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Governor



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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning, without my approval as to Section 4, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5499 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to election reform."

This bill reforms and strengthens our election system. As one of its priorities, our Legislature has passed several bills on election reform. Many of those bills have reached my desk for signature. Section 4 of this bill is essentially identical to Section 21 of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5743, which I also sign today. The only difference between the two bills is their effective date. Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5499 becomes effective in 90 days. Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5743 becomes effective on January 1, 2006.

The above-noted bill sections concern absentee ballot envelopes, and the declarations required on those envelopes. As certain rural counties have already begun purchasing envelopes for this year's election cycle, and in light of limited funds to purchase new envelopes, it would create unnecessary hardship to require them to immediately purchase new return envelopes under Section 4 of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5499. I am therefore vetoing Section 4 of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5499.

This veto does not take away the strong warnings on absentee ballot return envelopes concerning the need for voters to return them in timely fashion. It just gives our cash-strapped rural county auditors an additional six months to comply with the new envelope requirements.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Section 4 of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5499

With the exception of Section 4, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 5499 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/
Christine O. Gregoire
Governor