

Association of Counties and the Maryland Municipal League have requested a veto.

These public officials and organizations representing local government in Maryland have each noted the bill's substantial fiscal impact on them. Indeed, the requirement for payment under Senate Bill 702 is absolute. By contrast, under the State highway beautification program compensation is not required to be paid for signs not eligible for federal matching funds and the State is not required to spend any funds for those purposes until appropriate matching federal funds are available to the State. I am fearful that the fiscal impact of Senate Bill 702 could result in a discontinuance of existing sign control programs and would provide a severe fiscal disincentive to any future regulation.

The mechanism provided in the bill for payment "in accordance with the just compensation schedule of the State Department of Transportation" also is troublesome. The Department of Transportation's schedule was developed to implement the Federal Highway Beautification Act, which requires each State to develop "effective control" measures for billboards located within a certain distance of a federally aided primary or an interstate highway. The existing schedule, therefore, pertains only to large signs and does not cover the wide array of signs which may be included within the scope of the bill's undefined class of "off-premises outdoor advertising signs."

In conclusion, I am vetoing Senate Bill 702, not because I oppose compensation to sign owners, but because it does not provide sufficient local flexibility and because its substantial fiscal impact may well halt sign regulation programs at the local level.

Sincerely,
Harry Hughes
Governor

Senate Bill No. 702

AN ACT concerning

Outdoor Advertising - Highway Signs

FOR the purpose of prohibiting any county or municipality from removing or requiring the removal of certain outdoor advertising signs unless the county or municipality pays a certain fair market value for the sign.

BY adding to