

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



MIKE COONEY
LT. GOVERNOR

May 10, 2019

The Honorable Corey Stapleton
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Secretary Stapleton:

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 579 (HB 579), "AN ACT REVISING THE AUTOMATED ACCOUNTING SYSTEM LAWS RELATING TO VIDEO GAMBLING AND PLAYER REWARDS SYSTEMS; PROVIDING FOR CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA; PROVIDING RULEMAKING; AMENDING SECTION 23-5-621, MCA; AND PROVIDING A DELAYED EFFECTIVE DATE."

Gaming is a part of Montana's economy and history. Current law prohibits gambling machine operators and owners from using automated systems to track a player's gaming habits. House Bill 579 lifts that prohibition and outlines how establishments can use information collected from players.

The bill makes it easier for gaming establishments to collect and track a player's gambling activity. This allows establishments to reward players, ultimately encouraging them to continue to gamble and spend more money. House Bill 579 allows casinos and other establishments with gaming machines to target individual Montanans, who may have a gambling problem, to get them to gamble even more.

House Bill 579 makes major changes to Montana's gaming economy and gives advantages to large casinos over smaller establishments whose focus is food and drink instead of gambling. And because small businesses cannot afford sophisticated player tracking systems, large casinos will likely gain customers at the expense of their smaller competitors.

During the legislative process, testimony was given suggesting automated player tracking systems are already being used in violation of state law. Enacting a law now to allow player tracking would only be rewarding bad behavior. Indeed, there are current, legal systems used today that allow a casino or tavern to reward their best customers without automatically tracking and storing a player's gambling activity.

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Additionally, HB 579 was not reviewed by the state's Gaming Advisory Council. This is the typical process for gaming legislation and allows small businesses and other stakeholders to work out flaws and oversights.

In short, HB 579 opens the market for personal data to be collected and used to get players to gamble even more.

For these reasons, I veto HB 579.

Sincerely,



STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division
Scott Sales, President of the Senate
Greg Hertz, Speaker of the House