

VETO MESSAGE ON HB 1002-S

May 14, 2003

To the Honorable Speaker and Members,
The House of Representatives of the State of Washington

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 1, Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 1002 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to mercury reduction and education;"

This bill provides protection for our environment and for the people of our state from potential contamination by mercury, a chemical so toxic that 1/20th of a teaspoon can contaminate a 20-acre lake to the point where fish cannot be consumed. There is an estimated 1,000 pounds of mercury disposed of in our state every year. This bill will enable us to reduce the public health threat posed by this chemical.

Unfortunately, the intent section of this bill states, without qualification, that fish caught in our region are safe to eat. In fact, our Department of Health has issued thirteen fish consumption advisories for a variety of species of fish in waters around the state. These advisories demonstrate that contamination of our waters is still a serious issue. We need to address these sources of contamination and prevent them, rather than assert they do not exist. This bill is a dramatic example of how we can step-up to our obligations and prevent mercury from entering our environment, threatening human health and the health of our wildlife.

For this reason, I have vetoed section 1 of Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 1002.

With the exception of section 1, Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 1002 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor