

April 19, 2000

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE FOR HOUSE BILL 725

I am returning House Bill No. 725: "AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 7-7-215, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ABOLISH THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AUDIT BE REQUIRED TO FILE INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS IN THE OFFICE TO WHICH THEY PERTAIN, MAKE THEM SUBJECT TO PUBLIC INSPECTION OR PRESERVE COPIES FOR THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES." without my approval, and assign the following reasons for my veto:

The best interests of the citizens of the State of Mississippi are served by open government. Under existing law, if the State Department of Audit conducts an investigation or audit, it must submit a report to the office or department to which the audit or investigation pertains, and it must retain a copy for the Governor and/or legislature to use. This procedure ensures that audits and investigations are reported to the public systematically.

To remove the requirement that investigations be reported to the relevant office or department removes a level of accountability. Under existing law all investigations must be reported. Under this bill, investigations could be reported in some cases and not in others. This leaves too much discretion to pick and choose. We should not place the State Department of Audit in such a precarious situation.

Without a convincing reason having been given to me for changing existing law, I believe it is best for the people of Mississippi for the law to remain the same.

Respectfully submitted,

RONNIE MUSGROVE  
GOVERNOR