

Written Testimony for the
House Government and Veterans Affairs
March 9, 2023
Erika White, Burleigh County Election Manager



RE: OPPOSITION for SB 2226

Greetings, Chair Schauer, and members of the Committee. My name is Erika White and I am the Election Manager in the Burleigh County Auditor/Treasurer's office. I'm submitting testimony in opposition of SB 2226, as written.

I understand the basis for this bill and agree that voters should be educated on the material presented on the ballot. I disagree that measures should be stated in full on the ballot. This can and will lead to substantial and significant issues when it comes to executing an election.

Space on a ballot is limited due to size restrictions the tabulating equipment can handle. The current tabulation equipment can scan ballots 8.5 inches wide and up to 19 inches in length. While this may seem like a sizeable area, there are restrictions for the amount of text that can be placed in a singular column. In addition, space is further restricted due to header and footer information, required by law, as well as border space for the tabulators to correctly scan each ballot.

If the information cannot fit on a one-page, double-sided ballot, the only option is to have a two-page, double-sided ballot. Having a two-page ballot opens a myriad of issues. Voters will forget or even choose to only send back a singular page in their absentee envelope. Scanning one page versus two pages will create discrepancies with the number of absentee voters checked-in to our Central Voter File and the quantity of ballots scanned on the tabulator. Having these discrepancies in the count will lead to increased voter distrust and election integrity concerns.

Having a two-page ballot will also lead to early vote and Election Day problems. The dedicated election workers who are at the polls will have more to manage with a two-page ballot. This could lead to increased wait times at the polls as well as balancing issues when the polls close, all of which will lead to a delay in reporting the election results.

Voter education is key when relating to items on the ballot. Auditors across the state are currently supplying polling locations with the entire text of ballot measures. The entirety of the text is posted throughout the polling location and additional copies are readily available for any voter who requests a copy. I personally have never witnessed a voter examining the entirety of the text or requesting the text of measures. I would argue that a majority of voters have their decision regarding ballot measures decided before coming to the polling location.

I do believe that auditors would be willing to supply each voting booth with the full text of measures for voters to read. Printing the entirety, or up to 500 words of a measure, will be overwhelming and burdensome for the voter. We agree that transparency and communication

is key when executing successful elections. However, there are great alternatives that can maintain the current one-page, two-sided ballot. This will allow us to confidently uphold the integrity of North Dakota Elections.

Thank you for your time and I urge a DO NOT PASS on SB 2226 as drafted.