

Dear Committee Members,

The response to COVID-19 clearly highlighted the need for legislation that would protect the balance of power among the branches of government, particularly with regard to current and future state emergency declarations.

Not only did the arbitrary and draconian nature of the executive orders undermine legitimate concerns of Covid-19, but it caused great financial, emotional, and mental harm to thousands of North Dakotans. Throughout the last year, we forced small businesses, restaurants, bars, and salons to make significant financial sacrifices, kept families away from dying loved ones, imprisoned the elderly in long-term care facilities, kept kids out of school and extracurricular activities to the detriment of their mental health, forced people to wear useless pieces of cloth over their faces, and even informed citizens how many people we should invite into our homes over the holidays. And the executive office did all of these things based on inaccurate data provided by unelected public health officials and without the input and consent of citizens. North Dakotans need to know that their voices matter even during a state of emergency. We need to know that our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness will be protected from future executive orders that seek to micromanage citizens' lives in the name of safety.

There is a current trend in government to declare an emergency, whether it is related to climate, guns, white supremacy, or COVID-19, in order to implement extremist policies and/or to justify spending obscene amounts of taxpayer dollars. There should be more input and discussion surrounding what constitutes a state of emergency, not less. And that input should be as local as possible, not from global entities like the World Health Organization, out-of-state billionaires, or a single branch of government on a power trip.

Please render a DO PASS on 2124. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amber Vibeto
Minot, District 3