

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erik Nygren and I serve as Chairman of District 25 and formerly served as Regional Chair for the Southeast Region of the North Dakota Republican Party. I have been involved in politics for almost 20 years and I strongly believe that a hallmark of Republican governance has always been to rely on the people to guide our party and our state. In the organization of the NDGOP State Committee we have veered away from that model and toward one which allows leadership to perpetuate itself and shore up power rather than allowing the citizens to decide through those they have elected to represent their districts.

Our State Committee consists of 47 District Chairs, elected by the members of each district, in what should be fair and open elections. When the NDGOP leadership is elected, however, this representative body is augmented by a slate of officers who were not elected at the district level and who, when included, represent nearly 18% of the voting body, which can easily swing an election and reflects a disparate and non-representative voting body.

In many cases, those who are voting on leadership are outgoing members of the leadership who no longer have a stake in the direction of the organization. Imagine if all outgoing legislators were given a vote on the next session's leadership along with the newly elected legislators from their respective districts. Several districts would have unequal representation which would ultimately be a disservice to the voters.

Article 3 Section 3 of the NDGOP bylaws states: " The District Chairmen, which make up the State Committee, shall meet on or before July first of each odd- numbered year and organize in accordance with state law."

It is clear that the intent of that rule is to allow the District Chairs to elect the leadership, but despite objections from members, that has not been the practice in recent years. This bill will codify that system to ensure that the grassroots voters who give their time and energy attending District Conventions and Caucuses will be equally represented in the election of the Party leaders.

This bill will provide a mechanism for all parties to elect their leadership by giving the largest voice to those members who have the largest stake in their local representation. When you enter the legislature, you are on equal footing with every other member who has been elected by their constituents. The parties should be represented in a similar way.

I thank you for your consideration on this issue and strongly urge a 'do-pass' on HB1523.