



North Dakota Township Officers Association

Promoting basic Grassroots Government!

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House Political Subdivisions Committee

To oppose SB 2324

Good morning Chairman Dockter and members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee. I am Larry Syverson, the Executive Secretary of the North Dakota Township Officers Association. NDTOA represents the nearly 6,000 Township Officers that serve 1,317 organized ND Townships.

NDTOA is currently conducting a survey of its members concerning funding shortcomings and asking them to identify projects that they cannot complete because of the lack of funds. So far we have received 305 responses back; the most common unfunded issue is the replacement of deteriorated or undersized culverts, this was reported by 111 of the 305 townships. Of those that provided cost estimates the mean value of the needed work was \$42,029.

It would seem the premise of SB 2324 is that if the township replaces one culvert all will be well, end of story. If only it were that easy I would not bother to oppose the bill. The problem is, the problem would not be solved, just moved to the next mile and then to the next mile. The flow must reach either a river or an assessment drain before it can be considered resolved. That often requires a chain of culverts which must be replaced resulting in cost in the tens of thousands of dollars.

Should SB 2324 pass, townships will have to make some difficult choices if faced with one of these dilemmas; how to pay for thousands of dollars' worth of culvert installations and still maintain the road network. Perhaps they could set up a special assessment district and charge the cost to the benefited landowners. Perhaps the road in question might be closed, barricaded, and cut open to allow unrestricted flow; the public would have to take the long-way-around to get where they need to go, not a good solution, but if the township doesn't have an extra \$60,000 that might be the answer.

One possible solution would be for the state engineer to determine the water course and forward the information to the appropriate water resource district to set up an assessment drain district to cover the costs of the culverts and any downstream modifications to handle the resulting flow rate. That way the costs would not be paid at the expense of road maintenance funding. This would also allow the costs to be applied across multiple townships if required by the water course. (continued)

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NDTOA opposes SB 2324 as an unfunded mandate, and unless a way can be found to address the cost, I must respectfully ask that you give it a do not pass recommendation

Thank you, Chairman Dockter and committee members; that concludes my prepared statement; I will try to answer any questions you may have.