

STATE OF ILLINOIS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
SPRINGFIELD, 62706GEORGE H. RYAN
GOVERNOR

August 3, 2001

To the Honorable Members of the
Illinois House of Representatives
92nd General Assembly

I have signed House Bill 3209, which amends "AN ACT concerning freedom of information." This bill exempts "computer graphic systems" from inspection and copying covered under the Freedom of Information Act if the disclosure of those documents could reasonably be expected to produce private gain or public loss.

Although the intent of this bill is to protect the investment public bodies make in integrating geographic information systems with other overlays of public records such as parcels, the wording in the bill is vague and could be defined too broadly. The term used in the bill, "computer graphic system," does not intuitively define the data contained on any system but the term "system" could be construed to refer only to hardware or software that pertains to any type of graphic representation.

Moreover, at a time when I am encouraging state agencies and local governments to collaboratively provide more information over the Internet, this bill has the potential to discourage local and state entities from providing this type of integrated data online. The lack of a specific definition for the type of overlay data that should be protected from private gain could be a reason for concern and lead to misunderstanding. Without this type of definition, there is not a limit on the type of data that is paid for with public funds that in fact should be shared online with the public.

While I support the intent of House Bill 3209, legislation should be pursued that clarifies these issues and balances the immense costs of maintaining public accountability and public access with limits on the commercialization and exploitation of public data for private gain.

With this clarification, I have signed House Bill 3209.

Sincerely,
s/GEORGE H. RYAN
Governor