



Overview of the WA Law Against Discrimination, Ch 49.60 RCW, (WLAD)

Chapter 49.60 RCW is a state law that prohibits discriminatory practices on the basis of:

- Race/Color
- Creed
- National origin
- Marital status or Families with children
- Sexual orientation/Gender identity/Sex
- Age (in employment)
- Veteran or military status
- Sensory mental, or physical disability
- Use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability
- HIV or Hepatitis C
- Breastfeeding (in a public accommodation)
- State employee whistleblower

The WLAD creates a civil right to be free from discrimination in areas of:

- Employment
- Accommodations of any places of public resort
- Commerce free from discriminatory boycotts
- Real Estate transactions
- Credit and insurance transactions

Established in 1949, the Washington State Human Rights Commission (WSHRC) may investigate complaints of discrimination or unfair practices. The Commission provides an extra judicial process to resolve disputes through conciliation or compromise. Appropriate remedies in the conciliation process may include back pay, reinstatement, rent refunds, or training to eliminate the unfair practice.

A complainant may also pursue private litigation in a court of law.

Creed or Religion

The WLAD does not define the term "creed" as it is used in Chapter 49.60 RCW. The state Human Rights Commission has not adopted any regulation to define the term "creed". However the Commission's website generally defines "creed/religion" as follows:

RCW 49.60 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibit discrimination in employment based on religion or creed. A religion or creed is defined broadly and includes observance, practice, and belief. A creed or religious belief includes those sincere and meaningful beliefs that occupy in the life of that individual a place parallel to that of God in a traditional religion. The beliefs can include sincerely held moral and ethical beliefs as to what is right and wrong, and beliefs that address ultimate ideas, or questions about life, purpose, and death.

- *A person does not have to be part of an organization or church to have a creed or religion.*
- *Someone from a particular religion may adhere to different practices and beliefs than someone else in the same religion.*
- *Someone who was not religious at one point may become religious.*
- *Employers may request some type of information to ensure that the employee is sincere, such as further information from the employee or a letter from a religious leader; however, it is often difficult, from a legal standpoint, to challenge a person's sincerity.*

See <http://www.hum.wa.gov/CQ/definitions.html>.