



March 10, 2026

The Honorable Chip Neiman
Speaker of the House of Representatives
State Capitol, 200 West 24th Street
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Re: Veto of House Enrolled Act No. 35/House Bill 0178 Public unions-transparency and dues withdrawal limitations

Dear Speaker Neiman,

I am frustrated with the increasing trend of out-of-state interests foisting out-of-state solutions on Wyoming. With alarming regularity, these think-tanks-for-hire use our legislative process to enact solutions to problems we do not have. Chalking up a win in Wyoming to augment their scoresheet across the nation does very little for our state, but it allows them to continue to raise funds for the fat cats who support these efforts.

HEA0035/HB0178, often dubbed “paycheck protection,” is an example of that sort of cynicism. While I understand the inappropriateness of using public resources to support the political activity of private organizations, this bill is not a solution to that problem. Rather it is a thinly veiled attempt to frustrate the choices an employee can make with their own earned money. Truly it is correct that public resources should not be used for political advocacy; but having paid someone for their work, the state has very little to say with how that individual chooses to use his own money.

Wyoming is already a “Right to Work” state, there are no closed shops here. When an employee chooses to opt in for automatic withdrawals, the state should presume they know what they are doing. And that is the way it works currently here in Wyoming. Public employees may voluntarily “opt in” to automatic deductions to cover contributions for charities and organizations, including labor organizations, as a convenience not an obligation. This convenience comes at negligible costs to public employers. It seems to

me if the administrative costs of this practice were the true concern of the legislature, the amendment offered to charge for the convenience would have been adopted.

Instead, HEA0035/HB0178 creates several problems. Chief of those concerns is the non-uniform treatment of types of public employees. How can the state decide what employees (or citizens for that matter) chose to do with the money they have earned? The notion that we should carve out automatic payroll deductions based upon the type of employment should alarm anyone who values freedom. Our public safety personnel, public health workers, teachers, and other public servants all work rigorously to ensure the ongoing operations of our state, counties, and towns. Creating disparity between those employees by allowing the simple convenience of an opt-in automatic deduction from earned compensation for some but not others is unnecessarily punitive at best and subject to legal challenge at worst.

On the issue of non-uniformity, I also find it arbitrary for this legislation to prohibit deductions for contributions to labor organizations and certain political organizations but not other organizations that are engaged in advocacy work. This raises questions about the potential retaliatory nature behind this initiative, rather than an honest response to the concerns brought forth by our constituents. Shouldn't we trust our citizens to make their own choices? Is it better for the state to make those choices for us?

Further, I question the penalty the bill creates. Impulsively exposing public employers and employees to potential criminal liability deserves a more robust conversation. At the state level, the executive branch is obligated to operate within the statutory authority granted by the Legislature. Adding criminal penalties into the legislation seems to be a punitive response without consideration for unintended consequences, including an unclear relationship with governmental immunity.

I finally raise a concern on behalf of our state retirees. In its current form, the bill neglects to consider Wyoming Retirement System beneficiaries who elect to receive health benefits through automatic payments from their retirement benefits that are conditioned on their participation in a labor organization. How the state should intervene in that decision to direct compensation toward certain benefits offered by labor organizations and not the state retirement system was not adequately considered in the legislative process. Again, this seems to be a potential unintended consequence of rash policymaking fueled by political retribution. This is not the Wyoming way.

After careful consideration, and for the reasons above, I have decided to veto HEA0035/HB0178. I reiterate my adamant support of Wyoming's status as a "Right to Work" state, and I have no doubt that this issue will be taken up again in a future legislative session. When that time comes, I encourage the Legislature to scrutinize the proposal for the concerns I raise here and other unforeseen consequences that deserve attention.

Sincerely,



Mark Gordon
Governor

MG:rl:kh

cc: The Honorable Bo Biteman, President of the Senate
The Honorable Chuck Gray, Secretary of State
Chief Clerk, Wyoming House of Representatives
Chief Clerk, Wyoming Senate