

VETO MESSAGE ON HB 2080-S2

May 19, 1997

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, Second Substitute House Bill No. 2080 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to agricultural lands with long-term commercial significance for the production of food or other agricultural products;"

Second Substitute House Bill No. 2080 would have established an additional type of current use valuation for agricultural lands, "Agricultural Lands with Long-Term Commercial Significance."

This would have allowed farmers to discontinue commercial farming and still enjoy the lower taxes associated with agricultural land. If such a land owner were to later withdraw the land from this new classification, the owner would not be subject to paying the back taxes that would otherwise have been paid under a different land classification (as current law requires). In essence this land gives a substantial tax break and encourages farms to be held for speculation and future development, rather than worked.

I understand the need to give land owners more choices and rewards in exchange for growth management. However, this statute would establish a bad precedent by allowing a relatively small number of property owners to avoid paying several years of saved taxes, interest on the tax savings, and avoidance of a penalty for early withdrawal if they later develop their agricultural land.

I prefer the favorable treatment agricultural lands receive in sections 31, 32, and 33 of Engrossed Senate Bill 6094 that was recommended by the Land Use Commission.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Second Substitute House Bill No. 2080 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor