

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

March 27, 2015

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

Dear Speaker Knudsen:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I do hereby return with amendments House Bill 250 (HB 250), "AN ACT CLARIFYING THAT SOUND REDUCTION DEVICES MAY BE USED ON FIREARMS WHILE HUNTING WILDLIFE NOT PROTECTED BY STATE OR FEDERAL LAW; AMENDING SECTION 87-6-401, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

HB 250 would allow the use of suppressors on firearms only while hunting wildlife not protected by state or federal law. I am returning this bill with proposed amendments that will allow the use of a suppressor on a firearm during all lawful hunting, not just when the wildlife pursued is not protected by state or federal law.

It is time for Montana to join the clear majority of states that allow the use of suppressors for hunting. All of the western states do so, except for California. The public perception of suppressors as the same thing as silencers, where the assassin quietly dispatches his victim, no longer holds true. Suppressors mitigate the sound of a shot, but do not silence it.

The use of suppressors for hunting, when hunters cannot wear ear protection because they need to be aware of their surroundings, can help protect against hearing loss. This is especially true for our younger hunters, even those who are not actually hunting but are accompanying their parent in the field.

I understand the concerns regarding the risks of increased poaching and do not take this lightly, but other states have not found this to be the case. Similarly, in the past private landowners have expressed concerns about being able to hear shots on their property, as a means of knowing that hunters are present. There have been three bills this legislative session that addressed the use of suppressors, and private landowners did not appear to express any opposition. As I mentioned above, it is clear to me that the public understanding and perception of suppressors has changed.

Speaker Knudsen
March 27, 2015
Page 2

I respectfully ask that you support my amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division
Secretary of State