

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK  
GOVERNOR



JOHN WALSH  
LT. GOVERNOR

May 6, 2013

The Honorable Linda McCulloch  
Secretary of State  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary McCulloch:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana I hereby veto House Bill 265 (HB 265), "AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS; REVISING WHEN FUNDS RECEIVED BY A CAMPAIGN MUST BE DEPOSITED; RAISING THE LIMITATION ON CONTRIBUTIONS TO A CANDIDATE FROM POLITICAL COMMITTEES AND INDIVIDUALS; RAISING THE LIMITATION ON AGGREGATE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT A CANDIDATE MAY RECEIVE FROM POLITICAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS; REVISING THE DEFINITION OF "ELECTION" FOR THE PURPOSES OF DETERMINING CONTRIBUTION LIMITS; REVISING THE TIME AND TRIGGERING AMOUNT FOR FILING CERTAIN REPORTS OF CONTRIBUTIONS; RAISING THE AMOUNT OF AGGREGATE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT MUST BE RECEIVED FROM A CONTRIBUTOR BEFORE CERTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR MUST BE DISCLOSED; ELIMINATING THE LIMITATION ON AGGREGATE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT CERTAIN CANDIDATES MAY RECEIVE FROM POLITICAL COMMITTEES; AMENDING SECTIONS 13-37-207, 13-37-216, 13-37-226, AND 13-37-229, MCA; AND REPEALING SECTION 13-37-218, MCA."

The Legislature had an opportunity, through Senate Bill 375 (SB 375), to enact meaningful campaign finance reform by clarifying Montana law to shine light on the dark money expenditures that have contaminated elections in Montana. In supporting that bill, I was willing to accept increases in campaign contribution limits as a compromise, believing that it would increase the chances of attracting enough votes to overcome the vested interests of those who wish to protect individuals and groups who operate in the shadows. That compromise did not work; the Legislature failed to enact SB 375.

Without the kinds of reforms included in SB 375, I do not believe HB 265's increases in campaign contribution limits, or the elimination of the aggregate limit on Political Action Committee (PAC) contributions in legislative races, are in the best interests of our State. Candidates for our state and local elections are able to raise sufficient funds to run effective, competitive campaigns. The percentage of donors who contribute the maximum allowable amounts is relatively low, indicating that the vast majority of donors do not feel constrained by current limits. And, the limits are

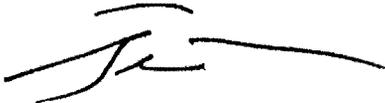
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statutorily adjusted for inflation. In short, we in Montana are fortunate that our candidates for public office can still get elected through door-to-door, face-to-face contact with voters. Increasing the amount of money in our elections will only serve to further elevate the importance of fundraising and media campaigns, while diminishing the voices of everyday Montanans who wish to support their chosen candidates.

It would not be good policy to increase contribution limits without also securing the transparency and accountability ensured by effective campaign finance disclosure laws. Because the Legislature refused to strengthen our disclosure laws, I cannot sign HB 265 into law.

For these reasons, I veto HB 265.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Bullock', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK  
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division  
Mark Blasdel, Speaker of the House  
Jeff Essmann, President of the Senate