

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Austin Knudsen
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Debby Barrett
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Knudsen and President Barrett:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I do hereby veto House Bill 298 (HB 298), "AN ACT REVISING CONCEALED WEAPONS LAWS; PROVIDING THAT THE OFFENSE OF CARRYING A CONCEALED WEAPON DOES NOT APPLY TO A PERSON WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO POSSESS A HANDGUN UNDER STATE OR FEDERAL LAW; AND AMENDING SECTION 45-8-317, MCA."

During the 2013 legislative session I vetoed House Bill 304 – a bill identical to this session's House Bill 298. I now veto HB 298 for the same reasons. Montana grants the authority to issue a concealed weapons permit to our locally elected sheriffs, who "shall" issue a permit to an applicant. The sheriff may require completion of basic firearms safety training before issuing a permit or they may deny a permit to a person struggling with mental illness. Denials are uncommon, and only happen under the most extreme circumstances.

HB 298 would effectively eliminate Montana's concealed weapon permitting process by allowing anyone eligible to possess and handgun to carry a concealed weapon without a permit. The measure would allow individuals to decide for themselves whether they are eligible to carry a concealed weapon.

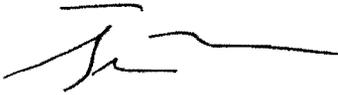
If the logic of HB 298 were applied to other situations, there would be no need for a person to be licensed before driving on our highways – all they would need to do would be to determine whether they were "eligible" to drive. The same goes for pilot's licenses, building permits, hunting licenses, or any other type of permit. While I will fiercely defend the 2nd Amendment rights of our citizens, I cannot support an absurd concept that threatens the safety of our communities by not providing for the basic fundamentals of gun safety or mental health screening.

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Moreover, instead of protecting the rights of Montanans, in reality HB 298 erodes the ability of a Montana citizen to purchase a weapon or carry concealed in another state. HB 298 would void our state's reciprocity agreements with more than 40 states that recognize concealed weapon permits and it would void our laws allowing Montana permit holders to bypass the federal background check required for a firearm purchase.

I respectfully ask that you stand with the Montana Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association in opposition to this bill and sustain my veto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Bullock', with a horizontal line above it.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division
Secretary of State