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CITY OF JAMESTOWN



NORTH DAKOTA

"THE BUFFALO CITY"

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January 18, 2021

Honorable Craig Headland, Chairman
House Finance and Taxation Committee
North Dakota House of Representatives

RE: House Bill 1200

Dear Chairman Headland and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today to speak in opposition to House Bill 1200. Although I serve as the Mayor of Jamestown, I have not asked the City Council to weigh in on this matter, so I am writing on my own behalf in opposition to this bill.

Unfortunately, those of us at the bottom of the food chain who are responsible for paying bills sometimes find ourselves in a position where there is simply no alternative except for raising taxes to maintain sound local government. We may not like it, but that is the truth. We have elections in the city every two years. This is the vehicle for voter approval of the job we are doing.

I have in the past invited members of the legislature to come to our budget meetings or hearings and publicly comment on any portion of our budget they feel to be improper and explain their position to our residents. For every action there is a reaction. No one took me up on that offer.

There is another problem here that simply has to do with practicality. With the time constraints on when our budgets must be submitted, there simply would not be sufficient time in most cases to hold an election after it became obvious that an increase above 2% would be necessary. And let's not forget there are property-rich cities and property-poor cities and in many cases that has really nothing to do with how well the city is or is not being run, but often by geography or other quirks of fate.

Jamestown for example is as you all know a wonderful small town, but much of our heavier industry is located out of the city limits and we also have an above average percentage of tax-exempt properties. This leaves a position where we have one of the higher mill rates of the 10 largest cities. However, if we had the same per-capita tax valuation as the average of the other nine larger cities, we would be the lowest mill levy and that mill levy would raise \$500,000 more than what our now highest or second highest mill levy raises.

These are decisions that must be left to where they can be best decided and that is at the local level.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration.

Yours Truly,

Dwaine Heinrich, Mayor
City of Jamestown, North Dakota