

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 6574-S

March 31, 1998

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. 6574 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to the learning materials loan program;"

SSB 6574 would require local school districts to make a "good faith effort" to accommodate annual loan requests from any state-approved private religious or nonsectarian school for current textbooks and workbooks on the district's adoption list. This bill, which does not define "good faith effort" and for which there is no appropriation, would likely place a financial hardship on school districts « especially those with disproportionate numbers of private schools.

Last year, I signed HB 1367, enabling public schools to loan surplus educational materials to private nonreligious, nonsectarian schools where previously they were available solely for purchase, rent, or lease. Accordingly, these private schools already have access to public school materials in a way that does not unduly jeopardize the adequacy of education programs for public school children. Washington state funds K-12 public education based on public school enrollment, not private school enrollment. This bill would have a financial impact on public education, yet is not accompanied by any commensurate change in the state school finance system.

This bill also conflicts with our state constitution by directing state funds to private religious schools. The Washington Constitution clearly states that "the entire revenue derived from the common school fund and the state tax for common schools shall be exclusively applied to the support of the common schools" and that "no public money or property shall be appropriated for, or applied to any religious worship, exercise or instruction, or the support of any religious establishment." SSB 6574 would divert resources away from the state's common schools.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Substitute Senate Bill No. 6574 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor