

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 6557

April 3, 2002

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

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 2, Senate Bill No. 6557 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to the selection of the chair of the higher education coordinating board;"

Senate Bill No. 6557 changes the structure of the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to allow the HECB members to select the chair, rather than the governor.

Currently, all members of the HECB serve four-year terms, except the chair, who serves at the pleasure of the governor. Section 2 of the bill would have changed the term of the chair to a four-year term as well. However, it was unclear whether the four-year term limitation for the chair applied to the current chair. The existing law, which is retained by this veto, does not contain the same caveat as section 1 of the bill regarding the term of the current chair. Accordingly, this veto may create confusion regarding the length of the chair's term. I ask the legislature to pass remedial legislation next year.

I endorse rotation of the chair among the board members in the future, however it is a principle of the Washington State Constitution that the term of an official should not be shortened while the official is in office.

For these reasons, I have vetoed section 2 of Senate Bill No. 6557.

With the exception of section 2, Senate Bill No. 6557 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor