

Testimony of Eric Volk, Executive Director

ND Rural Water Systems Association

House Bill 1353

House Appropriations Committee

January 26, 2021

Chairman Delzer and members of the House Appropriations Committee, my name is Eric Volk. I am the executive director of the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association (NDRWSA). Our vision is to ensure all of North Dakota has access to affordable, ample, and quality water. NDRWSA is committed to completing and maintaining North Dakota's water infrastructure for economic growth and quality of life. Today, I am submitting testimony in support of House Bill 1353.

Rural/Regional Water Facts:

- Serve over 160,000 rural residents (59,000 connections).
- Provide water to 268 (75%) of North Dakota's 357 incorporated cities.
 - Furnish water to over 295,000 North Dakota residents.
 - Provide service through over 40,000 miles of pipe.

In addition to the Southwest Pipeline Project, Northwest Area Water System, the Red River Valley Water Supply Project and the Western Area Water Supply Project, there are currently many other rural and regional projects in various stages of development across the state. Some examples of these projects are the completion of the large expansion of the Dakota Rural Water District, the further development of the Walsh Rural Water District, and the completion of a multi-county expansion of the McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District, in addition to several others; many of them located in energy impacted areas of our state. (Please see attached 21-23 project funding map).

From a project sponsor aspect, we feel this bill will increase the agencies overall effectiveness by adding a director position. Water projects, small or larger, are just not technical

in manner. Projects also include financial, management and political (state/federal) aspects. The creation of the director position would allow for the state engineer position to focus their expertise on the technical issues (permitting, design, environmental concerns, life cycle analysis and a list that would go on and on). The director would focus on such things as state, tribal, federal & international issues, project funding & appropriations, and politics. The size of the agency budget and the amount of project development each biennium warrant an additional, high-level director.

With that said, the NDRWSA supports HB 1353 which will help meet the critical water needs of North Dakota. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the NDRWSA. Eric Volk, ericvolk@ndrw.org.

