

A pair of brass scales of justice is centered in the image. The scales are made of polished brass and have two pans hanging from a central beam. They are placed on a wooden surface. The background is a blurred image of a group of people, possibly a jury or a courtroom audience, with a warm, golden light filtering through, suggesting a courtroom setting.

**WHAT IS THE
WASHINGTON LAW
AGAINST
DISCRIMINATION**

What Is the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD)?

The Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD) protects you from illegal discrimination and harassment in employment based on your actual or perceived: race, creed, color, national origin, citizenship or immigration status, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, or other protected characteristic.

Individuals who encounter illegal discrimination, harassment or retaliation at work are entitled to remedies under the law. These remedies include hiring, front and back pay, reinstatement, promotion, cease-and-desist orders, expert witness expenses, legal fees, punitive damages, and emotional distress injuries.

In this insightful article, our skilled attorneys in Washington go into further detail about the Washington discrimination statute and how it protects you.

Unfair Practices of Washington Employers

Despite the anti-discrimination law, many employers often engage in the practice of unfairly treating an individual or a group compared to others. Some examples of unfair practices include:

- Refusing to employ any person because of their protected class.
- Discharging or barring anyone from employment because of their protected

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class.

- Discriminating against anyone concerning pay or other employment conditions due to their protected class.
- Circulating any statement, advertisement, or employment application that expresses any limitation, specification, or discrimination as to age, sex, marital status, etc.

Typically, employers are not compelled to give reasons for their decisions on hiring, firing, promotions, and demotions. For this reason, it is not difficult for employers to provide other legal justifications for their unlawful actions when discrimination claims are raised. Hence, you need a skilled employment law attorney by your side to prove workplace discrimination and recover fair damages.

Elements of a WLAD Claim

In general, to bring a successful claim under the WLAD, one must show:

1. The employee engaged in protected activity and/or is a member of a protected class;
2. The employer discriminated against the employee for engaging in protected activity and/or based on the employee's protected status; and
3. The employer did not have legal justification for discriminating against the employee.

Examples of protected activity include:

- Requesting medical leave or reasonable workplace accommodations;
- Raising concerns about sexual harassment or a hostile work environment; or
- Bringing forward good-faith concerns about workplace safety.

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Examples of being a member of a protected class include:

- Gender;
- Sexual identity;
- Veteran status; and
- National origin.

Cases where the employee has written or other documentary evidence of the adverse action generally yields a more successful outcome for the employee. By contrast, “he-said / she-said” situations are more difficult to prove, although not insurmountable. In short, the more paper/documentary evidence of your discrimination claim, the easier it is to prove in court.

How to File a Discrimination Complaint?

The WLAD prohibits employers from engaging in discriminatory practices based on a person’s protected status or protected activity. If you have been subject to unlawful workplace discrimination, you can file a discrimination claim with the Washington State Human Rights Commission (WSHRC) or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The WSHRC is a state organization tasked with implementing and upholding anti-discrimination laws, and the EEOC enforces laws prohibiting employment discrimination. These organizations collaborate when processing claims due to their “work-sharing agreement.” Always keep in mind to contact a qualified employment attorney as soon as you believe your rights have been violated.

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If you feel you have been a victim of discrimination based on protected class status, contact a knowledgeable lawyer to proceed with the complaint process. They can assist you with all the legal documentation and guide you to make the right decision regarding your case.

Protecting Your Rights Against Discrimination in Washington

Workplace discrimination can cause significant disruptions in the employee's life. It is a serious issue, and victims shouldn't have to face it alone. If you believe you have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, or retaliation at work, our compassionate employment law attorneys at Athan Law will guide you to pursue remedies ensuring your rights are protected. Call us any time at (509) 215-4679.

Disclaimer: The information provided in this article is for educational purposes only and is not intended as legal advice. Every case or situation is unique, and you should consult with a licensed attorney before taking any action. No attorney-client relationship is formed by downloading or reading this article.

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