

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

April 24, 2015

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

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

Dear President Barrett and Speaker Knudsen:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto Senate Bill 235 (SB 235), "A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: 'AN ACT CLARIFYING THAT JUDICIAL BRANCH BUDGET PROPOSALS MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET SUBMITTED BY THE GOVERNOR WITHOUT CHANGES; AND AMENDING SECTION 17-7-122, MCA.'"

Title 17, Chapter 7 of the Montana Code includes very specific requirements for the development of the executive budget. Currently, the law states that judicial branch proposals for spending above the current base budget need not be included in the executive budget. However, my staff and I have always worked very closely with the judicial branch to include as much of the judiciary's budget request as the state can afford. This cooperative relationship has resulted in fair budget allocations to the judicial branch while allowing the executive to present a balanced financial plan to the Legislature.

If implemented, SB 235 could force the executive branch to forego its budget priorities in order to fully fund a budget request of the judiciary that has no boundaries or limitations. The chief officer of the executive branch is elected by the people of Montana to implement certain policy priorities. SB 235 could severely restrict my ability, and ability of future governors, to present an executive budget to the Legislature that reflects the broad policy priorities of the people of Montana.

Further, the current budgetary process allows the judicial branch to present any funding requests not included in the executive budget to the joint appropriations subcommittee, or during any subsequent step in the budget review process. If the judiciary believes it has funding needs beyond the executive budget, it can still make its case directly to the Legislature. This strikes a fair balance between the

President Barrett
Speaker Knudsen
April 24, 2015
Page 2

budgeting obligations and priorities of the executive branch, and the funding needs of the judiciary as a separate and equal branch of government.

I look forward to a continued cooperative relationship with the judicial branch that accommodates its funding needs while balancing the needs of all of state government.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you sustain my veto of SB 235.

Sincerely,

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

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

Cc: Legislative Services Division
Secretary of State