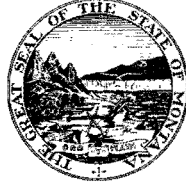


OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

May 12, 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. 526 (HB 526), **"AN ACT AUTHORIZING AN INTERSTATE HEALTH CARE COMPACT; AND DIRECTING THE GOVERNOR TO JOIN THE COMPACT."**

Under HB 526, Montana would join an interstate compact with other states to suspend the operation of all federal health care laws (except the military, veterans, and Indian Health Services) that are inconsistent with the state's health care laws, including laws as far-ranging as Medicaid, Medicare, the federal Children's Health Insurance Program, and laws governing Federally Qualified Health Centers, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control as related to disease outbreak. Instead, under HB 526, Montana would receive federal funding for health care according to a formula applicable to member states to the compact, based on federal spending on health care in the state in baseline fiscal year 2010 as adjusted annually for population and inflation.

Under the compact, Montana seniors, people with disabilities, and children are among the populations that the state would serve in potential disregard of the above-listed federal laws, including, as stated, Medicare and Medicaid. Benefits Montanans receive under those federal laws would be in danger of elimination at the whim of the Montana Legislature, which could change Montana's health care laws biennially, leaving no federal protections in place.

Tucked into HB 526 is the caveat that the bill is not effective until Congress consents to the right of states to enter the compact and suspend the operation of any conflicting federal law. We will put a person on Neptune before Congress gives this consent. HB 526 is a frivolous measure that does nothing at best, and at worst puts seniors, Montanans with disabilities, and children at risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Schweitzer", written over a large, stylized graphic element that resembles a signature or a decorative flourish.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR

cc: Legislative Services Division