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January 28, 2021

TO: Chairman Kasper and Members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
FR: Jim Silrum, Deputy Secretary of State on behalf of Secretary of State Al Jaeger
RE: HB 1312 – Excuse needed to vote absentee, limitation of executive orders by the Governor, and elimination of the early voting option and voting by mail as a form of election administration

With a few exceptions, this bill only allows voters to cast a ballot at a polling place on election day.

It eliminates no excuse absentee voting adopted by the 1997 Legislative Assembly 24 years ago.

A voter would be required to declare one of the 15 allowable excuses that would be listed in NDCC § 16.1-07-01 as to why he or she will be absent from their precinct on election day.

It mandates the Secretary of State adopt rules for counties to follow to ensure that voters requesting an absentee ballot will indeed be absent from their precinct on election day.

It prohibits Executive Orders to modify any election even during an emergency.

It eliminates mail ballot elections, a county choice for over 27 years and chosen by the County Commissions of 30 to 35 counties each election cycle over the past decade.

It would eliminate early voting, which has been a choice for County Commissions since 2003.

On behalf of the Secretary of State and his election team who believe this bill creates significant hardships and obstacles for voters and will disenfranchise tens of thousands of voters every election, I request the committee give this bill a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation.