

VETO MESSAGE ON HB 1651

April 17, 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 as to House Bill No. 1651 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to the sale of malt liquor in kegs;"

This bill would allow certain establishments that obtained Class H liquor licenses (restaurants with lounges that serve alcoholic drinks for consumption on the premises) after January 1993, to also sell beer in kegs for off-site consumption. The state's liquor licensing structure has always carefully differentiated between on-site and off-site consumption of wine/beer and hard liquor. There is no public policy rationale for eliminating or blurring those distinctions at this time.

This bill provides a privilege and economic advantage for certain Class H license holders, and not for others. In addition to hard liquor, Class H license holders who happen to have converted from Class A-E or Class B-E combination licenses after January 1993 would be able to sell kegs of beer for off-site consumption, and those who converted prior to that date would not. Thus, this bill would create an arbitrary inequity between holders of the same class of liquor license.

This bill also contains vague language. The phrase "in lieu of", as used in HB 1651, could have several meanings and therefore have unintended consequences, upsetting the liquor license system and weakening its protections.

For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill No. 1651 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor