

Testimony HB 1289
House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
February 12, 2021

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

I would assume that, as legislators, you often find yourself asking how does this or that bill impact the lives of North Dakota citizens or my constituents. Here are some examples of how this bill might impact the lives of people in North Dakota.

If you decide to move to North Dakota, you would lose your right to vote in the community you are living in for a year. If you move outside your current precinct, but in the same district you might not be able to vote for the legislator you have voted many times for in the past if you move in August, September or October of an election year. If your business is doing really well and you have the opportunity to buy and move to a new house, you could lose your right to vote unless you time your move 90 days before an election. Primary and General Elections happen in June and November. Other elections are held at other times during the year.

All sorts of people would be impacted: New residents are, or have been, moving to North Dakota to work in the oil fields, work at our Air Bases, be doctors at our hospitals, and give their talents at businesses, schools, and other workplaces. People move. Some people find it necessary to move more often. Life happens. You should not lose your right to vote because of it.

This bill would appear to negate the reason behind HB 1447 which would have the state's colleges and universities issue their students an ID that would be valid for voting. The school year starts in August or September so unless you already lived in the same precinct as before, that new ID would do you little good in election years.

As for legal issues, this bill limits people's right to vote, right to travel. That is why the U.S. Supreme Court has held that such extreme requirements are unconstitutional.

If freedom and opportunity are important to us, then HB 1289 should be defeated. North Dakota Voters First urges the committee to recommend a Do Not Pass. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you this morning.