

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 5460

May 9, 1997

To the Honorable President and Members,  
The Senate of the State of Washington  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, Senate Bill No. 5460 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to the use of public funds;"

Senate Bill No. 5460 attempts to address a valid question: To what extent should private organizations funded in part from fees derived from public funds be permitted to engage in campaigns for or against candidates or ballot issues?

This is a more complicated issue than is recognized by the bill. There is a great range of organizations funded in part by dues, fees or assessments paid from public funds. These include private, voluntary associations of government entities; organizations that include governments and businesses as members; and health maintenance organizations funded with fees paid for public-employee members. Some of these organizations are directly involved in government and public issues. Others may serve the private needs of individuals but may be affected by political issues.

This bill would prohibit any of these organizations from engaging in campaigns for or against ballot issues or candidates, if more than 25% of their income is derived from fees or assessments paid with public funds. That is more restrictive than the law that applies to elected officials or public agencies, which provides an exception for the "normal and regular" duties of public office.

SB 5460 does not distinguish between the public and private nature of affected organizations, or distinguish appropriate functions from inappropriate election activity.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill No. 5460 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gary Locke  
Governor