1	SENATE BILL NO. 49
2	INTRODUCED BY B. USHER
3	BY REQUEST OF THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
4	
5	A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROHIBITING JUDICIAL OFFICERS FROM INITIATING OR
6	CONDUCTING ANY PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS OR TAKING ANY DISCIPLINARY
7	MEASURES AGAINST CERTAIN ATTORNEYS FOR ACTIONS TAKEN WHILE SERVING AS A
8	CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICER OR A MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATURE; PROVIDING EXCEPTIONS; AND
9	PROVIDING A DEFINITION; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND A RETROACTIVE
10	APPLICABILITY DATE."
11	
12	WHEREAS, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, and
13	Superintendent of Public Instruction are constitutional officers because their offices are provided for in the
14	Montana Constitution and these officials form a part of the executive branch; and
15	WHEREAS, legislators are also provided for in the Montana Constitution and form the legislative
16	branch; and
17	WHEREAS, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article II, section 7, of the
18	Montana Constitution, both protect freedom of speech; and
19	WHEREAS, the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article II, section 17, o
20	the Montana Constitution both guarantee due process of law before any official deprivation of "life, liberty, or
21	property"; and
22	WHEREAS, Article II, section 4, of the Montana Constitution provides, "Neither the state nor any
23	person or institution shall discriminate against any person in the exercise of his civil or political rights on
24	account of political ideas"; and
25	WHEREAS, elected officials who are also licensed to practice law in the State of Montana must be
26	allowed to perform their official duties without the threat of disciplinary measures from the judicial branch,
27	including the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and the Commission on Practice, pursuant to the doctrine of
28	separation of powers and the protections for free speech, due process, and freedom from political



1	discrimination.
2	
3	BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:
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5	NEW SECTION. Section 1. Restrictions on disciplinary proceedings. (1) Except as provided in
6	subsection (3), a judicial officer may not initiate or conduct any professional disciplinary proceedings or take
7	any disciplinary measures against an attorney who serves as a constitutional officer as defined in 2-6-1002 or
8	as a member of the legislature for actions taken by the attorney during the attorney's term of public office THAT
9	COULD DETER, RETALIATE AGAINST, OR PREVENT THE LAWFUL EXERCISE OF THE ATTORNEY'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS
10	OR WOULD OTHERWISE IMPEDE THE FAITHFUL EXECUTION OF OFFICE.
11	(2) A judicial officer is barred from conducting proceedings described in subsection (1) after the
12	attorney leaves office if the basis for the proceeding arises while the attorney is in office.
13	(3) A judge or justice of the peace may take disciplinary measures against an attorney identified in
14	subsection (1) for courtroom behavior that disrupts a judicial proceeding.
15	(4) IF PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS ARE INITIATED AGAINST AN ATTORNEY SERVING AS A
16	CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICER OR MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATURE, THAT INDIVIDUAL MAY FILE A MOTION TO DISMISS OR A
17	MOTION TO QUASH UNDER THIS SECTION.
18	(4)(5) For the purposes of this section, "judicial officer" means a judge, a justice of the peace, a
19	supreme court justice, any court of law, the office of disciplinary counsel, and the commission on practice.
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21	NEW SECTION. Section 2. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
22	integral part of Title 3, chapter 1, part 6, and the provisions of Title 3, chapter 1, part 6, apply to [section 1].
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24	NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.
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26	NEW SECTION. Section 3. Retroactive a pplicability. [This act] applies retroactively, within the
27	meaning of 1-2-109, to any disciplinary proceedings occurring on or after January 1, 2024.
28	- END -

