

April 9, 2002

TO THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

GOVERNOR'S TRANSMITTAL MESSAGE FOR HOUSE BILL 1795

I am returning House Bill Number 1795: "AN ACT MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2003" approved in part and not approved in part and assign the following reasons for the partial veto.

Pursuant to authority granted under Section 73 of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890, as amended, I hereby exercise a partial veto of House Bill No. 1795, in particular the separate, severable and discreet portions of the bill, Section 14, that appropriates \$1,600,000 of TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) federal funds directly to the state Coalition of the YMCA for the purpose of developing and implementing six new Adolescent Offenders programs, and Section 17 that restricts the authority of the Department of Human Services for hiring employees under Personal Service Contracts.

The Department of Human Resources currently partners with established Adolescent Offender programs, many of which operate under the guidance of County and Youth Court Judges as a function of their judicial responsibilities. They provide needed supervision and assistance to troubled youths, helping many of them to lead productive lives.

The YMCA is certainly an outstanding and worthy organization that contributes in many ways to many Mississippi communities. However, it should compete with other worthy organizations that operate successful, established programs for these resources. It is unfair to those programs that the YMCA should be specified in statute as a recipient of these funds while the fates of other recognized ongoing programs must await the outcome of a competitive process. We are responding to judges from across the State who have the moral and the statutory responsibility to respond to the needs of the adolescent, the family and the community.

At a time when DHS is in desperate need for monies to hire social workers to assist troubled families and children and security personnel to staff our training centers, the appropriation of separate, discrete sums to a variety of agencies and organizations weakens and fragments the ability of the State to meet its most sacred obligation, the protection of children.

This type of specific, line item appropriation compromises the Department of Human Services in the discharge of its difficult mission. It is unwise to draw away precious resources in such a haphazard way, while restricting the agency's ability to hire essential personnel when the effect is to drain the agency of its strength to confront the enormous challenges that it must face everyday.

I urge the members of the Legislature to sustain this partial veto of Section 14 and of Section 17 of House Bill No. 1795 in recognition of the need to consolidate funds in Adolescent Offender programs that must demonstrate success and of the Agency's obligation to hire necessary personnel and not to be artificially restricted from hiring social workers and meeting its obligation to the Courts.

Respectfully submitted,

RONNIE MUSGROVE
GOVERNOR