

Government must be careful not to interfere with the market flow of commercial transactions and to ensure that any necessary interference not compromise the public interest. In past veto messages, I have indicated my concerns about establishing market areas for new motorcycle franchise dealers (1985 - Substitute Senate Bill No. 3333) and motor vehicle fuel dealers (1986 - Engrossed Senate Bill No. 4620). Both measures had the effect of significantly inhibiting competition, which would adversely affect the consuming public. I remain convinced that the public does not benefit from this type of market interference.

With the exception of sections 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, Engrossed House Bill No. 1645 is approved."

CHAPTER 416

[Substitute House Bill No. 1547]

MEDICAL SUPPORT—ORDERS AND ENFORCEMENT

AN ACT Relating to medical support enforcement; amending RCW 26.09.105, 26.18-.020, 26.09.170, 26.23.050, 26.18.100, and 26.18.110; adding a new section to chapter 26.26 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 26.18 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 74.20A RCW; and declaring an emergency.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington:

Sec. 1. Section 1, chapter 201, Laws of 1984 as amended by section 1, chapter 108, Laws of 1985 and RCW 26.09.105 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) In entering or modifying a support order under this chapter, the court shall require either or both parents to maintain or provide health insurance coverage except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, for any ((dependent child if the following conditions are met:

(1) Health insurance)) child named in the order if: (a) Coverage that can be extended to cover the child is or becomes available to that parent through ((an employer or other organization; and

(2) The employer or other organization offering health insurance will contribute all or a part of the premium for coverage of the child)) employment or is union-related; and

(b) The cost of such coverage does not exceed twenty-five percent of the obligated parent's basic child support obligation.

(2) The court shall consider the best interests of the child and have discretion to order health insurance coverage when entering or modifying a support order under this chapter if the cost of such coverage exceeds twenty-five percent of the obligated parent's basic support obligation.

(3) The parents shall maintain such coverage required under this section until:

(a) Further order of the court;

(b) The child is emancipated, if there is no express language to the contrary in the order; or

(c) Health insurance is no longer available through the parents' employer or union and no conversion privileges exist to continue coverage following termination of employment.

(4) A parent who is required to extend health insurance coverage to a child under this section is liable for any covered health care costs for which the parent receives direct payment from an insurer.

(5) This section shall not be construed to limit the authority of the court to enter or modify support orders containing provisions for payment of ~~((medical))~~ uninsured health expenses, ~~((medical))~~ health care costs, or insurance premiums which are in addition to and not inconsistent with this section. ~~((“Health insurance” as used in this section does not include medical assistance provided under chapter 74.09 RCW.))~~

(6) A parent ordered to provide health insurance coverage shall provide proof of such coverage within twenty days of the entry of the order, or within twenty days of the date such coverage becomes available, to:

(a) The physical custodian; or

(b) The department of social and health services if the parent has been notified or ordered to make support payments to the Washington state support registry.

(7) Every order requiring a parent to provide health care or insurance coverage shall be entered in compliance with RCW 26.23.050 and be subject to direct enforcement as provided under chapter 26.18 RCW.

(8) “Health insurance coverage” as used in this section does not include medical assistance provided under chapter 74.09 RCW.

Sec. 2. Section 2, chapter 260, Laws of 1984 as amended by section 17, chapter 435, Laws of 1987 and RCW 26.18.020 are each amended to read as follows:

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Dependent child" means any child for whom a support order has been established or for whom a duty of support is owed.

(2) "Duty of support" means the duty to provide for the needs of a dependent child, which may include necessary food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. The duty includes any obligation to make monetary payments, to pay expenses, including spousal maintenance, or to reimburse another person or an agency for the cost of necessary support furnished a dependent child. The duty may be imposed by court order, by operation of law, or otherwise.

(3) "Obligee" means the custodian of a dependent child, or person or agency, to whom a duty of support is owed, or the person or agency to whom the right to receive or collect support has been assigned.

(4) "Obligor" means the person owing a duty of support.

(5) "Support order" means any judgment, decree, or order of support issued by the superior court or authorized agency of the state of

Washington; or a judgment, decree, or other order of support issued by a court or agency of competent jurisdiction in another state or country, which has been registered or otherwise made enforceable in this state.

(6) "Employer" includes the United States government, a state or local unit of government, and any person or entity who pays or owes earnings to the obligor.

(7) "Earnings" means compensation paid or payable for personal services, whether denominated as wages, salary, commission, bonus, or otherwise, and, notwithstanding any other provision of law making the payments exempt from garnishment, attachment, or other process to satisfy support obligations, specifically includes periodic payments pursuant to pension or retirement programs, or insurance policies of any type, but does not include payments made under Title 50 RCW, except as provided in RCW 50.40-.020 and 50.40.050, or Title 74 RCW.

(8) "Disposable earnings" means that part of the earnings of an individual remaining after the deduction from those earnings of any amount required by law to be withheld.

(9) "Department" means the department of social and health services.

(10) "Health insurance coverage" includes any coverage under which medical services are provided by an employer or a union whether that coverage is provided through a self-insurance program, under the employee retirement income security act of 1974, a commercial insurer pursuant to chapters 48.20 and 48.21 RCW, a health care service contractor pursuant to chapter 48.44 RCW, or a health maintenance organization pursuant to chapter 48.46 RCW, and the state through chapter 41.05 RCW.

(11) "Insurer" means a commercial insurance company providing disability insurance under chapter 48.20 or 48.21 RCW, a health care service contractor providing health care coverage under chapter 48.44 RCW, a health maintenance organization providing comprehensive health care services under chapter 48.46 RCW, and shall also include any employer or union which is providing health insurance coverage on a self-insured basis.

Sec. 3. Section 17, chapter 157, Laws of 1973 1st ex. sess. as last amended by section 17, chapter 275, Laws of 1988 and RCW 26.09.170 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (7) of RCW 26.09.070, the provisions of any decree respecting maintenance or support may be modified only as to installments accruing subsequent to the motion for modification and, except as otherwise provided in subsection (4) or (5) of this section, only upon a showing of a substantial change of circumstances. The provisions as to property disposition may not be revoked or modified, unless the court finds the existence of conditions that justify the reopening of a judgment under the laws of this state.

(2) Unless otherwise agreed in writing or expressly provided in the decree the obligation to pay future maintenance is terminated upon the death of either party or the remarriage of the party receiving maintenance.

(3) Unless otherwise agreed in writing or expressly provided in the decree, provisions for the support of a child are terminated by emancipation of the child or by the death of the parent obligated to support the child.

(4) An order of child support may be modified one year or more after it has been entered without showing a substantial change of circumstances:

(a) If the order in practice works a severe economic hardship on either party or the child;

(b) If a party requests an adjustment in an order for child support which was based on guidelines which determined the amount of support according to the child's age, and the child is no longer in the age category on which the current support amount was based;

(c) If a child is still in high school, upon a finding that there is a need to extend support beyond the eighteenth birthday to complete high school; or

(d) To add an automatic adjustment of support provision consistent with RCW 26.09.100.

(5) An order or decree entered prior to June 7, 1984, may be modified without showing a substantial change of circumstances if the requested modification is to:

(a) Require health insurance coverage for a child named therein; or

(b) Modify an existing order for health insurance coverage.

(6) An obligor's voluntary unemployment or voluntary underemployment, by itself, is not a substantial change of circumstances.

~~((6))~~ (7) The department of social and health services may file an action to modify an order of child support if public assistance money is being paid to or for the benefit of the child and the child support order is twenty-five percent or more below the appropriate child support amount set forth in the adopted child support schedule. The determination of twenty-five percent or more shall be based on the current income of the parties and the department shall not be required to show a substantial change of circumstances.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 26.26 RCW to read as follows:

(1) In entering or modifying a support order under this chapter, the court shall require either or both parents to maintain or provide health insurance coverage for any dependent child as provided under RCW 26.09.105.

(2) This section shall not be construed to limit the authority of the court to enter or modify support orders containing provisions for payment of uninsured health expenses, health costs, or insurance premiums which are in

addition to and not inconsistent with this section. "Health insurance coverage" as used in this section does not include medical assistance provided under chapter 74.09 RCW.

(3) A parent ordered to provide health insurance coverage shall provide proof of such coverage within twenty days of the entry of the order, or within twenty days of the date such coverage becomes available, to:

(a) The physical custodian; or

(b) The department of social and health services if the parent has been notified or ordered to make support payments to the Washington state support registry.

(4) Every order requiring a parent to provide health insurance coverage shall be entered in compliance with RCW 26.23.050 and be subject to direct enforcement as provided under chapter 26.18 RCW.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 26.18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Whenever an obligor parent who has been ordered to provide health insurance coverage for a dependent child fails to provide such coverage or lets it lapse, the department or the obligee may seek enforcement of the coverage order as provided under this section.

(2)(a) If the obligor parent's order to provide health insurance coverage contains language notifying the obligor that failure to provide such coverage may result in direct enforcement of the order and orders payments through, or has been submitted to, the Washington state support registry for enforcement, then the department may, without further notice to the obligor, send a notice of enrollment to the obligor's employer or union by certified mail, return receipt requested.

The notice shall require the employer or union to enroll the child in the health insurance plan as provided in subsection (3) of this section.

(b) If the obligor parent's order to provide health insurance coverage does not order payments through, and has not been submitted to, the Washington state support registry for enforcement:

(i) The obligee may, without further notice to the obligor send a certified copy of the order requiring health insurance coverage to the obligor's employer or union by certified mail, return receipt requested; and

(ii) The obligee shall attach a notarized statement to the order declaring that the order is the latest order addressing coverage entered by the court and require the employer or union to enroll the child in the health insurance plan as provided in subsection (3) of this section.

(3) Upon receipt of an order that provides for health insurance coverage, or a notice of enrollment:

(a) The obligor's employer or union shall answer the party who sent the order or notice within thirty-five days and confirm that the child:

(i) Has been enrolled in the health insurance plan;

(ii) Will be enrolled in the next open enrollment period; or

(iii) Cannot be covered, stating the reasons why such coverage cannot be provided;

(b) The employer or union shall withhold any required premium from the obligor's income or wages;

(c) If more than one plan is offered by the employer or union, and each plan may be extended to cover the child, then the child shall be enrolled in the obligor's plan. If the obligor's plan does not provide coverage which is accessible to the child, the child shall be enrolled in the least expensive plan otherwise available to the obligor parent;

(d) The employer or union shall provide information about the name of the health insurance coverage provider or insurer and the extent of coverage available to the obligee or the department and shall make available any necessary claim forms or enrollment membership cards.

(4) If the order for coverage contains no language notifying the obligor that failure to provide health insurance coverage may result in direct enforcement of the order, the department or the obligee may serve a written notice of intent to enforce the order on the obligor by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by personal service. If the obligor fails to provide written proof that such coverage has been obtained or applied for within twenty days of service of the notice, or within twenty days of coverage becoming available the department or the obligee may proceed to enforce the order directly as provided in subsection (2) of this section.

(5) If the obligor ordered to provide health insurance coverage elects to provide coverage that will not be accessible to the child because of geographic or other limitations when accessible coverage is otherwise available, the department or the obligee may serve a written notice of intent to purchase health insurance coverage on the obligor by certified mail, return receipt requested. The notice shall also specify the type and cost of coverage.

(6) If the department serves a notice under subsection (5) of this section the obligor shall, within twenty days of the date of service:

(a) File an application for an adjudicative proceeding; or

(b) Provide written proof to the department that the obligor has either applied for, or obtained, coverage accessible to the child.

(7) If the obligee serves a notice under subsection (5) of this section, within twenty days of the date of service the obligor shall provide written proof to the obligee that the obligor has either applied for, or obtained, coverage accessible to the child.

(8) If the obligor fails to respond to a notice served under subsection (5) of this section to the party who served the notice, the party who served the notice may purchase the health insurance coverage specified in the notice directly. The amount of the monthly premium shall be added to the support debt and be collectible without further notice. The amount of the monthly premium may be collected or accrued until the obligor provides proof of the required coverage.

(9) The signature of the obligee or of a department employee shall be a valid authorization to the coverage provider or insurer for purposes of processing a payment to the child's health services provider. An order for health insurance coverage shall operate as an assignment of all benefit rights to the obligee or to the child's health services provider, and in any claim against the coverage provider or insurer, the obligee or the obligee's assignee shall be subrogated to the rights of the obligor. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section regarding assignment of benefits, this section shall not require a health care service contractor authorized under chapter 48.44 RCW or a health maintenance organization authorized under chapter 48.46 RCW to deviate from their contractual provisions and restrictions regarding reimbursement for covered services. If the coverage is terminated, the employer shall mail a notice of termination to the department or the obligee at the obligee's last known address within thirty days of the termination date.

(10) This section shall not be construed to limit the right of the obligor or the obligee to bring an action in superior court at any time to enforce, modify, or clarify the original support order.

(11) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require a health maintenance organization, or health care service contractor, to extend coverage to a child who resides outside its service area.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. A new section is added to chapter 74.20A RCW to read as follows:

(1) Whenever a support order is entered or modified under this chapter, the department shall require the responsible parent to maintain or provide health insurance coverage for any dependent child as provided under RCW 26.09.105.

(2) "Health insurance coverage" as used in this section does not include medical assistance provided under chapter 74.09 RCW.

(3) A parent ordered to provide health insurance coverage shall provide proof of such coverage to the department within twenty days of the entry of the order, or within fifteen days of the date such coverage becomes available.

(4) Every order requiring a parent to provide health insurance coverage shall be entered in compliance with RCW 26.23.050 and be subject to direct enforcement as provided under chapter 26.18 RCW.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. A new section is added to chapter 74.20A RCW to read as follows:

In furtherance of the policy of the state to cooperate with the federal government in the administration of the child support enforcement program, the department may adopt such rules and regulations as may become necessary to entitle the state to participate in federal funds, unless such rules would be expressly prohibited by law. Any section or provision of law dealing with the child support program which may be susceptible to more than

one construction shall be interpreted in favor of the construction most likely to comply with federal laws entitling the state to receive federal funds. If any law dealing with the child support enforcement program is ruled to be in conflict with federal requirements which are a prescribed condition of the allocation of federal funds, such conflicting law is declared to be inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict.

**Sec. 8. Section 5, chapter 435, Laws of 1987 and RCW 26.23.050 are each amended to read as follows:*

(1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, the superior court shall include in all superior court orders which establish or modify a support obligation(;):

(a) A provision which orders and directs that the responsible parent ((to)) make all support payments to the Washington state support registry((; or the person entitled to receive the payments if the parties agree to an alternate payment plan and the court finds that the alternate payment plan includes reasonable assurances that payments will be made in a regular and timely manner. The superior court shall also include));

(b) A statement that a notice of payroll deduction may be issued or other income withholding action under chapter 26.18 RCW or chapter 74.20A RCW may be taken, without further notice to the responsible parent((; if a support payment is more than fifteen days past due in an amount equal to or greater than the support payable for one month. If the court approves an alternate payment plan, the order shall include)); and

(c) A statement that the order may be submitted to the Washington state support registry for enforcement:

(i) If a support payment is ((more than fifteen days past due in)) not paid when due and an amount equal to or greater than the support payable for one month is owed under an order entered prior to July 1, 1990; or

(ii) At any time after entry of the court order for orders entered by the court on or after July 1, 1990.

(2)(a) For orders entered on or after July 1, 1990, the court may approve an alternate payment plan and order the responsible parent to make payments directly to the person entitled to receive the payments or direct that the issuance of a notice of payroll deduction or other income withholding actions be delayed until a support payment is past due. The parties to the order must agree to such a plan and the plan must contain reasonable assurances that payments will be made in a regular and timely manner.

(b) If the order directs payment to the person entitled to receive the payments instead of to the Washington state support registry, the order shall include a statement that the order may be submitted to the registry if a support payment is past due.

(c) If the order directs delayed issuance of the notice of payroll deduction or other income withholding action, the order shall include a statement

that such action may be taken, without further notice, at any time after a support payment is past due.

(d) The provisions of this subsection do not apply if the department is providing public assistance under Title 74 RCW.

(3) The office of administrative hearings and the department of social and health services shall require that all support obligations established as administrative orders include a provision which orders and directs that the responsible parent shall make all support payments to the Washington state support registry. All administrative orders shall also state that a notice of payroll deduction may be issued, or other income withholding action taken without further notice to the responsible parent((:));

(a) For an order entered prior to July 1, 1990, if a support payment is ((more than fifteen days past due in)) not paid when due and an amount equal to or greater than the support payable for one month; or

(b) For orders entered on or after July 1, 1990, at any time after entry of the order.

~~((3))~~ **(4) If the support order does not include the ((provision ordering and directing that all payments be made to the Washington state support registry and a statement that a notice of payroll deduction may be issued if a support payment is past due,)) notice required under subsection (1) of this section the office of support enforcement may serve a notice on the responsible parent stating such requirements and authorizations. Service may be by personal service or any form of mail requiring a return receipt.**

~~((4))~~ **(5) Every support order shall state:**

(a) That payment shall be made to the Washington state support registry or in accordance with the alternate payment plan approved by the court;

(b) That a notice of payroll deduction may be issued or other income withholding action under chapter 26.18 RCW or chapter 74.20A RCW may be taken, without further notice to the responsible parent((:));

(i) If a support payment is ((more than fifteen days past due in)) not paid when due and an amount equal to or greater than the support payable for one month is owed under an order entered prior to July 1, 1990; or

(ii) At any time after entry of the order for orders entered on or after July 1, 1990, unless the court approves an alternate payment plan under subsection (2) of this section;

(c) The income of the parties, if known, or that their income is unknown and the income upon which the support award is based;

(d) The support award as a sum certain amount;

(e) The specific day or date on which the support payment is due;

(f) The social security number, residence address, and name of employer of the responsible parent;

(g) The social security number and residence address of the ((custodial parent)) physical custodian except as provided in subsection (6) of this section;

(h) The names, dates of birth, and social security numbers, if any, of the dependent children; ~~((and))~~

(i) That the parties are to notify the Washington state support registry of any change in residence address;

(j) That any parent owing a duty of child support shall be obligated to provide health insurance coverage for his or her child if coverage that can be extended to cover the child is or becomes available to that parent through employment or is union-related as provided under RCW 26.09.105;

(k) That if proof of health insurance coverage is not provided within twenty days, the obligee or the department may seek direct enforcement of the coverage through the obligor's employer or union without further notice to the obligor as provided under chapter 26.18 RCW; and

(l) The reasons for not ordering health insurance coverage if the order fails to require such coverage.

~~((5))~~ (6) The physical custodian's address shall be omitted from an order entered under the administrative procedure act. A responsible parent whose support obligation has been determined by such administrative order may request the physical custodian's residence address by submission of a request for disclosure under RCW 26.23.120.

(7) The superior court clerk, the office of administrative hearings, and the department of social and health services shall, within five days of entry, forward to the Washington state support registry, a true and correct copy of all superior court orders or administrative orders establishing or modifying a support obligation which provide that support payments shall be made to the support registry. If a superior court order entered prior to January 1, 1988, directs the responsible parent to make support payments to the clerk, the clerk shall send a true and correct copy of the support order and the payment record to the registry for enforcement action when the clerk identifies that a payment is more than fifteen days past due. The office of support enforcement shall reimburse the clerk for the reasonable costs of copying and sending copies of court orders to the registry at the reimbursement rate provided in Title IV-D of the social security act.

~~((6))~~ (8) Receipt of a support order by the registry or other action under this section on behalf of a person or persons who are not recipients of public assistance is deemed to be a request for support enforcement services under RCW 74.20A.040.

~~((7))~~ (9) After the responsible parent has been ordered or notified to make payments to the Washington state support registry in accordance with subsection (1), (2), or (3) of this section, the responsible parent shall be fully responsible for making all payments to the Washington state support registry and shall be subject to payroll deduction or other income withholding action. The responsible parent shall not be entitled to credit against a support obligation for any payments made to a person or agency other than to the Washington state support registry. A civil action may be brought by the

payor to recover payments made to persons or agencies who have received and retained support moneys paid contrary to the provisions of this section.

*Sec. 8 was vetoed, see message at end of chapter.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 9. A new section is added to chapter 26.18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) An obligated parent's employer or union shall be liable for a fine of up to one thousand dollars per occurrence, if the employer or union fails or refuses, within thirty-five days of receiving the order or notice for health insurance coverage to:

(a) Promptly enroll the obligated parent's child in the health insurance plan; or

(b) Make a written answer to the person or entity who sent the order or notice for health insurance coverage stating that the child:

(i) Will be enrolled in the next available open enrollment period; or

(ii) Cannot be covered and explaining the reasons why coverage cannot be provided.

(2) Liability may be established and the fine may be collected by the office of support enforcement under chapter 74.20A or 26.23 RCW using any of the remedies contained in those chapters.

(3) Any employer or union who enrolls a child in a health insurance plan in compliance with chapter 26.18 RCW shall be exempt from liability resulting from such enrollment.

Sec. 10. Section 10, chapter 260, Laws of 1984 as amended by section 20, chapter 435, Laws of 1987 and RCW 26.18.100 are each amended to read as follows:

The wage assignment order shall be substantially in the following form:

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF
WASHINGTON IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF

.....

.....,
Obligee
vs.

No.

.....,
Obligor

WAGE ASSIGNMENT
ORDER

.....,
Employer

THE STATE OF WASHINGTON TO:
Employer

AND TO:
Obligor

The above-named obligee claims that the above-named obligor is more than fifteen days past due in child support payments in an amount equal to or greater than the child support payable for one month. The amount of the accrued child support debt as of this date is dollars, the amount of arrearage payments specified in the support order (if applicable) is dollars per, and the amount of the current and continuing support obligation under the support order is dollars per

You are hereby commanded to answer this order by filling in the attached form according to the instructions, and you must mail or deliver the original of the answer to the court, one copy to the Washington state support registry, one copy to the obligee or obligee's attorney, and one copy to the obligor within twenty days after service of this wage assignment order upon you.

If you possess any earnings due and owing to the obligor, then you shall do as follows:

(1) Withhold from the obligor's earnings each month, or from each regular earnings disbursement, the lesser of:

(a) The sum of the accrued support debt and the current support obligation;

(b) The sum of the specified arrearage payment amount and the current support obligation; or

(c) Fifty percent of the disposable earnings of the obligor.

(2) The total amount withheld above is subject to the wage assignment order, and all other sums may be disbursed to the obligor.

You shall continue to withhold the ordered amounts from nonexempt earnings of the obligor until notified by:

(a) The court that the wage assignment has been modified or terminated; or

(b) The Washington state support registry, office of support enforcement that the accrued child support debt has been paid.

You shall promptly notify the court and the Washington state support registry if and when the employee is no longer employed by you.

You shall deliver the withheld earnings to the Washington state support registry at each regular pay interval, but the first delivery shall occur no sooner than twenty days after your receipt of this wage assignment order.

You shall deliver a copy of this order to the obligor as soon as is reasonably possible. This wage assignment order has priority over any other wage assignment or garnishment, except for another wage assignment or garnishment for child support, or order to withhold or deliver under chapter 74.20A RCW.

WHETHER OR NOT YOU OWE ANYTHING TO THE OBLIGOR, YOUR FAILURE TO ANSWER AS REQUIRED MAY MAKE YOU LIABLE FOR OBLIGOR'S CLAIMED SUPPORT DEBT TO THE OBLIGEE OR SUBJECT TO CONTEMPT OF COURT.

NOTICE TO OBLIGOR: YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO REQUEST A HEARING IN THE SUPERIOR COURT THAT ISSUED THIS WAGE ASSIGNMENT ORDER, TO REQUEST THAT THE COURT QUASH, MODIFY, OR TERMINATE THE WAGE ASSIGNMENT ORDER.

DATED THIS ... day of ..., 19

.....
Obligee,
or obligee's attorney

.....
Judge/Court Commissioner

Sec. 11. Section 11, chapter 260, Laws of 1984 as amended by section 21, chapter 435, Laws of 1987 and RCW 26.18.110 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) An employer upon whom service of a wage assignment order has been made shall answer the order by sworn affidavit within twenty days after the date of service. The answer shall state whether the obligor is employed by or receives earnings from the employer, whether the employer will honor the wage assignment order, and whether there are multiple child support attachments against the obligor.

(2) If the employer possesses any earnings due and owing to the obligor, the earnings subject to the wage assignment order shall be withheld immediately upon receipt of the wage assignment order. The withheld earnings shall be delivered to the Washington state support registry at each regular pay interval, but the first delivery shall occur no sooner than twenty days after receipt of the wage assignment order.

(3) The employer shall continue to withhold the ordered amounts from nonexempt earnings of the obligor until notified by:

(a) The court that the wage assignment has been modified or terminated; or

(b) The Washington state support registry that the accrued child support debt has been paid, provided the wage assignment order contains the language set forth under RCW 26.18.100(2)(b). The employer shall promptly notify the Washington state support registry when the employee is no longer employed.

(4) The employer may deduct a processing fee from the remainder of the employee's earnings after withholding under the wage assignment order, even if the remainder is exempt under RCW 26.18.090. The processing fee may not exceed (a) ten dollars for the first disbursement made by the employer to the Washington state support registry; and (b) one dollar for each subsequent disbursement to the clerk.

(5) An order for wage assignment for support entered under this chapter shall have priority over any other wage assignment or garnishment, except for another wage assignment or garnishment for child support, or order to withhold and deliver under chapter 74.20A RCW.

(6) An employer who fails to withhold earnings as required by a wage assignment issued under this chapter may be held liable for the amounts disbursed to the obligor in violation of the wage assignment order, and may be found by the court to be in contempt of court and may be punished as provided by law.

(7) No employer who complies with a wage assignment issued under this chapter may be liable to the employee for wrongful withholding.

(8) No employer may discharge, discipline, or refuse to hire an employee because of the entry or service of a wage assignment issued and executed under this chapter. A person who violates this subsection may be found by the court to be in contempt of court and may be punished as provided by law.

(9) An employer may combine amounts withheld from various employees into a single payment to the Washington state support registry, if the payment includes a listing of the amounts attributable to each employee and other information as required by the registry.

(10) An employer shall deliver a copy of the wage assignment order to the obligor as soon as is reasonably possible.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 12. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect immediately.

Passed the House April 17, 1989.

Passed the Senate April 4, 1989.

Approved by the Governor May 13, 1989, with the exception of certain items which were vetoed.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State May 13, 1989.

Note: Governor's explanation of partial veto is as follows:

"I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 8, Substitute House Bill No. 1547 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to medical support enforcement."

Section 8 of this bill incorrectly amends RCW 26.23.050 which was also amended by section 15 of Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 1635. To avoid confusion, I am vetoing section 8 of this bill.

With the exception of section 8, Substitute House Bill No. 1547 is approved."