

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK  
GOVERNOR



MIKE COONEY  
LT. GOVERNOR

May 11, 2017

The Honorable Corey Stapleton  
Secretary of State  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Secretary Stapleton:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto Senate Bill 176 (SB 176), "AN ACT REVISING REQUIREMENTS FOR LANDLORDS TO MAINTAIN PREMISES; REVISING LANDLORDS' ACCESS TO PREMISES; AMENDING SECTIONS 70-24-303, 70-24-312, 70-24-424, 70-24-426, 70-33-303, 70-33-312, AND 70-33-426, MCA; REPEALING SECTIONS 70-24-322 AND 70-33-322, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

SB 176 is one of more than a dozen bills that were introduced this session seeking to overhaul landlord-tenant law in Montana. If enacted, these bills would significantly alter the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act that has been in place since 1977. If there are problems with the state of landlord-tenant law in Montana, I would encourage the legislature to engage in a balanced, independent and thoughtful study of the issue rather than the haphazard approach of the slate of bills introduced this session. While I believe some bills introduced this session are appropriately balanced and reasonable, others are not.

SB 176 strikes in its entirety the current legal requirement that a landlord may not knowingly allow any tenant or other person to engage in activity that creates a reasonable potential that the premises will be damaged or destroyed or that neighboring tenants may be injured. This provision is not one that can be cast aside – it is a fundamental part of a landlord's obligation to ensure the safety of his or her tenants. If a landlord knows a tenant is engaging in activity that could injure other tenants or damage their dwelling units, the landlord has an obligation to intervene. The responsibility properly lies with the landlord, as other tenants cannot be expected to take matters into their own hands. Removing this common sense safety provision will increase tenant conflict, and decrease tenant safety.

For this reason, I veto SB 176.

Sincerely,



STEVE BULLOCK  
Governor

cc: Legislative Services Division  
Scott Sales, President of the Senate  
Austin Knudsen, Speaker of the House