

Testimony HB 1451
House Political Subdivisions Committee
February 12, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee, my name is Don Morrison. I live in Bismarck and 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.

HB 1451 is needed to make sure North Dakotans are able to know who is paying to influence our elections outside of candidate campaigns, political committees, and ballot measure committees. This bill is about “dark money.” Those using “dark money” to influence North Dakota elections should not be given the veil of secrecy any longer. This bill is good whether you are a Republican, Democratic-NPLer, Libertarian, or independent. Our elections and public policy discussions work better when they are more open, ethical, and accountable to the citizens of our state.

This session we have heard a lot about the problem of out-of-state money coming to North Dakota to try to tell us how to vote. That concern has been used as a reason to put restrictions on ballot measures, to make it harder to pass ballot measures, and even to require the whole text of the initiated or referred measure to be printed in full on the ballot. That last effort would not only be confusing, but it would also make our ballots irritatingly cumbersome and expensive.

Making it more difficult for the citizens of our state to have our voices heard is like a throwing a wet blanket on the citizen engagement we should be encouraging.

Instead of that, we should be straight forward and direct our problem solving at the real problem we all seem to have identified – money in our politics. HB 1451 tackles that problem.

North Dakota Voters First urges this committee to recommend a Do Pass on HB 1451. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you this morning.