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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 Second Substitute Senate Bill 6117 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to reclaimed water."

Section 4 of this bill would establish procedures for determining when a water reuse project would impair existing water rights, and would change the standard for mitigating any such impairment. Based on legal advice, I believe this section could have unintended consequences to existing water rights. The remainder of Section 4 of the bill would also create a new task force to address the state's water reuse program, including water right impairment issues.

I have vetoed Section 4 of Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6117 because of that portion of it that changes the standard for mitigating impairment of existing water rights.

Section 3 of the bill establishes new requirements for considering reclaimed water during watershed planning and land use decisions, which will eventually need to be harmonized with other statutes in order to ensure effective implementation. I believe this work is still needed and important to accomplish. Accordingly, I am directing the Department of Ecology to work with legislative leadership to address water right impairment from water reuse projects, reclaimed water planning and other issues raised in Sections 3 and 4 of the bill and to provide a report and recommendations to the Governor and appropriate standing committees of the legislature by December 31, 2007.

With the exception of Section 4, Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6117 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/
Christine O. Gregoire
Governor