

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:

Local firefighters put their lives on the line to protect our communities and our livelihoods. Our local firefighters should have the training and resources they need to get their job done, and local government is the most appropriate source for providing funding for local firefighter training.

House Bill 511 creates a new state government program at the Department of Military Affairs to establish a \$5 million firefighter training facility grant program and distribute grants to "local government firefighting authorities for property acquisition, construction, space acquisition, remodeling, repairs, and the purchase of appliances and equipment."

House Bill 511 appropriates \$5 million in new state spending to fund a grant program for local firefighter training facilities, an infrastructure project that is primarily, if not wholly, a function of local government. Further, cost projections indicate the program will require more than \$150,000 in administrative expenses between fiscal years 2026 and 2028, including more staff, travel, equipment, supplies, and other associated costs.

Our Montana Constitution requires us to balance our budget. In 2021 and 2023, I am proud that we worked together to deliver balanced budgets that not only were fiscally responsible, but also allowed us to seize the opportunity to let hardworking Montanans keep more of what they earn. The budget proposal I sent to the Legislature for the 2025 Legislative Session was fiscally conservative, keeping spending below inflation.

The budget and other bills with hefty price tags that the Legislature passed, however, are not fiscally responsible. Therefore, I will keenly review the budget and spending bills the Legislature

passed, making some difficult decisions to protect taxpayers and their hard-earned resources. Hardworking Montanans expect us to be fiscally responsible.

I appreciate the sponsor's intent with House Bill 511, and working with the sponsor, relevant state agencies, and stakeholders during the biennium, we can chart a better path forward. For example, instead of a grant program, one path to consider is a low-interest loan program with stronger guardrails.

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 House Bill 511: "AN ACT CREATING A FIREFIGHTING TRAINING FACILITY GRANT PROGRAM TO FUND CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR PROJECTS, AND EQUIPMENT PURCHASES; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; REQUIRING MATCHING FUNDS ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS; ALLOWING APPROPRIATIONS TO CONTINUE INTO THE 2027 AND 2029 BIENNIUMS; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE."

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State