

2023 HB1523 Testimony

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this important bill. My name is John Trandem and I have served in various capacities within the Republican Party at the District and State level for the past 27 years and have conducted and attended numerous organizational and endorsing conventions.

While I believe that as a rule, Districts should be able to maintain autonomy in their governance and organization, in recent years we have seen some Districts take liberties and compromise the right of the electors to participate in their organizational conventions or caucuses. These events are the gateway to serving your community and working to advance the values of the political party with which you align and need to be open for newcomers to participate and work alongside the longer-term advocates that they may learn, and one-day assume a leadership role if such is desired.

There has been great frustration of late in districts which abuse their unchecked status by imposing standards for participation which are impossible to meet unless the desired participants are tipped off in advance and told how to meet the criteria. This is done is by setting participatory requirements-often the payment of dues, and setting a date by which those dues must be paid in order to participate in the meeting. The deadlines are rarely publicized and are often set well in advance of the notice requirement for the meeting. For example- a district may require that dues be paid forty-five days in advance of the reorganizational meeting, but only notice the meeting fifteen days in advance. Those whose participation is desired by district leadership are notified well in advance of the deadline and encouraged to pay their dues and attend while many who are not informed are met at the door immediately prior to the meeting and told they are too late to participate as the dues they didn't know were required were not timely paid.

Another tactic is to set dues or requirements but not inform anyone as to how they can satisfy them- who to pay, or how to register.

As a long-time member of the State Committee, I know that when reorganizational conventions come around there are invariably people clamoring for copies of the bylaws for their district to find out how to participate. NDGOP Headquarters is often deluged with calls from citizens wishing to find out how to participate after having been refused the pertinent information by the leadership in their District. This intentional disenfranchisement is among the reasons that people suggest that District Conventions are like 'the wild west' with no laws but outlaws, and while it is the exception, not the rule, there are cases where those assessments are accurate.

Among other things, this bill will require, as a matter of proper notice, that the participation requirements be publicized so citizens who wish to participate cannot be denied access if they satisfy the requirements. In addition to that information, notice requirement will need to exceed the deadline for any participatory requirements by thirty days to give citizens ample opportunity to satisfy the requirements.

Current provisions in Century Code prohibit any regulation of these district processes and make it impossible for the respective parties to impose any standards regarding the conduct, notice, or transparency of the reorganizational meetings. Without the passage of this bill the standard of no accountability will remain intact and the disenfranchisement of our citizens who wish to become active in politics will persist. It is for that very reason I stand to encourage a do-pass on House Bill 1523 and welcome your comments or questions.