

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR

JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

May 10, 2011



The Honorable Linda McCulloch
Secretary of State
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary McCulloch:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill No. 444 (HB 444), **"AN ACT CREATING THE MONTANA PUBLIC FINANCE WEBSITE; REQUIRING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WEBSITE FROM WHICH THE GENERAL PUBLIC CAN SEARCH, RETRIEVE, AND DOWNLOAD INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE FINANCES, INCLUDING STATE ENTITY BUDGETS, REVENUE, APPROPRIATIONS, AND EXPENDITURES BY EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE, AND JUDICIAL BRANCH AGENCIES; AND PROVIDING FOR DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION DUTIES AND RULEMAKING AUTHORITY."**

House Bill 444 would establish a website with a searchable database, listing all state expenditures for the public to examine. Development of this website would cost almost \$400,000, but provide no return on the taxpayer investment. Montanans already have ample access to information about the state budget. The Legislative Fiscal Division publishes volumes of reports about the budget passed by the Legislature and endless other fiscal matters. If legislators desired to publish more information about Montana's fiscal affairs, they already have the authority to upload that information on their own website. Additionally, Legislative Audit Division reports, showing detailed budget information, already can be obtained by the public in both digital and hard copy formats for free. As well, the state's Consolidated Annual Financial Report (CAFR) is available from the Legislative Auditor.

There is a more practical obstacle to my veto. As part of our overall budget settlement, my office reached an agreement with the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate that this bill would not receive funding. This means that the nearly \$400,000 cost of implementing HB 444 is not addressed in House Bill 2 and would represent an unfunded mandate imposed upon the Department of Administration. The Department cannot absorb the costs necessary to implement HB 444 from within its existing budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Schweitzer", written over a horizontal line.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR

Cc: Legislative Services Division