

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5795-S

May 16, 1995

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 No. 5795 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to reduction of city limits;"

Substitute Senate Bill No. 5795 would reduce the threshold for areas of the City of Seattle to withdraw from the city. Under current law, such withdrawals require a petition signed by ten percent of the registered voters in the entire city in the last general election. In the election that would follow, the city as a whole would vote on the proposal. The proposal would require a sixty percent affirmative vote for approval.

This bill would make such withdrawals considerably easier. It would require signatures of at least twenty-five percent of the registered voters in the area wishing to withdraw. The area wishing to withdraw would have to be at least ten percent of the population of the city as a whole. In the election, only the area seeking to withdraw would be able to vote on the proposition.

The state has adopted laws in a number of areas to allow local communities to change the nature of local governance to meet the changing needs of local communities. It is appropriate that avenues be available to allow local citizens to seek new ways to address their common governance needs.

Substitute Senate Bill No. 5795, however, has the potential to create substantial unintended problems. It would not only allow any area with ten percent of the population of the city to move to separate from the city, but it would also eliminate the jurisdiction of the boundary review board over that separation. This opens the possibility of multiple, overlapping proposals for boundary changes with no authorized way to alleviate the boundary confusion. Similarly, in an effort to provide an adequate tax base, competing proposals for new cities could vie for high tax income areas -- such as downtown office towers or retail centers -- with no way to resolve their rival claims.

While this surely is not the intent of the bill's proponents, the current provisions would make such an outcome a very real possibility.

For these reasons, I am vetoing Substitute Senate Bill No. 5795 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Lowry  
Governor