

Comment Report

SF 2096

A bill for an act repealing gender balance requirements for appointive bodies. Effective date: 07/01/2024.

Subcommittee Members: Schultz-CH, Celsi, Cournoyer

Date: 02/01/2024

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Room G15

Name: Sandy Wilson

Comment: Citizen Engagement declares IN FAVOR of SF 2096. Please advance the bill.

Name: Deverie Kiedaisch

Comment: As a person who worked on improving gender balance on appointed bodies for Keokuk and Lee County, I can testify to the improvement in equity and diversity this encouraged. Our City Council and Lee County Supervisors seem to have no problem working toward more balanced boards and commissions and new volunteers have been brought into the process. I know of no instances where it has created a problem and some boards and commissions have never reached gender balance. It is something to work toward and gives all voices in the state a place at the table.

Name: Maureen White

Comment: People make laws and rules for the common good. We don't rescind those laws just because people are following them. We keep them in place because they work. Iowa's exemplary law requiring gender balance on appointed state boards and commissions works. Since the law was passed in 1987 on a bipartisan basis and was signed by a Republican governor, every governor has followed it. That law was amended in 2009, again on a bipartisan basis, to extend the gender balance principle to appointed city and county boards and commissions. However, those making appointments must only make a good faith effort for three months. Compliance has been more uneven, with only around 60% gender balance. Some legislators say the gender balance law is no longer needed because we have a woman governor, U.S. Senator, and two female U.S. Representatives. However, Iowa ranks 34th among the states with only 29% female legislators. Only two of the seven Supreme Court justices are women. Further, some say the law isn't needed because more women graduate now from college, but fail to acknowledge that women graduates carry a higher burden of student loan debt and that when they are hired, they are likely to be paid less than men in the same type of job. Many majority party legislators who say the gender balance law isn't needed these days because women have attained equity have repeatedly passed legislation that denies girls and women the right to make their own reproductive health care decisions, including when and if to have a child. When women have true bodily autonomy, when men and women in the same type of job have equal pay, when women and girls can go about their lives without fear of assault, and women have equal representation in all levels of our government; we can claim to have achieved a degree of equality and a real voice for all women in our democracy. Until then, Iowa must retain one of the few laws in our state that provides for equal opportunity for women in all levels of government. My questions for the subcommittee to consider: What is the harm in keeping the gender balance law? What is the harm in rescinding the gender balance law?

Name: Linda Morgan

Comment: Just because something is hard, doesn't mean you still should not keep trying or that

you should rescind the ruling that makes it possible. Gender Balance is one of these rulings. Leave it alone. Cities, counties, state agencies, boards etc.should keep trying for gender balance. All citizens should have a women's perspective on as many policies and decisions as possible.