

Veto No. 1980-8

HB 1786

December 19, 1980

To the Honorable, the House of Representatives
of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

I file herewith, in the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, with my objection, House Bill 1786, Printer's No. 3998, entitled "An act amending the act of June 18, 1980 (No.17A), entitled 'An act to provide for the expenses of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Departments of the Commonwealth, the public debt and for the public schools for the fiscal period July 1, 1980 to June 30, 1981, and for the payment of bills incurred and remaining unpaid at the close of the fiscal period ending June 30, 1980; to provide supplemental appropriations from the General Fund to the various departments of the Commonwealth for the fiscal period July 1, 1979 to June 30, 1980,' increasing an appropriation to the Department of Aging, adding appropriations to the Department of Health and to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and decreasing certain appropriations to the Department of Public Welfare and adding an appropriation to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency."

House Bill 1786 contains four appropriations for various programs. Although I support all of these programs, I must disapprove the methods employed in this bill to provide these additional funds.

The Blakely Borough appropriation for flood damage was provided in Act 138A of 1980. Therefore, the appropriation is redundant and unnecessary.

Since appropriations to the Franklin Institute are provided through non-preferred appropriation bills, it would be improper for the funding of the book on Pennsylvania's contribution to aviation to be provided in a preferred appropriation bill.

Yesterday, I signed into law House Bill 230, which establishes the Pennsylvania Cancer Registry. This bill contains a \$500,000 appropriation for that program for fiscal year 1980-81. However, the money to fund the Cancer Registry is inappropriately taken from the Medical Assistance Program appropriation. Any further incremental reductions in that appropriation could bode serious consequences. Nonetheless, I remain committed to providing funds for a Cancer Registry in the 1981-82 fiscal year through a more appropriate revenue mechanism.

The additional \$2.3 million appropriation for the Department of Aging was proposed in my 1980-81 Budget. In that budget request, which was submitted to the General Assembly, I recommended a total of \$14,787,000 for these aging programs. I also recommended that

these moneys come from the Lottery Fund which was established specifically to fund senior citizen programs. I made these recommendations based on my desire to provide an acceptable level of services to Pennsylvania's senior citizens and in recognition of the inability of the General Fund to provide sufficient funds to do this. The Lottery Fund was, and is, fiscally capable of accommodating the entire \$14,787,000 recommended appropriation.

During the legislative debate over the budget, the General Assembly rejected the concept of Lottery funding for aging services. The legislature reduced the appropriation to \$12,471,000 and provided the money from the General Fund.

I still believe that the \$2.3 million for aging programs is needed, but it simply is not available at the present time from the General Fund. This bill proposes to reduce Medical Assistance programs by \$2.831 million to provide the General Fund money. At a time when health care costs are rapidly escalating and the utilization of services by recipients is unpredictable, it is unwise and fiscally irresponsible to arbitrarily cut these appropriations. In a very real sense, we would be cutting services to one needy group of citizens in order to provide increased services to another needy group of citizens. I cannot support this and, therefore, must veto this shifting of funds. I would and do support a proposal to provide the additional \$2.3 million from the Lottery Fund.

For these reasons, I must file House Bill 1786 without my approval.

DICK THORNBURGH