

GOV. RITTER VETO MESSAGE ON HOUSE BILL 09-1170

May 19, 2009

Honorable Colorado House of Representatives
67th General Assembly
First Regular Session
State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am filing with the Secretary of State House Bill 09-1170, "Concerning unemployment insurance benefits for locked-out employees." I vetoed this bill as of 4:55 p.m. today, and this letter sets forth my reasons for doing so.

There are currently ongoing contract negotiations between the United Food and Commercial Workers No. 7 and several grocery stores, including King Soopers, Safeway, Albertsons, and City Market. The parties to these negotiations have been working hard for several months to try to reach an agreement. I believe it is ill-advised and counterproductive to enact legislation that materially impacts the relative bargaining position of parties in the midst of ongoing negotiations. In these troubled economic times, I am deeply concerned about the effect a strike or lockout of employees would have on grocery store workers and consumers across the state, and I am concerned that signing this bill into law will make a negotiated resolution of the grocery store contract more difficult, not less. Therefore, under these circumstances, the state should not interject itself into these contract negotiations by enacting House Bill 09-1170 into law.

The merits of this bill, however, are worthy of future discussion and perhaps future legislation. In 1999, the statutory provision that House Bill 09-1170 would repeal and reenact was substantially amended for the first time in twenty-four years, upsetting the longstanding balance governing when locked-out and striking workers were eligible for unemployment benefits. The issue of how best to restore this balance is a debate that we should have. But the debate should be had and legislation crafted outside of the shadow of a major contract negotiation that has the imminent threat of a strike or lockout.

Accordingly, I have vetoed this bill.

Sincerely,

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor