



STATE OF MICHIGAN
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

BRIAN CALLEY
LT. GOVERNOR

June 30, 2017

Michigan House of Representatives
Michigan Senate
State Capitol Building
Lansing, Michigan 48913

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today I vetoed Senate Bill 163. This legislation is more emotionally and politically charged than most.

SB 163 would create the "Choose Life" fundraising license plate, the proceeds of which would go to the Choose Life Fund. Money from that fund would then be disbursed from the state to the private Choose Michigan Life Fund, which will in turn distribute funds to eligible nonprofit organizations of its choosing, such as crisis pregnancy centers, homes for pregnant women, and other organizations that provide support to pregnant women, outreach to at-risk populations, and promote alternatives to abortion. These are noble causes; but, having a private fund making funding decisions is a concern.

But SB 163 is not about a license plate; it's about the State of Michigan making a political statement. And that statement arouses strong emotional reaction that divides the residents of this state.

In 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that when a state issues a specialty license plate, the state itself is speaking.^[1] And as a speaker, it is free to choose its message. The Supreme Court noted that "[w]hen the government speaks it is entitled to promote a program, to espouse a policy, or to take a position. In doing so, it represents its citizens and it carries out its duties on their behalf."

The "Choose Life" license plate is a political message that has the potential to bitterly divide millions of Michiganders and that, in my view, is not appropriate for a state-issued license plate.

Sincerely,

Rick Snyder
Governor

^[1] *Walker v Tex Div, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Inc.*, 576 US ____; 192 L Ed 2d 274 (2015)