



Dear Friends,

Welcome to a special edition of Health Policy News. This year is a milestone anniversary for our state. We mark the 10 year anniversary of the passage of a package of bills in the Washington State Legislature to impact health disparities. One of these bills created the [Washington State Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities](#). The Council is charged with identifying priorities and creating recommendations to the Legislature and Governor to eliminate health disparities by race/ethnicity and gender.

But how did this happen? All legislation has a backstory. I was privileged to hear the story from the prime sponsor, Senator Rosa Franklin. Vazaskia Crockwell, member of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities arranged a meeting with Senator Franklin for members and staff last year. Also invited were Board of Health and Health Care Authority staff.

In her remarks, Senator Franklin noted the importance of [The Heckler Report](#), named for US Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler. This report, released in 1985 was the first convening of a group of health experts by the U.S.

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government to conduct a comprehensive study of racial and ethnic minority health. The report elevated minority health to a national stage. The Heckler Report celebrated its 30 year anniversary in 2015 and influences awareness of the importance health equity today. Trained as a nurse, Senator Franklin had been acutely aware of the importance of health care access and health inequities throughout her career.

In 1994, the Washington State Legislature created the Joint Select Committee on Health Disparities. The committee was co-chaired by Senator Rosa Franklin and Representative Dawn Morrell. The committee held a series of meetings and hearings on health disparities. The Joint Committee produced a [final report found here](#), and as a result of the report, Don Sloma, Senate Health Care Staff Director drafted an omnibus bill. The omnibus bill was later divided into five bills. The larger of the five created the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. Senator Franklin insisted the agency remain in the executive branch of government. The Council creates an action plan for eliminating health disparities by race, ethnicity, and gender in Washington, convenes advisory committees, and has developed many recommendations to support language assistance.

The Legislature authorized the Washington State Board of Health to conduct Health Impact Reviews (HIRs) in collaboration with the Council. A Health Impact Review (HIR) is an analysis of how a proposed legislative or budgetary change will likely impact health and health disparities. HIRs, an evidence based practice, can only be requested by the Governor or a state legislator. To receive additional information about HIRs, including how to request a review, copies of past reviews, or to be added to the HIR email distribution list, please visit the [Washington State Board of Health website](#).

Resources

April is Minority Health Month

[State of Washington Proclamations signed by Governor Jay Inslee](#)

[The Heckler Report](#)
US HHS Secretary Margaret Heckler's Report of Black and Minority Health

The Washington State Select Joint Committee on Health Disparities
[Final Report](#)
[Members](#)



[Washington State Board of Health - Health Impact Reviews](#)



Vazaskia V. Crockwell,
Senator Rosa Franklin,
and Emma Medicine
White Crow, Council
Chair

On April 20th, Healthy Gen will honor Senator Rosa Franklin for her contributions to creating enduring healthy equity through public policy in Washington State with the presentation of an eponymous award. Dr. Maxine Hayes, will also be honored for her contributions to creating enduring health equity through public health practice. The award will be followed by a panel discussion, "The Frontiers Of Health Equity: Past, Present & Future." For more information about the Science of Hope Conference, [click here](#).

As always, if you have a bill or policy questions, please feel free to direct them to me at juliep@healthygen.org or [@healthygenjulie](https://twitter.com/healthygenjulie).

Ever forward!

Julie

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Staff from the Health Care Authority, Board of Health, Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities and Health Care Authority pose with Senator Franklin.



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