

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



June 28, 2023

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VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Patrick Page Cortez
Senate President
Louisiana Senate
Post Office Box 94062
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9062

RECEIVED

JUN 30 2023

SENATE
SECRETARY'S
OFFICE

RE: Veto of Senate Bill 159 of the 2023 Regular Session

Dear President Cortez:

Please be advised that I have vetoed Senate Bill 159 of the 2023 Regular Session.

Senate Bill 159 is a blatant reversal of the Raise the Age legislation passed with bipartisan support in 2016. Raise the Age was implemented in stages to allow the juvenile justice system to make adjustments in preparation for changes pursuant to the law. Senate Bill 159 is also unnecessary as Louisiana Children's Code Article 306 states that the courts may, based on a balancing test, detain juveniles fully segregated by both sight and sound, away adult offenders.

This rollback is contrary to detention standards in The Federal Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act which prohibits juvenile offenders from being housed with adults even if they are being prosecuted as adults. Senate Bill 159 also runs afoul of the Prison Rape Elimination Act. Violations of federal law will result in Louisiana losing federal funding critical to operating and maintaining our juvenile justice and adult correctional systems. Housing seventeen year olds with adults is dangerous and reckless. Juveniles detained in adult jails are often preyed upon by adult inmates. They often come out as seasoned criminals after being victimized.

For these reasons, I have vetoed the bill.

Sincerely,

John Bel Edwards
Governor

enclosure

cc: Honorable Clay Schexnayder
Speaker of the House of Representatives