

Testimony HB 1238
Senate Government and Veteran Affairs Committee
March 4, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Government and Veterans Committee, my name is Don Morrison. I live in Bismarck and am providing testimony as a volunteer for North Dakota Voters First. We are a non-partisan group of North Dakotans working to strengthen our democracy, help make our elections and public policy more open, ethical, and accountable to the people of our state.

Every citizen has the right to vote. Our elections should be as open as possible. The goal of policy makers should be to remove as many roadblocks for our citizens to vote as possible.

Counties, districts, and voters face different situations and circumstances. For some voters, mail ballots are a welcome improvement. For other voters, voting by mail is hugely difficult and, therefore, nearby, small, local polling places are the only way that doesn't pose major challenges to overcome.

Our concern with HB 1238 is that rural voters, particularly those on Native American reservations are losing their polling places where they live. Their lack of transportation and US Postal Service make this loss of polling places a major roadblock. This is being compounded during this Legislative Session as the number of days early voting polling places are open may also be cut, so voters would have less time to make other arrangements to vote.

By changing state law to stipulate that a city with over 1,000 people must have at least one polling place open will make it more likely that polling places will not be open in low population rural areas.

For that reason, we would recommend a DO NOT PASS for HB 1238. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this bill.