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Vetoes make sense.

Complaints by disappointed activists that Gov. Vic Atiyeh has used his veto power like a sniper, striking down bills without warning, just won't wash. Most of the governor's vetoes following the recently completed legislative session were reasonable and predictable.

No governor has an obligation to volunteer to lawmakers or sponsors of a bill his views regarding a possible veto. It is the responsibility of supporters of legislation to find out this information. This particular governor, however, went out of his way during the legislative session to let lawmakers know how he felt about some pending legislation.

Atiyeh, for example, called lawmakers into his office to discuss problems he had in supporting water reform legislation. In other examples, Atiyeh simply let out the word that he was unhappy with a particular bill. He did not threaten a veto in all cases. He just said, as in the case of the bill that would have required partial divestiture of state trust funds from companies doing business in South Africa, that he opposed the bill as written and would favor a specific alternative.

There were a few exceptions in which the governor's silence delivered a wrong signal. However, the governor did not deserve the scolding he got after vetoing a bill to extend the statute of limitations for women claiming injuries from the Dalkon Shield birth-control

device. Supporters of that bill chastised Atiyeh for not expressing opposition to the bill as it breezed through the House and Senate. However, those same people neglected to ask the governor during the session how he felt about it. They naively assumed that since the bill cleared the House on a 57-to-0 vote and sailed through the Senate 27-to-2, that it was somehow veto-proof; therefore, the governor need not be consulted. That is not the way the system works.

There is no such thing as a veto-proof bill. The Dalkon Shield bill, for example, may have been supported by 84 of 90 lawmakers the first time around; however, one should not bet on the ability of the Legislature to override Atiyeh's veto of this bill in Round 2. More likely, the 26 House Republicans and 12 Senate Republicans would vote now to sustain the governor's veto.

The governor's track record in vetoing legislation in 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985 has been prudent, consistent and dependable. Despite 40 vetoes in 1983 and 32 this year, he has used his veto power sparingly, given the overproductive nature of a liberal-leaning Legislature that tends to turn out impractical cures for a variety of social ills.

For the most part, Atiyeh nailed in 1985 a packet of bills that either need more work in future legislative sessions or deserve permanent burial.