

Testimony Prepared for the
House Government & Veterans Affairs

January 21, 2021

By: Stanley Dick, Cavalier County Commissioner
President, North Dakota Association of Counties



RE: OPPOSE House Bill 1182 – Party Affiliation for County/City Election Candidates

Good morning Chairman Kasper and committee members. For the record, my name is Stan Dick, Cavalier County Commissioner, and current President of the North Dakota Association of Counties. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony opposing HB1182 which permits party designations for candidates for local elections.

Current law provides that city and county officials are to be elected on a no-party ballot. HB1182 permits candidates for city and county offices to identify a party of their choosing on the nominating petition form that is filed with the county auditor.

North Dakota county officials have been elected without representing a party for many years. Voters select county officials on a variety of factors not related to party affiliation; whether they feel you can do the job, are likeable, and are the person (rather than the party) for whom they want to vote. County and city elections are about electing candidates the voter believes will efficiently administer local community services rather than of differing political party policy.

County no-party elections reduce the influence of political parties for candidates who make decisions on what is best for their community rather than what is best for the political party. As a commissioner of a county, we are a local government, facing local problems, using local people, to have a local solution to that problem. State and National party affiliation would not help in the discussion of local issues. As you know, there is not a Democrat or Republican way to plow roads, replace a bridge, gravel roads, or record deeds.

HB1182 could have unattended consequences. Without party endorsement, candidates may be encouraged to list an “electable” party without verification or proof that they support that party’s policies. This could potentially be confusing and misleading for

voters who have learned to trust the Party Ballot candidates as having been vetted through the North Dakota political party process.

County elected officials serve their county residents who are also their neighbors, in-laws, classmates, parents, children, and fellow church members. These relationships and the commitment to serve their constituents in a responsible manner is what inspires county elected officials to run for office. Politicizing county elected offices may deter future leaders from running for local public office.

Chairman Kasper and committee members, on behalf of our 53 member counties, the ND Association of Counties urges a DO NOT PASS on HB1182, as it will negatively impact grass roots, nonpartisan, county elections and those who run for county office.