

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5005-S

April 24, 1997

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. 5005 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to sentencing for multiple violent crimes;"

Under the Washington state sentencing guidelines, certain crimes are defined as "serious violent offenses" and others are defined as "violent offenses". This legislation would dramatically increase the jail time for adult felons who are convicted of two or more "violent offenses" at the same proceeding by mandating that the sentences run consecutively, rather than concurrently.

While I strongly agree that criminals who commit several violent crimes at the same time should be punished more severely than those who do not, I am concerned that the language in SSB 5005 is over broad.

Under this legislation, a person convicted of three counts of vehicular assault for injuring three people in the same car crash would automatically be sentenced to three consecutive sentences. In some cases that result may be very appropriate, however in many cases it may not. Our sentencing guidelines already impose enhanced sentences based on multiple victims and other aggravating factors. Judges also *must* order consecutive sentences for "serious violent offenses: and have the discretion to order consecutive sentences when warranted for "violent offenses".

I support very stiff sentences for violent offenders, however I cannot agree with over broad legislation that could result in inappropriate or unfair sentences.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5005 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor