

Comment Report

SSB 1037

A bill for an act repealing gender balance requirements for appointive boards, commissions, committees, and councils.(See SF 136.)

Subcommittee Members: Schultz-CH, Jochum, Westrich

Date: 01/17/2023

Time: 12:00 PM

Location: Room G15

Name: Sandy Wilson

Comment: Citizen Engagement declares IN FAVOR of SSB1037

Name: Linda Schreiber

Comment: It took the League of Women founders 80 years to achieve the right to vote in 1920. The Iowa Legislature has only required gender balance on statelevel boards and commissions since 1987. The requirement has provided 35 years of equity. U.S. Census Quick Facts for Iowa reports the percent of the female civilian labor force population over 16 years is 62.7% for the period 20172021. On the eve of the pandemic, women's labor force participation rate was 59.2%. As of Sept. 2, 2022, it's 58.4%. As of Sept. 2, 2022, it had dropped 58.4% reflecting women leaving the workforce to care for families and other responsibilities. Sen. Jason Schultz introduced Senate Study Bill 1037. He believes the gender imbalance has been corrected or that it will correct itself. History tells us that's not true. Too often women's voices are overlooked. If Iowa is to achieve fairness and equity, women must have leadership roles on its boards and commissions to achieve gender equity. If Iowa wants to be a leader, it must maintain innovation, and find ways to encourage women to take leadership roles to advance Iowa's position in government, business, and industry.

Name: Amy DeGroot-Hammer

Comment: KEEP a gender balance requirement...do not go backwards, Iowa. If Iowa is to achieve fairness and equity, women must have leadership roles on its boards and commissions to achieve gender equity. If Iowa wants to be a leader, it must maintain innovation, and find ways to encourage women to take leadership roles to advance Iowa's position in government, business, and industry.It took the League of Women founders 80 years to achieve the right to vote in 1920. The Iowa Legislature has only required gender balance on statelevel boards and commissions since 1987. The requirement has provided 35 years of equity. Sen. Jason Schultz introduced Senate Study Bill 1037 and it seems he believes the gender imbalance has been corrected or that it will correct itself. History tells us that's not true. Too often women's voices are overlooked.

Name: Gerri Perreault

Comment: What is the issue? Says gender balance "if possible." Serves as an important reminder and nudge. It is laughable, and dismaying,for someone to argue it is not needed.

Name: Miriam Timmer-Hackert

Comment: Why would you want to change the "gender balance, if possible," requirement for state level boards? I think it is great to have men and women on all boards to get diverse perspectives and diverse life experiences. Why would we go backward on

this?

Name:

Terese Grant

Comment:

I am strongly opposed to this legislation. This current law to ensure gender equity on boards, committees, and commissions is necessary to balance the decisionmakingrole that men and women play in these important committees. Please do not make any changes at this time.

Name: Amy Campbell

Comment: The League of Women Voters of Iowa strongly opposes SSB 1037. Comments are attached.

LWVIA strongly opposes this bill (SSB 1037). Boards and commissions give stakeholders and regular Iowans a voice in the operations of state government. They incubate leaders, some of whom decide to run for office. It's where many Iowans dip their toes in the water of public service. It is so important right now to hear the voices of women on these boards, and this could not come at a worse time.

Governor Reynolds has issued a moratorium on new rules, with a complete review of rules over the next four years. She has announced a major reorganization of state agencies. The voices of women on the boards and commissions that work with and in many cases approve these rules are absolutely needed. Making sure women are heard as agencies restructure is essential.

Gender balanced boards, as political and geographically balanced boards, bring diversity of ideas and experience. Women may raise issues of gender inequality that men may not have experienced.

And I'm going to push back about women's advances.

- We can celebrate our achievements, but it did take Iowa far longer than other states to elect its first female Governor. But let's level set.

- Women continue to face a wage gap that has not budged in the last two decades. In 2022, the wage gap narrowed by only one penny. Women working full-time, year-round now make only 84 cents for every dollar men earn ([according to the Women's Law Center](#)). If you are a Latina, that wage gap is 46 cents. That gap has long-lasting impacts, including on retirement ([retiring women have saved only 70% of men](#))
- Women reached 32% of the [S&P 500 board seats](#) for the first time ever.....nowhere near equity. [Only 9% of Fortune 500 CEOs](#) are women, and that's an all-time high.
- And to put a value on this, a survey of [Chief investment officers of leading investment firms](#) found that if choosing between two comparable firms, they would invest twice as much in the firm with more gender diversity. They simply believe they will perform better.

Our goal should be to build inclusive boards and we cannot do that without this law in place. I'm not saying it is easy to meet requirements of boards, but you're not asking to get rid of geographic balance to ensure rural Iowa voices are heard. You are assuming gender is the driving force in failing to fill positions. I don't know that this is based in fact.

Some boards have returned to required in-person attendance, which does make it harder for Iowans to agree to serve. As the Senate has witnessed, we can be more transparent using zoom and increase participation.

I would ask if we are responding globally to an issue with a specific set of boards. I don't know what the root cause of board vacancies is; is it frustration in general with government? Do we have too many boards and commissions with overlapping responsibilities? Have we done our best to engage community groups like the League or colleges to help grow a volunteer base?

If we have a gender gap, let's address it head on, not abolish the one thing that is keeping us on task to ensure women's voices are heard where decisions are made in government.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Amy Campbell

Lobbyist, League of Women Voters of Iowa

amy@ialobby.com