

March 30, 2001

TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATE:

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE FOR SENATE BILL 3123

I am returning Senate Bill No. 3123: "AN ACT MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND TO PAY THE EXPENSES OF COUNTIES FOR HOLDING STATE PRISONERS IN COUNTY JAILS, FOR FISCAL YEARS 2001 and 2002" without my approval, and assign the following reasons for my veto.

I am vetoing Senate Bill No. 3123 because I can not in good conscience endorse the payment to private prisons of millions of dollars for "ghost inmates" when \$14 million has been taken from our teachers. The legislature would spend money for non-existent inmates in order to subsidize private prisons rather than put resources into classroom supplies for our state's students.

Currently the Department of Corrections has over 2500 empty beds as the rate of growth of inmates has slowed. The Commissioner of the Department of Corrections, and not lobbyists, must have the authority to determine where inmates are to be assigned, whether state institutions, regional facilities or private prisons.

Additionally, we are subsidizing private prison operators with dollars that should be in the pockets of our teachers. In 1992, we addressed the problem of teachers having to reach into their own pockets to pay for necessary classroom supplies with the creation of the Education Enhancement Fund.

I ask that you take this bill and reconsider its funding of private prisons. Look at providing for the regional facilities at a more sustainable level of support. Restore funds to the Education Enhancement Fund. Stop the bail out of private prison corporations and put school supply dollars back into the hands of our teachers and textbooks back into our classrooms. Because of the various problems with this legislation, I urge you to thoughtfully reconsider Senate Bill No. 3123.

Respectfully submitted,

RONNIE MUSGROVE
GOVERNOR