

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

April 9, 2015

The Honorable Austin Knudsen
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Debby Barrett
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Knudsen and President Barrett:

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 348 (HB 348), "AN ACT AUTHORIZING AN INTERSTATE HEALTH CARE COMPACT; DIRECTING THE GOVERNOR TO JOIN THE COMPACT; AND PROVIDING A CONTINGENT EFFECTIVE DATE."

HB 348 requires that Montana enter into an Interstate Health Care Compact (Compact). The Compact would allow the state to suspend the operation of all federal laws, rules, regulations, and orders regarding health care that are inconsistent with Montana's laws. Laws subject to suspension could include Medicare, Medicaid, the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and others.

HB 348 is a bad idea that would compel substantial state government expansion and put our most vulnerable citizens at risk. Completely suspending federal health care laws like Medicare and Medicaid and having the state administer these programs would require a massive increase in state infrastructure and personnel. Further, if the state joined the Compact, the Legislature could determine that it no longer wanted to appropriate its dollars towards Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP, or an insurance marketplace, putting over 400,000 Montanans who participate in these programs in continual danger every legislative session of losing access to health care. Trusting that future legislatures and governors would fully appropriate these dollars towards health care and not be tempted during lean budget years to fund other essential programs is too risky a proposition.

The fact that this bill could place thousands of Montana seniors and their Medicare in jeopardy is reason enough to veto it. However, the bill is further flawed because the Compact requires Congressional approval before it can be implemented. There is no serious possibility of the Congress approving this Compact. At best, HB 348 is political posturing.

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President Barrett
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For these reasons, I veto HB 348.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division
Secretary of State