



HB 1182
House Government and Veterans Affairs
Rep. Jim Kasper, Chair
January 21, 2021

Good morning Chairman Kasper and members of the Committee. For the record, Blake Crosby, Executive Director of the North Dakota League of Cities.

I appear today to oppose HB 1182. A version of this bill was introduced last session and was defeated. The difference between this bill and the bill last session, is the move from a requirement to identify a political party, to making it optional. While that change did soften the language, it does not change the objections from over 50 cities that you have before you and objections from those online.

The objection is to the consequences of the bill itself. Local governing is difficult enough without the insertion, or potential insertion, of partisan politics. As Mayor Dardis from West Fargo so aptly writes, “there is no Democrat or Republican way to collect garbage”.

Cities use taxpayer money to provide services...fire, police, water, sewer, etc. I am still waiting for someone tell me there is a Republican or Democrat way to fix a water main break, to pave my street or plow my snow.

And you say “but this is optional”, when the reality is if only one candidate indicates a party affiliation, the others will be compelled to do likewise...so there really is no option. You either affiliate or don’t run or don’t win.

As I told you last Session, this bill will particularly create problems in small cities. Over 60% of the 357 cities in North Dakota have a population of 500 or less. They have great difficulty finding candidates as it is...this will not help.

If a candidate declares a party, there is nothing in this bill that indicates the party will vet and endorse the candidate. If you do not, how do you know the candidate is really an “R” or a “D”? It is no secret that in most districts it is much easier to get elected with an “R” than a “D” and persons are figuring this out. What is to stop a person who is against oil from running as an “R” if there is no vetting?

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If candidates are endorsed, they should be eligible just as you are, for party campaign finance funds. Keeping in mind we could be talking hundreds of candidates each election cycle.

What about the effect of outside money? Or even inside money? We don't seem to like either and we know that money follows political parties. If it did not, you would not need to raise money or request campaign funds. We cannot ignore the fact that money moves votes.

We pride ourselves on being the "citizen legislature". The documents you have in front of you are citizens telling you they don't want partisan politics in local governance. They are respectfully asking you to not pass this bill.

Local government is doing just fine as they are. Let's appreciate the work they do for their communities, and the State, and not further complicate their jobs. I respectfully ask for a DO NOT PASS on HB 1182.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will do my best to answer any questions.