

April 21, 2005

TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATE:

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE FOR SENATE BILL 2471

I am returning Senate Bill 2471: "AN ACT TO CODIFY SECTION 43-47-39, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ESTABLISH A VULNERABLE ADULT EDUCATION, TRAINING, INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION TRUST FUND TO ASSIST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING RELATING TO THE VULNERABLE ADULTS ACT AND TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR THE VULNERABLE ADULTS UNIT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE; TO CREATE A SPECIAL TRUST FUND TO BE DESIGNATED AS THE CHILD SUPPORT PROSECUTION TRUST FUND TO PROSECUTE DELINQUENT CHILD SUPPORT CASES; TO AMEND SECTION 41-59-75, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE DISPOSITION OF TRAUMA CARE FUNDS; TO AMEND SECTION 99-19-73, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, AS AMENDED BY SENATE BILL NO. 2559 AND SENATE BILL NO. 2960, 2005 REGULAR SESSION, TO INCREASE THE STANDARD STATE MONETARY ASSESSMENTS AND TO PROVIDE AUTOMATIC REPEAL OF THE SECTION; TO AMEND SECTION 9-23-51, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FROM THE DRUG COURT FUND; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES." without my approval, and assign the following reasons for my veto.

After full consideration, I am vetoing Senate Bill 2471. I support the goal of Senate Bill 2471 as it was originally introduced, which was to increase funding for trauma care systems. I also support the amendment to Senate Bill 2471 which would increase funding for home and community based services for individuals with disabilities within the Department of Rehabilitation Services. However, Senate Bill 2471 was further amended to provide funding to the Attorney General's office for services related to "Vulnerable Adults Education, Training, Investigation, and Prosecution." While I fully support programs which are designed to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, Senate Bill 2471 would establish a duplicative program within the Attorney General's office to those which already exist within the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS).

Educating the public about elder abuse and other matters relating to the Vulnerable Adults Act and investigating these terrible crimes are the responsibility of the MDHS, as delineated by Section 43-47-33 of the Mississippi Code. Furthermore, MDHS, Division of Aging and Adult Services, has the mandate under Title VII of the Older Americans Act to establish programs for the prevention of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation in the state, including the provision of related education. Establishing a new program within another agency of state government would be confusing to the general public and would cause unnecessary new administrative costs.

As previously stated, I support much of Senate Bill 2471. I fully support increased funding for our state's trauma care system and increased access to home and community based services in long-term care. I look forward to working with members of the Legislature to address both of these issues as soon as the Legislative schedule allows.

For these reasons, I urge the members to sustain the veto and reject Senate Bill 2471.

Respectfully submitted,

Haley Barbour
Governor