

I urge legislative support of HB1524 for funding of regional planning council. Having served on the Board of North Central Regional Planning Council (NCP) since 1989 has given me the opportunity to see how valuable the work of a regional planning council can be for the residents of the six counties NCP serves.

In the mid 80s while serving as a City Commissioner at Devils Lake I made several trips to Bismarck to appeal for Community Block Grant (CDBG) Funds to a committee chaired by then Lieutenant Governor Sand. Often times the result was funding went to larger communities in the state. Then the decision was made that regional planning councils would decide how the CDBG funds were distributed. This action allowed small communities of only a few hundred a fighting chance to make a pitch for help on their local community needs. Whether it was reducing the size of a lagoon that had been overbuilt on the premise of the missile project or a water tower repair/replacement the decisions were made by representatives of the six counties who were familiar with small town problems.

As part of the application for CDBG and other programs small communities relied on the assistance of staff from NCP to jump through the regulatory hoops. This service was provided and the result was small projects in small communities being funded.

Recently the decision making has reverted back to being done in Bismarck due to both federal and state decisions. Requirements of project size has literally eliminated small communities the opportunity to apply!

If our small communities, the backbone of our state, are going to survive and hopefully prosper the regional planning councils must be able to assist those communities. Over the years our state has never provided any state funds to help make this happen. HB#1524 can be the first step in helping to allow NCP and other regional planning councils provide that help to small rural communities.

I urge your support and passage of this legislation,

Mike Connor
Board Member, North Central Regional Planning Council
Devils Lake, ND