GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

JEFFERSON CITY

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JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON
GOVERNOR

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July 7, 2016

TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Herewith I return to you Senate Substitute No. 2 for Senate Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 1631 (House Bill No. 1631) entitled:

AN ACT

To repeal section 115.427, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to elections, with a contingent effective date.

I disapprove of House Bill No. 1631. My reasons for disapproval are as follows:

House Bill No. 1631 would require an individual to present a non-expired, state or federal government-issued photo identification in order to vote. Like a similar bill I vetoed in 2011, House Bill No. 1631 would disproportionately impact senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and other individuals who have been lawfully voting since becoming eligible, but do not have the kind of government-issued photo ID that would qualify under House Bill No. 1631. This legislation is such an affront to Missourians' fundamental right to vote that it requires that our Constitution be amended for its voter suppression provisions to become effective. Making voting more difficult for qualified voters and disenfranchising certain classes of people is wrong. I will oppose the constitutional amendment in November and I oppose House Bill No. 1631.

Missouri law already requires that voters provide election authorities with a form of identification in order to vote at the polls. House Bill No. 1631 would erect needless obstacles to voting by requiring that individuals provide election authorities with a non-expired, state or federal government-issued photo ID. A voter with a form of ID allowed under current law would only be permitted to cast a ballot under House Bill No. 1631 if they sign a statement under penalty of perjury that, among other things, requires them to explain why they lack a qualifying government-issued photo ID. The bill would also authorize election authorities to take a picture of voters who appear at the polls without the qualifying ID.

As a result, an elderly person with an expired driver's license would only be allowed to cast a regular ballot if they sign a statement under penalty of perjury, and wait in a separate line to have their picture taken. The same would be true for a person with a disability that prevented them

from easily acquiring the specific ID required under the bill. To that extent, House Bill No. 1631 would needlessly cast suspicion on the elderly, disabled, and other individuals who, for a myriad of reasons, do not have the type of government-issued photo ID required under the bill. And, while House Bill No. 1631 ostensibly requires that qualifying IDs and certain supporting documents be provided by state agencies free-of-charge, the bill does nothing to alleviate the time and expense required of Missourians to acquire a qualifying ID. Individuals who do not have a copy of their birth certificate or other necessary documents would still be required to expend their time and resources to obtain those records in order to obtain the qualifying government-issued photo ID.

Importantly, House Bill No. 1631 purports to solve a problem which does not exist. Missouri already has strong protections in place to prevent voter fraud, and voter impersonation fraud is an extremely rare occurrence. Due to the clear and overwhelming evidence that photo ID requirements are not necessary, the proliferation of these laws is widely understood to be motivated by an attempt to suppress turnout among certain classes of voters. Indeed, research has shown that, when controlling for other factors, photo ID requirements have a negative impact on turnout among racial and ethnic minorities.

Voting is the foundation of our democracy. By casting a ballot, citizens make their voices heard and hold their elected officials accountable. And the more citizens participate in our democracy by going to the polls, the stronger our democracy is. Putting additional and unwarranted barriers between citizens and their ability to vote is wrong and detrimental to our system of government as a whole.

House Bill No. 1631 has the same photo ID requirement that failed to gain my approval in 2011 because it would discourage registered voters who have been voting lawfully their entire adult lives from going to the polls. Disenfranchising voters is unacceptable and will not receive my approval.

In accordance with the above stated reasons for disapproving, I am returning Senate Substitute No. 2 for Senate Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 1631 without my approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor