

Testimony HB 1182
House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
January 21, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, good morning. My name is Don Morrison. I live in Bismarck and I am here as a volunteer for North Dakota Voters First, which is a non-partisan, grassroots North Dakota group working to strengthen our democracy, help make our elections and public policy more transparent, ethical, and accountable to the people of our state.

We have a positive, long-standing tradition in North Dakota of electing our local government officials to non-partisan offices. That tradition has served us well.

Local officials work together to build and repair roads, provide and administer public schools, develop and maintain parks, work to have a good economy, collect and dispose of garbage, build and maintain good clean water systems, and provide other services that citizens of the local community want.

Most of the time on most issues, local government officials work together, hear concerns, solve problems, are transparent, and focus their work on finding agreeable ways to make their communities better. Sometimes, there can be great disagreements on local issues. Certainly, the division about a road in my area of town might have neighbors disagreeing with neighbor or where to draw neighborhood school lines may cause some parents to disagree with other parents. But I don't remember disagreements on these kinds of issues being based on positions that are rooted in Republican Party or Democratic-NPL Party differences. These are not red versus blue issues. Why would you want to add partisan rancor to this?

Usually, bills are introduced to fix a problem, repair something, add something constructive or positive to our state and community that most people would see as beneficial, or would help us have more effective, better government or services.

What is wrong with the current non-partisan local elections? Is something broken or in need of repair in our local elections that interjecting Republican Party and Democratic-NPL Party politics would repair or fix? Does adding partisan politics and divisions solve some underlying problem? Just think of the national anger, divisions, violence, inability of partisan bodies to solve problems or move past tit for tat stalemates. Why would you want to give a dose of that to North Dakota local governments?

This bill is a solution in search of a problem. We urge you to give HB 1182 a DO NOT PASS.
Thank you.