

VETO MESSAGE ON HB 3041

April 2, 1998

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 section 6, Engrossed House Bill No. 3041, entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to the exemption of the office of the family and children's ombudsman from certain judicial and administrative proceedings;"

Engrossed House Bill No. 3041 provides the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman (OFCO) an exemption from disclosure of certain information related to its inquiries. The purpose of the exemption is to enable the OFCO to conduct and complete its inquiries in a manner that elicits as much useful information as possible. The possibility of premature disclosure, or the inability of the office to maintain reasonable confidences, could compromise the work of the office. This bill places limits on the exemption that assure that the OFCO is obligated to report child abuse, or the threat of child abuse, as well as other criminal behavior.

The OFCO currently reports directly to the Governor. Section 6 of EHB 3041 would have the OFCO also reporting to the legislative oversight committee. I do not support such a dilution of accountability. The work of the office is too important to subject it to an ambiguous and untested administrative arrangement.

For this reason, I have vetoed section 6 of Engrossed House Bill No. 3041.

With the exception of section 6, Engrossed House Bill No. 3041 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor