GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

JEFFERSON CITY
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JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON
GOVERNOR

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July 8, 2014

TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Herewith I return to you House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 506 entitled:

AN ACT

To repeal sections 144.010, 262.900, 265.300, 267.565, 275.352, 277.020, 277.040, 281.065, 304.180, 340.381, 340.396, 442.571, and 537.325, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof seventeen new sections relating to agriculture.

I disapprove of House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 506. My reasons for disapproval are as follows:

House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 506 would redefine the term "livestock" to include "captive cervids," which are members of the deer family, including white-tailed deer. These changes would eliminate the role of the Missouri Department of Conservation in regulating white-tailed deer. Because doing so would be at odds with longstanding successful conservation practices and would violate the Missouri Constitution, this legislation does not receive my approval.

For more than 75 years, the Missouri Department of Conservation has restored and protected Missouri's forest, fish, and wildlife resources. The Department has created countless opportunities for Missourians to enjoy the outdoors, while also making Missouri a national leader in conservation. In 1934, before Missourians voted by more than a two-thirds majority to establish the Conservation Commission in the Missouri Constitution, Missouri had less than 2,000 white-tailed deer. Today, Missouri has an estimated 1.3 million white-tailed deer. Each fall, half-a-million hunters go afield to harvest deer in Missouri, contributing $1 billion to our economy. Growing and managing our deer herd and fostering the hunting opportunities that we enjoy takes hard work and sound science, and the Department of Conservation should be commended for employing both to preserve this important part of our heritage, not stripped of its authority to do so in order to protect narrow interests.

House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 506 also does not receive my support because it very clearly violates the Missouri Constitution. Article IV, Section 40(a) of the Missouri Constitution vests the Missouri Conservation Commission with the exclusive authority for:

> The control, management, restoration, conservation, and regulation of the bird fish, game, forestry and all wildlife resources of the state, including hatcheries, sanctuaries, refuges, reservations and all other property owned, acquired, or used for such purposes and the acquisition and establishment thereof.

White-tailed deer are wildlife, and they are also a game animal. Putting them behind a fence does not change that fact. The Constitution makes clear that the Conservation Commission has the sole authority to control, manage, restore, conserve, and regulate "game … and **all** wildlife" (emphasis added). The citizen-supported, citizen-led effort to conserve our forests, fish, and wildlife through this constitutional provision has in its more than 75 years made Missouri a national leader in conservation. And in granting the Commission this broad constitutional authority, the 71% of Missouri citizens who voted to do so certainly did not countenance that a statutory enactment to simply redefine the term "livestock" could suffice to undermine that authority.

I note that it is unfortunate that the legislature insisted on amending this unconstitutional provision to two pieces of legislation that otherwise contain worthy provisions advancing Missouri agriculture.

In accordance with the above stated reasons for disapproval, I am returning House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 506 without my approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor