

March 16, 1999

TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATE:

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE FOR SENATE BILL 2887

I am returning Senate Bill 2887, "AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMISSION TO REGULATE THE KEEPING IN CAPTIVITY OF WILD ANIMALS BY A PERSON; TO AUTHORIZE A PERMIT AND A FEE FOR SUCH POSSESSION; TO AMEND SECTION 49-1-29, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CLARIFY POWERS OF THE COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES" without my approval and respectfully present the following reasons for my veto:

This bill creates a new section of Mississippi law. It would give the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks the authority to allow individuals to keep wild animals in their care. I believe this would be an unwise public policy for both our citizens and our wildlife.

Various wildlife rehabilitation organizations exist in our state that serve the noble purpose of rehabilitating injured animals and wildlife unsuited for domestic life. Their unanimous responses and the response from many such organizations across the U.S. (including Mrs. Cherry's fifth grade science class at Rosa Scott Middle School in Madison) have been statements of serious concern and opposition to Senate Bill 2887. I agree with their concerns.

It is difficult for us as humans to resist our nurturing instincts when dealing with young or injured animals. But what begins with the best of human motives often ends with mature wild animals unsuited for confinement and unsuitable for reintroduction into the wild. Wild animals kept without expert care are often harmed by well-meaning people who malnourish them with improper diets or debilitate them with unsuitable enclosures. What begins with the best of motives often ends badly for the animals.

Wild animals kept in captivity also pose serious health risks to humans and domestic animal populations. Such diseases as rabies, lyme disease, distemper, and typhus could spread in Mississippi if we were to change our current containment policies.

I am not without feeling for the family whose pet deer reportedly served as the inspiration for this legislation. I have been informed that a number of wildlife rehabilitation groups would be willing to help.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRK FORDICE
GOVERNOR