



Testimony on HB 1182
Presented to the Government and Veterans Affairs House Standing Committee
Prepared by Bernie Dardis, West Fargo City Commission President
Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021

1 Chairman Kasper and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs
2 Standing Committee: I would like to take this opportunity to submit my opposition to HB
3 1182, which would provide candidates running for local office the option of declaring a
4 political party affiliation.

5 I have been active in North Dakota politics for much of my adult life, so it may
6 seem odd that I oppose this bill. However, when it comes to providing services and
7 making important decisions at the local level I believe it is of utmost important to set
8 partisan differences aside and focus on the residents. In fact, there are very few
9 situations where a local elected official's political leaning would affect a vote or policy
10 decision. As they say, "There is no Democratic or Republican way to collect garbage."
11 Furthermore, cooperation between elected officials is more likely when the focus is on
12 getting the job done and not the added complication of party politics.

13 Non-partisan elections at the local level also create a more competitive
14 landscape, where candidates are not limited to a single party representative. This
15 opens the door for many more residents to consider stepping into local politics and
16 contributing to the betterment of their community. Additionally, voters learn more
17 about the candidates and their views on specific topics, instead of relying on their
18 interpretation of the political party's platform.

19 As an elected official without the pressure of partisan politics, I have a greater
20 ability to learn about specific issues and make decisions based on what is best for my
21 community – a value I strongly believe in and will continue to espouse regardless of
22 party politics. We can also expect that once one candidate declares a party, the

23 option will be taken away from the rest of the candidates because they will feel
24 pressure to declare.

25 For these reasons, I oppose HB 1182. If you have any questions, I am available at
26 bernie.dardis@westfargond.gov.