

(Date)

Phil Bryant
Office of the State Auditor
P. O. Box 956
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Phil:

I am writing in response to your letter dated April 20, 2000 where you wrote of your wish to have had the opportunity to discuss House Bill 725 with me before I vetoed this legislation. I was unaware that you supported this legislation and would have been more than happy to discuss this particular piece of legislation or any other matter with you had you contacted me.

As you are well aware, when an investigation or audit is conducted under existing law, the State Department of Audit 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 as well as investigations are conducted responsibly and fairly.

To remove the requirement that investigations be reported to the relevant office or department diminishes accountability and injects the potential for the political misuse of this function. Under existing law there is no discretion in determining which investigations must be reported. By making the law silent on the issue of departmental discretion and leaving the report to the discretion of the State Department of Audit presents an unneeded temptation for actions unbecoming this office.

Serving the best interests of the citizens of the State of Mississippi requires open and accountable government. House Bill 725 did not support that idea. I would consider signing this legislation if it addressed the discretionary element by requiring consistency in the reporting of the investigations to the relevant office or department.

Please feel free to call me at any time. It is my desire that we have an open line of communication in all matters.

Very Truly Yours,

RONNIE MUSGROVE