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Veto Message: Governor Snelling
1991(H.536)
An act relating to simulcast racing.

STATE OF VERMONT
Executive Department.
Montpelier, Vt., June 6, 1991

The following communication relating to the veto of H.536 was received from the Governor:

Robert L. Picher, Clerk
House of Representatives
Vermont General Assembly
State House
Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Bob:

I herewith return unsigned and within the time limits set by Chapter II, Article 11of the Constitution, H.536, a bill to permit pari-mutuel betting on simulcast racing.

I have taken this action because I believe this bill will extend gambling activities in Vermont without any commensurate benefit to the State. Initially, when betting on horse racing was permitted by Chapter 13 of the Title 31 of Vermont Statutes Annotated, the goal was to support and encourage agricultural fairs and improve the breeding of horses in the State. Later, this objective was extended to greyhound dogs. Under H.536, I believe the legislature has lost sight of this limited objective.

I have other objections to this bill as finally presented to me for signature:

1. For the first time in Vermont, a portion of gambling proceeds are dedicated to a particular local community.

Although the actual dollars may be small to begin with, I do not think sound public policy is served by making local communities dependent on gambling for their revenues. In addition I believe this is the first time state revenues have been dedicated to a specific town, a very bad precedent in my opinion.

2. While the bill permits betting on simulcasts of non-Vermont races only at the Green Mountain Racetrack in Pownal, it does not limit such activity to times when the racetrack is otherwise open. Nor is there any logical reason why such simulcasting (and betting thereon) should only be permitted in Pownal. Thus, the bill invites extension of this type of wagering to off-track locations in other cities and towns in Vermont, especially if other towns and cities may expect to obtain additional revenue from the state through such activities.

3. In 1986 the General Assembly authorized interstate simulcasting of races (but without interstate pools, as permitted by H.536). The authority terminated on December 31, 1987, unless a new act of the legislature extended it. No such extension was granted. H.536 contains no such sunset provision.

Law enforcement professionals contend that increased gambling activities tend to increase criminal activity as well, and that gambling itself begets more gambling. While informal wagering among friends is an accepted practice, I do not believe--and have never believed--that institutionalized gambling is healthy over the long run for the body politic. Where the state has become involved in such activity, as in the State Lottery, the primary purpose has been, and should continue to be, to forestall the development of organized criminal gambling activity. I do not believe H.536 furthers that limited goal, and thus have returned it to the House in which it originated without my signature.

Sincerely,
/s/Richard A. Snelling,
Governor

Governor's Veto Sustained
H. 536

The Governor's veto was sustained in the House:
Yeas: 0 **Nays:** 143

*Note the veto was sustained lacking the two-thirds majority vote to override.

Sources: *Journal of the House*, May 19, 1991 (pages 889-890); *Journal of the House*, January 8, 1992 (pages 17-18)