

House Bill 771 would significantly expand the statutory purpose of the Lida Lee Tall Learning Resources Center to include developing and implementing a center for elementary science and mathematics education, expanding the curriculum to include entrepreneurial skills, foreign languages, and world culture, and instituting model programs for parents to aid students with homework.

That proposed expanded mission includes some very laudable goals, but it is my understanding that the Center is not meeting its existing mission as a laboratory for elementary education methods. Except for holding an annual research conference, distributing the proceedings of those conferences, and issuing an occasional research monograph, the Lida Lee Tall Learning Resources Center helps a very limited population and its services do not have statewide implications. During more prosperous times, the continuation of funding for the Lida Lee Tall Learning Resources Center would not have been an issue. However, given our current economic climate, I must scrutinize the use of state resources very carefully, and my highest priority must be the educational needs of all the 700,000 young people who attend the public schools located in Maryland's 24 local school systems. As Governor, I must consider how many students will benefit from each dollar expended for education, and I must invest our limited resources wisely. In these difficult fiscal times, I certainly cannot justify appropriating such a substantial amount for only 170 students.

I recognize that House Bill 771 contains a source of funding for the Center, but that funding is only available for one fiscal year. I question whether State funding should be allowed to continue for another year when it is highly unlikely that State revenues would be available thereafter. In addition, I do not believe that the \$500,000 included in the supplementary appropriation is sufficient for the Center to continue its current functions, much less those set forth in its new and expanded mission statement. Lida Lee Tall does an excellent job of providing a quality education to a few students, but in my opinion, it serves far too few to justify the continuation of its State appropriation. This position should not surprise the supporters and others involved with the Center. Concerns were raised by the Executive Branch over two years ago about the Lida Lee Tall Learning Resources Center's failure to implement its mission on a statewide basis. In light of the questions that were asked, the reservations that were expressed about funding, and the warnings that were given, state funding should not have been expected to continue when the Center did not expand its focus.

For those reasons, I have today vetoed House Bill 771.

Sincerely,  
William Donald Schaefer  
Governor

**House Bill No. 771**

AN ACT concerning

**Lida Lee Tall Learning Resources Center - Supplementary Appropriation - Repeal of Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Cigarettes**