

July 8, 2008

The Honorable Alfred W. Speer  
Clerk of the House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Re: House Bill No. 1337 by Representative Aubert  
Veto Message

Dear Mr. Speer:

House Bill No. 1337 creates an exception to the ethics code to allow public servants to enter transactions to obtain “a governmental service that is provided by his agency and is available to or required of a member of the general public, including the purchase of water service, sewer service, and recreational services, under the same terms and conditions as applicable to a member of the general public.” This makes sense, but I have concern about creating an exception to avoid what appears to be an absurd interpretation of the ethics code. Article 9 of the Louisiana Civil Code instructs courts to interpret laws based on the “clear and unambiguous” meaning of words and to avoid interpretations that lead to “absurd consequences.” And Article 10 requires that “language susceptible of different meanings ... must be interpreted as having the meaning that best conforms to the purpose of the law.” It cannot be seriously argued that the purpose of the ethics code’s contract ban is to deny public servants the common benefits that are available to members of the general public. In fact, it’s just the opposite – the purpose of the code is to prevent public servants from obtaining special treatment *because of* their public service.

Of greater concern, HB 1337 also creates an exception for certain members of a parish governing authority who rent or lease property from the parish airport authority. I find this exception to be unnecessary. For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill No. 1337 and hereby return it to the House of Representatives.

Very truly yours,

Bobby Jindal  
Governor

jw