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**Updates proposed for City of Seattle civil rights code**

The Seattle Office for Civil Rights will ask Seattle City Council next month to amend Seattle’s civil rights ordinances to clarify some definitions and make the City’s code consistent with state and federal law.

The proposed changes would bring consistency between Seattle’s Municipal Code and state and federal laws, such as the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and add “genetics” as a protected class, clarify the definition of a service animal, and expand the statute of limitations for filing housing cases.

Members of the public have until Wednesday, July 28, 2010 to comment on the proposed changes. The full draft text of the proposed ordinance changes is available at [www.seattle.gov/civilrights](http://www.seattle.gov/civilrights). The authorizing legislation is contained in SMC 1404, 1406, 1408 and 1410.

“The changes we are proposing will bring Seattle’s civil rights ordinance into closer alignment with federal and state law,” said Julie Nelson, director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. “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 proposed ordinance changes will include actions to:

* Update the City’s definition of “disability” to conform with current Washington state law;
* Expand the definition of service animal” to include companion animals as described 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 “genetics” as a protected class in employment discrimination to incorporate protections included in the federal Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act.

The City of Seattle’s civil rights ordinance has not received a major revision in more than ten years. City Council added protections for “veteran or military status” in 2009.

You can send comments via e-mail to [nolan.lim@seattle.gov](mailto:nolan.lim@seattle.gov) or in writing to:

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Comments from the public will be used to evaluate the impacts of the proposed changes, and will shape the final amendments to be considered by Seattle City Council in August.

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