

TO: Chairman Jim Kasper, Government & Veterans Affairs Committee

From: Debbie Kroshus, Burleigh County Recorder

RE: HB 1182

Chairman Kasper and Committee Members,

My name is Debbie Kroshus and I am the Burleigh County Recorder. I am here to oppose HB 1182, a bill relating to references to party affiliation of candidates for local elective offices. I would like to take this opportunity to request a **Do NOT Pass on HB 1182**.

I strongly oppose any designation of a party affiliation for county offices, which include Commissioner, Recorder, Auditor, Treasurer, State's Attorney, and Sheriff. Though I have no disagreement with simple word changes to Century Code, the fact is this bill is trying to remove my independence from running for an office in local government that should not be defined by party lines. This bill, if passed, could have unintended consequences. If two candidates are running for a local office and one candidate chooses to declare party affiliation and the other chooses not to, the candidate that chooses to declare party could have an unfair advantage over the other.

The county recorder's office is probably one of the least political elected offices in the state as most of what we do is already defined in North Dakota Century Code, as are other local government offices. I would tend to believe that candidates run for local offices because they do not wish to declare party lines. 15 years ago when I first ran for County Recorder I did so because I knew I was qualified for the office and could effect change and move the office forward with great customer service, efficiency, and good management skills. Not because of politics or because I was a democrat or republican.

Local government offices should be run by an individual who knows how to create and balance a budget, manage staff, stay abreast on technology, and work well with constituents, business partners, and legislators to effect change to better serve our tax payers. I believe there is not one job function in local government that a Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, or other party member could do better because they are affiliated with a party, nor do decisions made in these offices run along a party line.

I see many unintended consequences if this bill passes. I envision less candidates wanting to run for local offices. The past several years has created enough division at the federal and state level between party lines causing great frustration to all. We don't want to enhance this division even more at the county and city level. This division is not blatantly prevalent in non-partisan local government. If this bill passes it could create more tension and less firm decision making at the local level causing more cost to tax payers. Several counties appoint their Auditors, Treasurers, and Recorders. If the elected would have the ability to declare party, I question if there is really balance and consistency in how these offices are managed. If an elected official is more focused on their party affiliation than they are in managing the office to meet requirements outlined in Century Code, are they really serving the needs of the tax payers?

If this bill passes and local government candidates could choose to declare a party, I wonder how many candidates would put an R behind their name just so they would have a better chance of being elected? I don't believe this would be fair to the other candidate if they choose not to list a party on the ballot. OR what happens if both candidates choose the same party? Wouldn't this cause confusion for the voters? Therefore, I strongly urge you to keep local government local and away from political party politics with a

DO NOT PASS on HB 1182.

Thank you for your time.

Debbie Kroshus, Burleigh County Recorder