, Molly, can answer questions about DOC’s holding.
- HB 1864 sponsor Rep Bateman
- SB in committee
  - Both bills will allow the Dept of Corrections to sell, deliver, and dispense this medication to the public.
  - Even if this goes to the Supreme Court, we do not need FDA approval in the state of Washington to distribute medication; we will continue to enforce state law and allow this medication to be distributed.
  - The secondary medication is still available and un-attacked so far.
- HB 1715, domestic violence
  - It has moved through both chambers. The governor is looking forward to signing this bill into law.
- HB 1541 Nothing About Us Without Us Act
  - Got all the way to fiscal cut off, but suddenly was pulled from executive session agenda.
  - Sponsored by Representative Darya Farivar
  - as it was originally written, the Gov would be removed from appointing people to chairs, only the Office of Equity could, red flag.
    - Set up a task force instead.
    - This was from disabled community who felt they were not represented in state government.
    - Re-worded to ensure people from these communities will be able to assist with these decision-making processes.
    - Why didn’t it move forward?
      - Chair of the Senate Ways and Means; disagreements regarding Budget as Rep Farivar wants this in statute. Other than this, no one really knows.
  - The Constitutional Amendment did not pass in Washington to protect Reproductive Freedom.
    - The Legislature does not feel they need to spend political capital on this now.
    - 10 of the 14 of the governor’s bills are still in session, very successful year for governor.
  - Voting Rights Act 2.0
    - Sponsored by Representative Meadow
    - Accountability tool that gives voting rights act teeth
    - Allows voter in WA to challenge when they feel their rights have been violated (now includes tribes)
    - A political subdivision can be reimbursed up to \$50,000 for proving that their rights have been violated. Allows citizens more power to hold subdivisions accountable.
    - Race, color, language minority group but also specifically for protected classes

## Ethics Presentation

Kate Reynolds

- Ethics in Public Service Act, RCW 42.52
- Each org has an ethics advisor–WSWC TBD
- Each violation can be a \$5,000 fine; individual agencies can act such as dock pay, firing. The ethics board only has the jurisdiction of individuals. Money goes to the general fund.
- **WSWC needs to have a Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. The Office of Ethics does have templates we can use and is available to assist.**

## OPMA Presentation

Kristin Lamson - AAG

- OPMA & PRA (open public meetings act)
- *We have done our yearly refresher with our AAG this year. Up to date*
- Make sure open meetings are prepared in case there are members of the public in attendance.
- Meeting→ am I responding to colleagues and commissioners?
  - Quorum = meeting, can be subject to OPMA.
  - Don't hit "reply all" if you can help it.
  - Discussion on email "reply all's" can be determined as a meeting.
    - Meeting: meetings at which the public agency takes "action".
    - Requires a majority of its members.
    - Physical presence not required.
    - "Retreat", "workshop", "study session", etc.
- ***The Commission should make sure to properly plan well in the future so that logistics such as "who is signing in?" are less of an issue, since "signing in" as pro or otherwise were already determined in an open meeting, for example.***
- Public attendance: there does need to be a physical location for the public to attend. Agencies are encouraged to provide remote access.
  - Commissioners need to be able to hear AND talk (vote)
  - The public is only required to be able to hear.
- ***Public comment REQUIRED prior to taking final action at a REGULAR meeting.***
  - Needs to be written in the agenda and on minutes.
  - Time, place, manner restrictions: May put reasonable guidelines in place for public comments, i.e., time limits.
  - Written testimony must be distributed to the governing body.
    - May have reasonable deadlines for submission of written testimony.
    - May limit comment on items on the agenda.
- Executive Session is part of a regular or special meeting that is closed to the public; needs to have documented purpose.
- Minutes are required to be kept for open sessions.

## WSWC Staff Report

Leah White

Kate Sowers

- Highlights: working on filling ED position
- Kasi, Ann, Vicki, Riddhi, and Quinn reappointed/appointed.
- Michelle's term is ending June 30th, we will be receiving applicants for that position.
  - Make sure the opportunity is communicated widely, esp. some groups where we are missing representation currently (Latinx, Queer/Trans)
- Updated Roles and Responsibilities:
  - Leah was promoted in February, dual Program Directors
  - Leah is lead for commission scheduling, legislative work, lead staff support, health committee, representation on western Washington, works closely with policy interns.
  - Kate is lead on policy intern/fellow management, eastern side of state representation, safety, and economic committees.
- Growing relationships with other organizations such as Planned Parenthood, WSCADV, League of Women Voters very important
- **Include in YW report quotes from women serving on the commission, including former Executive Director Regina Malveaux, etc. to close the gap.**
- **Allow Us to Reintroduce Ourselves project could include information about 1968 founding of the Women's Commission, and later the abolishment of the commission.**
  - Include in information packet as well.
- Plan and preparation for what to do during interim.
- Training for commissioners available online, asked to be concise.
- Template/formatting training available?

## Legislative Updates

Ann Simons - Legislative Committee Chair

- Having a weekly cadence is helpful.
- Key message: Collaboration and stakeholder outreach are both critical.
- Reproductive Rights
  - Who is elected makes a difference.
  - WSWC has had lots of success with this legislation.
  - How can we help women in other states? ←Strategic Plan
- Female Genital Mutilation bill supported by WSWC passed.
- Senator Dhingra's bill was not passed, might need to be worked on after session.
- DV/SA bill was more contentious; WSWC was able to use stakeholder input on this bill.
- **Can we make a log of all of our successes so the public can access it?**
- Bill 1155 Consumer Health Data, Kate and Leah put a spotlight on it and Planned Parenthood picked it up!
- **Childcare and early childhood education need to be highlighted and worked on an interim plan.**
  - HB 1541

- Universal childcare
- Meeting with legislators during the interim is far more important than during session.
- **Phone calls with legislators to say “thank you” for their support ←reach out to Representative Dye, for ex**
- **SPOTLIGHT HB 1474 Covenant Home Ownership Acct, Representative Jamila Taylor**

## Commission Work Session

### *Commissioners and Staff*

We have historically had subject matter committees that have been chaired by a commissioner that is a subject matter expert. We have invited various stakeholders to join us in those committee hearings. We need to know who the chair of these committees is, and what other committees commissioners will want to serve on.

Would like to restart these meetings in May.

Kate’s proposals:

- Health is Vicki (Chair), Anna (Chair), Chris
- Safety is Riddhi (Chair), Quinn
- Economic Security and Opportunity is Kasi, Ann, Michelle, Rituja, Chris (C?)
- Legislative Committee is Ann (Chair), Vicki, Riddhi
  - Feels relevant to have each chair from the committees to the leg committee.
  - If it is a quorum, it needs to be posted.
  - **How are we going to know what the recommendations are to focus on/how we get it back to you? ←Do not reply all.**
- Bylaws
  - “We serve at the pleasure of the governor”.
    - “By appointment of the governor”
  - We have not been following the format of our bylaws; two one-year terms.
  - Executive committee composition: are we still inviting former chairs?
    - Let’s see what other commissions are doing.
    - Perhaps a new chair having old chair attending will help with the transition.
  - Composition of Commission staff was diff since the creation of the bylaws; Page 6
  - Director Duties
    - Adding language with staff support as we now have the framework.
    - Working with LGBTQ+ Commission on defining “women” in our framework?
    - **Should we include a Women’s History committee?**
      - *Anna suggests that we ensure diversity is included because each woman has a vastly different experience (ex: Black women’s history is often not discussed)*
    - “Executive Assistant is supervised” should be cut, subheading should be “director and staff” duties, etc. **Riddhi volunteers to word smith**

- Kate shares that LGBTQ+ Commission gave WSWC appropriate language to define women; will share with the public through our social media campaign in Pride Month
  - Commissioners would like the details from this meeting shared with them.
- ***Deadline for recommendations on bylaws for Commissioners to send suggestions: 3 weeks! May 5, 2023***
- ***Setting up public meetings when we have plenary meetings across the state\*\*, so that we have info from those communities and the conversation is richer.***
  - ***2 weeks in advance, posting so others know.***
- ***We should highlight the amount of women running for office in Spokane!***

### **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:32 pm by Commission Chair, Rituja Indapure. The next general meeting will be at 9:00 am on July 14th in Bellingham, WA.

Minutes submitted by: Isabell Murray