

VETO MESSAGE ON SSB 5286

May 15, 2009

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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, Substitute Senate Bill 5286 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to exemptions from the WorkFirst program."

Under current law, the state may require a WorkFirst recipient with a child under one-year of age to get mental health treatment, alcohol or drug treatment, domestic violence services or parenting education even if the parent claims an exemption from participation in other WorkFirst activities. This bill gives the state the authority to require the parent to get help if needed, but reduces the state's ability to require participation as a condition of keeping the grant. If a parent refuses to participate, the Department of Social and Health Services (Department) could seek a volunteer to serve as a protective payee. However, under the interpretation of RCW 74.08.280 to limit liability and as a best practice, the Department would use contracted protective payees resulting in additional cost to the state.

I remain concerned about limiting the Department's ability to require a parent to receive treatment during the first ninety days. When I signed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6016 in 2007 creating the infant exemption, I signed the bill to support parents. Valuable time is lost if we wait three months to get a parent help with a drug or alcohol problem or domestic violence.

For these reasons I have vetoed Substitute Senate Bill 5286 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Gregoire
Governor