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January 21, 2021

TO: Chairman Kasper and Members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
FR: Jim Silrum, Deputy Secretary of State on behalf of Secretary of State Al Jaeger
RE: HB 1182 – Allowing political party designation for school, county, and city candidates

This bill would allow candidates for county, city, and school offices to have a political party designation next to their name on the ballot. This language is permissive rather than mandatory so candidates for these offices would not need to declare a political party designation.

The Secretary of State's office is offering neutral testimony because the outcome will impact the creation of the ballot for an election.

In a statewide general election, there are three distinct ballots, all included on the single ballot given to the voter. Those are: the political party ballot for many statewide and all legislative offices; the no-party ballot for Superintendent of Public Instruction, Justice of the Supreme Court, Judges of the District Court, multi-county, county, city, and school offices; and finally, the measures ballot. If county, city, and school candidates may request a political party designation, but some candidates for those contests do not, where on the ballot would these contests be placed?

In a statewide primary election, the ballot includes all of the "sub-ballots" that are included on a general election ballot, but for the political party primary ballot, there are separate ballots for each political party that is officially recognized in the state. Where would the county offices be placed on the ballot since the candidates may or may not be associated with a political party? Also, because city and school offices only have a general election that is held most often in June, where would those contests be placed on the ballot?

It has been said that the June election is the most complicated election in the state because the ballot contains both primary nominations and no-party general elections for cities and schools. It is also required that voters only vote for the candidates of one political party listed on the ballot. The answers to the questions above are critical to ensure that the voters will know how to mark their ballots if this legislative change is adopted.

Respectfully submitted.