

April 22, 1999

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE FOR HOUSE BILL 1721

I am returning House Bill 1721, "AN ACT TO RESTORE THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE TO JOHN WALDEN OF LOWNDES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI," without my approval and respectfully present the following reasons for my veto.

John Walden was convicted of the unspeakable crime of rape, served only two weeks in jail, and then was released on probation. If Walden's privilege to vote is now to be restored, it will have to be over my veto.

In May 1987 a Lowndes County jury convicted Walden of rape, and on May 14 of that year the judge sentenced Walden to sixteen years in prison but suspended eight years of the sentence. Just two weeks later on May 29, 1987, the judge, at Walden's request, amended the sentence, suspended the entire sixteen years, and placed Walden on probation for five years. In other words, Walden committed the heinous and violent crime of rape and for his punishment received mere probation.

Now Walden wants to regain the privilege of voting that he forfeited by his crime and conviction. I will not be a party to this travesty. After consulting with the victim's family and the District Attorney, I must veto this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRK FORDICE
GOVERNOR