

March 29, 2001

TO THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE FOR HOUSE BILL 1652

I am returning House Bill No. 1652: "AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES OF THE CITY OF HOLLANDALE TO CONSTRUCT A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY LOCATED IN THE CITY OR NOT MORE THAN TWO MILES OUTSIDE OF THE CITY LIMITS TO HOUSE MALE AND FEMALE OFFENDERS AND OFFENDERS IN NEED OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT SERVICES AND REHABILITATION; TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY TO CONTRACT WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, THE UNITED STATES AND ANY STATE OR POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS FOR THE HOUSING OF OFFENDERS IN THE CUSTODY OF THOSE JURISDICTIONS; TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY TO CONTRACT WITH A PERSON OR A PRIVATE ENTITY FOR THE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; TO PRESCRIBE OTHER POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE CITY; TO PRESCRIBE RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE FACILITY; TO REPEAL CHAPTER 987, MISSISSIPPI LOCAL AND PRIVATE LAWS OF 1997, WHICH AUTHORIZES THE CITY OF HOLLANDALE TO CONSTRUCT A SPECIAL NEEDS CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES" without my approval, and assign the following reasons for my veto.

I am vetoing House Bill No. 1652 today because it compounds the problem of committing State dollars to private prisons for inmates we do not have. I vetoed only yesterday House Bill No. 3123 which obligates the State to pay existing private prisons for 900 inmates when the State has 2500 empty beds. This approach is wrong and is made worse by House Bill No. 1652.

The bill calls for a 25-year State guarantee to fill 85% of 750 new beds with a 3% annual increase in the per diem rate. The State would absorb all medical costs incurred by the inmates. Contracts with the other private prisons are for five years with shared medical expenses. House Bill No. 1652 would provide an exorbitant subsidy to a private prison corporation when we should be funding public education.

Additionally, the bill is bad public policy because it did not receive the scrutiny of the legislative committees charged with the oversight of corrections. Nor was it considered by the respective appropriations committees. The bill passed out of the Local and Private Committees which ordinarily deal with matters of local concern and local resources. This bill is a general bill in nature and commits the State Department of Corrections and the State taxpayers to a built-in 25 year obligation of escalating costs for unneeded services.

We are presently in the fortunate position of having more prison beds than inmates and of being in compliance with court orders. Before the State constructs any more prisons, public officials responsible for corrections must develop a plan of action based on need. In the meantime we must invest in our teachers and students, not in private prison corporations.

I urge the members to sustain the veto and reject House Bill No. 1652.

Respectfully submitted

RONNIE MUSGROVE
GOVERNOR