STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Office of the Governor

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 18, 2013

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATE:

GOVERNOR'S SIGNING STATEMENT FOR HOUSE BILL 1515

I am signing House Bill 1515, "AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 19-5-93 AND 21-19-67, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES OF ANY COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY MAY DONATE FUNDS TO CHAPTERS OF THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION; TO FURTHER AMEND SECTION 21-19-67, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CLARIFY THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES TO DONATE FUNDS TO CERTAIN CERTIFIED FARMERS' MARKETS; TO BRING FORWARD SECTIONS 19-5-73 AND 21-19-69, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, FOR PURPOSES OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENT OR REPEAL TO CONFORM TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES"; in doing so, however, I wish to emphasize the limited use that should be made of its provisions.

House Bill 1515 amends Sections 19-5-93 and 21-19-67 of the Mississippi Code to add farmers' markets and YMCAs to lists of organizations to which county board of supervisors and municipalities are allowed to make donations. In general, taxpayer dollars should not be used to make donations to private organizations. There are many wonderful nonprofit organizations like YMCAs or farmers' markets that serve important purposes in our State. If individuals want to donate money to such groups, they have every right to do so. However, they should not be taxed and forced to do so.

The bill also increases from $1,000 to $5,000 the amount that a board of supervisors can contribute toward the cost of memorials to deceased veterans. State and local governments have long built or assisted in building suitable monuments to those who have served our Nation in battle, and it is appropriate to do so given the sacrifice and courage of our soldiers. Counties should be prudent in making such donations at a time that many are struggling to finance core government functions such as maintaining infrastructure and providing emergency services. However, this remains a worthy cause. For this reason, I am signing House Bill 1515 despite my objections to donating tax dollars to private groups.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Bryant
Governor