



GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

JEFFERSON CITY

65102

JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON
GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 720
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July 12, 2012

TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Herewith I return to you Conference Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for Senate Substitute for Senate Bill No. 749 entitled:

AN ACT

To repeal section 376.1199, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof two new sections relating to the protection of the religious beliefs and moral convictions of certain persons and entities, with an emergency clause.

I disapprove of Conference Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for Senate Substitute for Senate Bill No. 749. My reasons for disapproval are as follows:

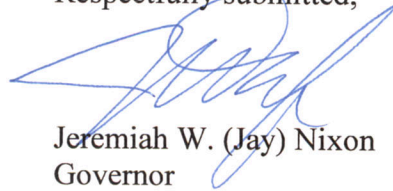
Missouri law for over a decade has effectively provided strong religious protections, which I support, giving employers the freedom to abstain from providing or paying for contraceptive coverage in their health plans "if the use or provision of such contraceptives is contrary to the moral, ethical or religious beliefs or tenets of such person or entity." These protections are not limited to religious or religious affiliated organizations. Instead, existing Missouri law provides that any employer, not just religious related entities, with firmly held objections to contraceptives may decline contraceptive coverage. Similarly, these same protections extend to employees who have a moral, ethical or religious opposition to the use or provision of contraceptives regardless of whether their employer is a religious or religious affiliated organization. Nothing in Conference Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for Senate Substitute for Senate Bill No. 749 would enhance these substantive religious protections that have been in place and afforded to employees and employers and will remain part of Missouri law after my action today.

However, Conference Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for Senate Substitute for Senate Bill No. 749 contains a provision that would undermine the priority, found in current law, placed on the moral, ethical or religious beliefs of both employees and employers. Under that provision, an insurance company would be allowed to impose its will, and deny inclusion of contraceptive coverage, even if that position is inconsistent with the rights and beliefs of the employee or employer. The moral, ethical and religious beliefs of Missourians, that are currently honored, should not become secondary to the will of an insurance company. Such

an effort would signal a retreat from the liberties enjoyed by employers and employees under current law.

In accordance with the above stated reasons for disapproval, I am returning Conference Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for Senate Substitute for Senate Bill No. 749 without my approval.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay Nixon", is written over the printed name and title.

Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor