

Testimony Prepared for the
Senate Government & Veterans Affairs

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RE: Support for SB 2231 – Publication of Official Election Results

Good afternoon Chairman Veda and committee members, I'm Donnell Preskey with the North Dakota Association of Counties. In that capacity, I serve as Executive Director for the Auditors and Treasurers Associations which are in support of this bill.

SB 2231 represents one of the items identified by County Auditors as an unnecessary publication requirement. By the time official election results are printed in the paper, they are already "old news" and known by the public. Elections are newsworthy at all levels and the results are available and reported by the media and on the Secretary of State's Election website. Because of the timing of weekly newspaper deadlines and when the canvassing board meets, the official results appear in papers several weeks after the election. Therefore, we support at the very least, the repeal of this requirement if counties list the results on their websites.

It is important to note that advertising rates are negotiated and set every biennium by OMB. Although this mechanism is efficient, local governments have little direct control of this cost. We estimate counties spent \$450,000 a year on publication requirements.

During our last survey of our 53 counties, only three counties are lacking websites.

Mr. Chairman, the same bill was before you last session. But in the past two years, there has been a dramatic shift in the number of papers that have reduced their printing circulations with major papers like the Forum manages as well as The Bismarck Tribune – reducing the days of the week they are printing papers and instead offering the information online. That is the major reason for our association asking you to do what newspapers have done – allow for our citizens to get this information online.