

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE  
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS  
LT. GOVERNOR

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Brandon Ler  
Speaker of the House  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Matt Regier  
President of the Senate  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Ler and President Regier:

Over the last four years, I'm proud of what we've accomplished together to boost public safety and support the law enforcement heroes who protect our communities. We've increased their pay, ensured they have the tools they need to do their jobs, invested in expanding capacity in our corrections systems so convicted criminals are locked up and aren't on our streets, and increased the number of judges to handle a growing criminal caseload.

In 2023, we worked together to protect retirement benefits for law enforcement officers, specifically Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) troopers, sheriffs, Department of Justice investigators, and detention officers. The reforms we made ensure that their pension benefits, through the Highway Patrol Officers' Retirement System (HPORS) and the Sheriffs' Retirement System (SRS), are secure, sound, and there for them when they're eligible to collect them. The reforms shored up our public safety pensions, with members eligible to collect their retirement benefit when they have served for 20 years, reach 50 years of age, and end their service.

Senate Bill 7 changes the eligibility guidelines, eroding the solvency of law enforcement officers' pension systems and reducing the security of the pensions they count on. Currently, HPORS and SRS benefits are available to a member who (1) has served 20 years, (2) is at least 50 years of age, and (3) ends his or her service. Senate Bill 7, however, would make pension benefits available to a member who has served 20 years and ended his or her service, striking the minimum age requirement.

When examining the eligibility criteria of 107 public safety pension systems throughout the United States, 72 have eligibility requirements that include a minimum age of a member and a

minimum number of years of service, including Montana's HPORS and SRS. Thirty-five require a minimum number of years of service but no minimum age to collect pension benefits.

Furthermore, as part of the 2023 reforms, we enacted House Bill 569, investing nearly \$96 million to shore up public safety pensions. We appropriated \$27.6 million to amortize HPORS in 25 years, and we appropriated \$26.8 million to amortize SRS in 25 years. Senate Bill 7 undermines that strategic investment and makes our public safety pension systems less sound.

We back the blue in Montana, and part of that commitment to them is ensuring their retirement benefits are sound, secure, and there when they're eligible to collect them. To protect the stability and soundness of law enforcement pensions through HPORS and SRS, we should maintain the reforms we enacted in 2023. Senate Bill 7 rolls back those reforms, jeopardizing the viability of these pension systems and the security of law enforcement officers' pensions.

Therefore, 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 7: "AN ACT REVISING THE RETIREMENT CRITERIA FOR THE HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM AND THE SHERIFFS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM; AMENDING SECTIONS 19-6-501 AND 19-7-501, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY DATE."

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte  
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division  
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State