

SB 2282

To: Members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

From: Kenneth & Mary Graner, 5355 Hwy 1806, Mandan, ND 58554

Chairman Veda and members of the committee,

I am Kenny Graner. My wife, Mary, and I own and operate a cow/calf and small grain operation South of Mandan. We have rented State School Trust Land for more than 30 years.

State trust lands were granted by the United States Congress to states upon entering the Union. These lands were designated to support essential public institutions, primarily public schools. State trust land managers lease and sell these lands to generate revenue for current and future designated beneficiaries.

Our primary concern is that farmers and ranchers do not have a seat at the table with the Land Trust Board. The Board members are becoming more and more removed from agriculture and have little experience with agriculture production and/or uses of the School Land.

There are 706,600 acres of school land in question. There are 4,400 Lessees renting this land for agriculture purposes. We need the Agriculture Commissioner on the Board to represent our interests as it is solely used for agricultural purposes.

Currently, there is a House Bill trying to get the ND Game and Fish to enforce the laws and rules for the Land Trust Department. There is a HUGE concern that if it passes, the ND Game and Fish will encourage the Land Trust Board to impose NDG&F management practices and add further expense and regulation of haying, grazing and farming to the Lessees of the property. The Lessees need the Agriculture Commissioner to represent their interests.

The failure of the bidding process was a prime example that shows the lack of knowledge of farming and ranching practices. We need transparency and accountability that only the Agriculture Commissioner can provide.

The Agriculture Commissioner is a better fit than the Treasurer on the Board. The rent received will still go through the State Treasurer for collections, disbursements, and investments. The treasurer will still maintain fiduciary obligation to our citizens as he will still have oversight of the funds which does not require sitting on the Board.

Thank you.

Kenny & Mary Graner