

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5996-S

May 20, 2003

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 sections 3 and 4, Substitute Senate Bill No. 5996 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to hosting the 2005 conference of the national conference of state legislatures and other government conferences;"

This bill establishes a host committee for the 2005 annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). It also amends the Ethics Act to allow the solicitation and acceptance of gifts for the purpose of hosting a government conference.

Section 3 would have established a presumption that state officers and employees are not in violation of the Ethics Act when soliciting gifts, grants or donations to host a government conference. Section 4 would have also exempted these gifts from the ordinary fifty-dollar limit. Sections 3 and 4 are too broad and not necessary to accomplish the primary objectives of the bill, which are to establish a host committee for the 2005 NCSL conference and to allow legislators on the committee to solicit contributions in excess of fifty dollars for the conference.

RCW 42.52.010(10)(e) of the Ethics Act specifies that a "gift" does not include "items a state officer or state employee is authorized by law to accept." Because section 2 of this bill authorizes the host committee to engage in fundraising activities, these activities are not considered a gift for purposes of the Ethics Act. Thus, sections 3 and 4 of the bill are not necessary.

Aside from being unnecessary to meet the primary objectives of this bill, sections 3 and 4 are too broad. They exempt fundraising for the hosting of any government conference, without limitation, from existing restrictions on the solicitation of gifts. The potential for abuse of this broad exemption concerns me.

For these reasons, I have vetoed sections 3 and 4 of Substitute Senate Bill No. 5996.

With the exception of sections 3 and 4, Substitute Senate Bill No. 5996 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor