

5527-S

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Agriculture & Environment  
(originally sponsored by Senators McDonald, Rasmussen, Sellar,  
Fraser and Anderson)

Brief Title: Providing incentives for water-efficient irrigation  
systems.

**SB 5527-S.E - DIGEST**

(DIGEST AS PASSED LEGISLATURE)

Finds that significant water savings could be realized through  
the installation of more efficient irrigation systems such as  
trickle irrigation systems where climatically and economically  
suitable.

Finds that positive economic incentives, establishment of  
necessary legal procedures, and removal of legal barriers are  
needed to stimulate the development of workable technologies and  
farming systems that rely on lesser quantities of water.

Allows the saved water to be voluntarily transferred by the  
water right holder to other uses.

Declares an intent to establish incentives through enabling  
self-funded, private capital or public funds to provide improved  
market-based incentives for adopting water saving technologies and  
to allow the benefits of the conserved water to be fully realized.

Declares an intent of this act that sufficient protections be  
provided to assure that existing water users are not adversely  
affected by transfers approved under this act.

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5527-S

March 31, 1998

To the Honorable President and Members,  
The Senate of the State of Washington  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, Engrossed  
Substitute Senate Bill No. 5527 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to incentives for water-efficient irrigation  
systems;"

ESSB 5527 would allow water right holders who conserve water  
through the use of efficient irrigation techniques to apply that  
water to new parcels of land, or sell or lease it to others,  
including the state.

A water right has specific parameters limiting the amount of  
water, the land on which, and purpose for which it may be used.  
Those parameters protect the public's interest by ensuring that  
only the necessary amount of water is used, leaving excess water  
available for other important uses, after the needs of the water  
rights holder have been met.

We do not have enough water available in Washington to meet  
all of our needs. The state has a compelling interest in assuring  
that water is allocated fairly among different uses, such as  
increasing in-stream flows for fish. This is an especially

important issue today when many streams are over-allocated and have inadequate flows for fish that have been, or may soon be, listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. If we do not take steps to protect fish, the federal government will do it for us, including federal limitations on our water use.

During the interim I will ask the Joint Natural Resource Cabinet to develop a proposal for the next legislative session that will provide an equitable way to allocate conserved water between off-stream and in-stream uses, and that provides incentive for irrigators to conserve. Water allocation issues should also be resolved collaboratively through watershed planning efforts.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5527 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gary Locke  
Governor