

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5156-S

April 17, 1995

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. 5156 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to promoting competition for long distance telecommunications;"

It is the stated telecommunications policy of the state of Washington to preserve affordable service, advance efficiency and availability, ensure reasonable rates for customers, and promote diversity in the supply of services and products throughout the state. The legislature has charged the Utilities and Transportation Commission with implementation of this policy.

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5156 is contrary to that policy. It removes from the Commission's hands the ability to investigate an advancement in efficiency through the introduction of "one-plus" dialing parity on behalf of consumers. It establishes a moratorium on current dialing patterns, depriving consumers of convenience and ease of choice in local long distance calling. This legislation unnecessarily maintains barriers to competition and efficiency readily eliminated by currently available technologies. This is not the way of Washington State.

Washington State leads the nation in progressive telecommunications policies. We are gaining recognition for authorizing and affirming competition at the local level. We have learned that such competition provides the best product at the best price. Such competition is not only healthy for strong, cutting-edge business, it benefits the consumer as well.

As the telecommunications service market becomes increasingly competitive, the complex balance of prices, costs, subsidies, access, availability, diversity and flexibility must be conscientiously and accurately assessed at every level of proposed change. This review and determination requires an appreciation for and understanding of perhaps the most complicated and rapidly advancing technology in the world. The Utilities and Transportation Commission offers the expertise and commitment to carry out this assessment. This is the right place to do the work.

The implementation of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5156 would unnecessarily delay the development of a truly competitive telecommunications marketplace in our state. The Commission has been responsibly and fairly guiding this development since 1985. Impeding its work for at least three years, or until federal action is taken, stands to destroy our distinct advantage in drawing investment to our state and providing the quality and diversity of service we deserve.

I compliment the legislature on its efforts toward competitive equity in this complex area. However, I believe this proposal to be untimely. I am confident the Commission will not take action on this matter prior to the 1996 legislative session. This will leave ample time for review by the legislature of the interim efforts of both the Commission and the Governor's Telecommunications Policy Coordination Task Force.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5156 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Lowry
Governor