

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5783-S

May 20, 1997

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 1, 2, and 4, Substitute Senate Bill No. 5783 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to public water systems;"

I have vetoed most of Substitute Senate Bill No. 5783, which affects water rights for public water systems. I do, however, recognize the need for and importance of providing adequate water supplies to support responsible growth. It is unfortunate that a compromise was not reached between the bill proponents and state agencies that addressed such an important issue in a balanced manner that also protected instream resources. I encourage the water purveyors and local government to return to the negotiating table and work with state agencies to resolve these issues in a balanced fashion.

Sections 2 and 4 would work together to provide an unfair advantage to public water systems by creating great uncertainty in trying to determine what water is available for other water rights, new applications, and the protection of instream resources. This would make it increasingly difficult to effectively and efficiently manage the public waters of the state. Section 1 directs the Department of Ecology to administer water rights laws consistent with sections 2, 3, and 4.

For these reasons, I have vetoed sections 1, 2, and 4 of Substitute Senate Bill No. 5783.

I have approved section 3, which amends the existing statute that fixes and grants extensions to the construction schedules for application of water to a beneficial use. These changes provide certainty for the water purveyors as to which conditions the Department of Ecology is required to consider. The term and amount of financing are major issues for water utilities and this language provides them assurance in their efforts to construct major capital facilities. Consideration for conservation and efficiency underscores and supports stretching existing water supplies. Finally, section 3 makes a positive step toward coordinating public water system supply with Growth Management Act provisions and population projections.

With the exception of sections 1, 2, and 4, Substitute Senate Bill No. 5783 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor