

Testimony of Cole Higlin
North Dakota Recreation & Park Association
To House Political Subdivisions
Neutral to HB 1312
Friday, January 24, 2025

Chairman Longmuir and members of the Committee, my name is Cole Higlin, and I am the public policy chair of the North Dakota Recreation & Park Association (NDRPA). We represent more than 900 members, primarily park districts, and work to advance parks, recreation and conservation for an enhanced quality of life in North Dakota.

On behalf of North Dakota's park districts, I would like to provide neutral testimony for House Bill 1312 which would move the elections of park districts and schools from the June primary election to the November general election.

The November general election typically sees a much higher voter turnout compared to June primaries. Moving the park district elections to November would potentially allow park districts to more effectively engage a larger and more diverse pool of voters, encouraging input from a broader group of the public.

We do have some concerns regarding the language within the bill that refers to the elections being held by the "same procedure as counties." Specifically, we are concerned that this could be interpreted to mean that park districts would be required to hold both a primary and general election, as is the case with county elections. The burden of additional elections could strain resources with potential added costs and logistical challenges.

Furthermore, if cities are not included in this change, we worry that it could create confusion for voters. Holding elections for park districts and schools in November while cities continue to hold their elections in June might lead to unnecessary complexity and voter confusion.

In conclusion, while we are optimistic about the potential benefits of moving park district and school elections to the November general election, we believe adjustments to the language and structure of the bill are necessary for the concept to be both practical and effective for all parties involved. Thank you for your time and consideration.