GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

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JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON
GOVERNOR

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May 4, 2016

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE
98TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SECOND REGULAR SESSION
STATE OF MISSOURI

Herewith I return to you Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651, entitled:

AN ACT

To repeal sections 163.011 and 163.018, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof two new sections relating to elementary and secondary education, with an emergency clause.

I disapprove of Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651. My reasons for disapproval are as follows:

Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651 would dramatically reduce the amount of funding called for under Missouri's public school foundation formula. This would be accomplished by re-imposition of a 5% cap on increases in current operating expenses when calculating the state adequacy target for per student state funding. This cheapening of the foundation formula would result in a broken promise to our local schools and the students they educate and cannot receive my approval.

Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651's primary purpose is to reduce the amount of state funding the legislature had previously concluded was necessary to provide an equitable, high-quality education to Missouri's students. Under existing Missouri law, fully funding the formula would require approximately $3.764 billion. Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651 would slash this goal by more than $400 million. With Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651, the legislature would be turning its back on a funding formula it has long embraced, reneging on its existing fiscal obligation to our local schools and shifting more of the financial burden to educate our students to local taxpayers.

In Missouri, support for local public schools is a fundamental value. And reflecting this value, the state has persevered during my years as Governor to provide greater educational opportunities for our children during both good and bad economic times. However, Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651 would abandon this value at precisely the time the state has been raising its standards for student learning, using more rigorous metrics to measure annual school performance and increasing expectations for teacher training.

By giving future governors and legislators a passing grade for a lower score, Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651 would provide cover for legislators to turn their backs on our local schools by passing even more reckless tax breaks that will further erode state funding for education and require local taxpayers to shoulder more of the financial burden to provide our children a quality education. After already diverting state revenues from education to special interests, legislators are now trying to mask the results of their misguided actions by lowering the bar for state funding for public schools.

Rather than placing a priority on public education, Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651 would instead decrease the benchmark for state funding and shortchange Missouri's students. And while the funding obligation contained in this legislation might be easier to meet, the General Assembly has already failed an initial test, missed this new, lower target and, in so doing, revealed its lack of sincere commitment to our public schools. The fiscal year 2017 budget recently passed by the General Assembly does not fully fund the lowered financial obligation to our schools contained in Senate Bills Nos. 586 & 651 and, in fact, fails to meet the funding level recommended in the budget I submitted in January.

In accordance with the above stated reasons for disapproval, I am returning Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill Nos. 586 & 651 without my approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor