

Support of HB 1236

House Political Subdivisions Committee

January 19, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Longmuir and Committee members.

I am Larry Syverson from Mayville, I am the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for Roseville Township in Traill County and I am also the Executive Secretary of the North Dakota Township Officers Association. NDTOA represents nearly 6,000 Township Officers that serve in more than 1,100 dues paying member townships.

HB 1236 deals with two issues our membership has asked us to have changed. The first is the date for the annual meeting of the township, 58-04-01 sets this date as the third Tuesday of March. It has probably been the third Tuesday of March ever since townships were established by the Dakota Territorial Legislature. That date has worked quite well for the many decades, township day was a bit of a highlight of the season as the winter waned and farmers prepared for planting season. It was a social event as much as an exercise of democracy. Citizens hardly traveled out of the township in those days and a chance to meet with neighbors was a time to cherish. The regard for township day has faded a bit since then, the average vehicle puts on about 41 miles per day, everyone is constantly somewhere else, school functions, sporting events and winter vacations are some of the reasons citizens don't make the meeting.

Township day is still an important event, it is the basis of our local control, it should be attended by as many citizens as possible. I personally am fond of the third Tuesday of March as annual meeting day but I realize that many conflicts have drawn citizens away. So, we are asking that 58-04-01 be amended to allow that townships may meet on any day in March so they can work around local events that keep people away.

HB 1236 has two sections to deal with this change we are requesting. Section 1 is for the annual meeting of a regular single township under 58-04-01. Section 2 covers annual

meetings under 58-05.1-07 where the electors have joined multiple townships under a mutlitownship board.

The other issue is the maximum limit of township officer compensation. We have heard that some townships find it ever more difficult to get people to take on the responsibilities of these offices with the pay limited to just sixty dollars per day. The current sixty-dollar cap was set in 2011. Three sections of HB 1236 address the compensation caps for officers. Section 3 sets the compensation of supervisors, Section 4 the clerk, and Section 5 is for the treasurer.

Necessary service for the officers may be a matter of board meeting attendance or it could be going out to barricade a washed-out culvert or flooded road. It may be hours of driving the roads for inspection. Townships don't have staff, the officers have to insure the safety of the roads along with their other duties.

The compensation cap for the officers is permissive, a township does not have to pay anything and many will continue to pay little or nothing, it is the elector's choice, it is set by the electors at the annual meeting. This is just a cap.

Chairman Longmuir and Committee members, the membership of the North Dakota Township Officers Association requests your favorable recommendation for HB 1236.

Thank you. I will try to answer any questions you may have.