

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 6655-S

April 3, 1998

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

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to sections 6 and 19, Substitute Senate Bill No. 6655 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to institutions of higher education;"

Substitute Senate Bill No. 6655 makes several important changes to statutes regarding higher education in the Spokane area. Many of its provisions enact recommendations developed by the Higher Education Coordinating (HEC) Board at my request. I commend the HEC Board for its comprehensive assessment performed on short notice, and I commend the Legislature for its enactment of many of the HEC Board's recommendations.

SSB 6655 dissolves the Spokane Joint Center for Higher Education (the "Joint Center") and transfers the majority of its duties and real estate and other assets to Washington State University (WSU). WSU is required to develop a plan for the management of the Joint Center's Riverpoint Park facility, and a new mission statement and operations plan for its Spokane branch campus.

Under SSB 6655, the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI) will no longer be under the authority of the Joint Center. It will be separately established with its own board of directors and more clearly affiliated with the economic development efforts of the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development.

The bill also requires the HEC Board to manage an assessment of current and future higher education capital and programmatic needs in Spokane, and also an economic assessment of the Spokane area addressing job expansion, technology-based high wage job development, and basic and applied research needs.

SSB 6655 requires Eastern Washington University (EWU) to develop a new mission statement and operations plan for comprehensive higher education based in Cheney. In addition, the value and role of EWU in Spokane is recognized along with the overriding values of collaboration and coordination among the various public and private higher education institutions in the Spokane area.

Section 6 of SSB 6655 would replicate ambiguous language in other sections of law regarding service delivery control and responsibility for branch campuses. It would not recognize the unique situation in Spokane where two public universities each have a major presence. Section 6 would confuse the roles, opportunity and value offered by EWU and other institutions in the Spokane area. It would leave open an interpretation that these institutions would be excluded from participating in higher education offered at Spokane, which was not the intent of the HEC Board's recommendations. Section 19 establishes an effective date for section 6, and is unnecessary after my veto of section 6.

For these reasons, I have vetoed sections 6 and 19 of Substitute Senate Bill No. 6655.

With the exception of sections 6 and 19, Substitute Senate

Bill No. 6655 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Locke
Governor