

HB 1218
1/19/23

TO: Chairman Porter and Members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee
FROM: Mr. Joddy Meidinger, Manager, Upper Souris Water District
DATE: January 19, 2023
RE: House Bill 1218

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your service to the citizens of North Dakota and the opportunity to offer comments on HB1218. I am *generally* in favor of this bill, but only because I fully recognize the need for an authority to oversee the NAWS system and the inclusion of the Department of Water Resources to make sure we all get along in the sandbox.

Let's be frank, there are competing interests on this Authority. City versus rural. Who and how many votes each entity will receive if this bill passes has been determined solely by the amount of water historically consumed. That is a quick and easy way to do it, but is it equitable? Just because someone uses more of a resource does not necessarily mean they should control it at the expense of the rest. We all have to be on the same team.

A few weeks ago, I attended the 59th Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention & Irrigation Workshop right here in Bismarck. If I learned anything at all, it was that we North Dakotans absolutely must prioritize our water usage toward the production of food. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Every other story in the news is about the shortage of water across the U.S. and the world. We cannot lose sight of the importance water holds for the people in the rural regions - the true economic backbone of the State, and the people who grow our food.

It has been said that if we had to ration water during a drought, farmers would not be allowed to spray their crops. To which someone wisely replied, "I'd rather eat than bathe."

Deciding who sits on this Authority should not be based solely on water usage, but on the economic impact the rural regions have in our overall economy. If we forget to prioritize the production of food, and allow those who dwell in the cities to determine who gets water and who does not, we might all go hungry.

I guess that will put us on the same team after all.

Thank you for listening to my testimony. Again, I appreciate your service to the people of the State of North Dakota and wish you Godspeed on your decision-making responsibilities.