

## 327B Political Subdivisions

### HB 1257

Chairman Longmuir, Committee members.

For the record, I'm Representative Liz Conmy from District 11 in Fargo.

I'm here to present House Bill 1257 which regards campaign contributions for candidates seeking an elected position on a school district's board of education. You may have heard, this bill is very similar to House Bill 1116... which you will hear later. From my perspective, this bill is the better bill.

Bill 1257 requires candidates for school board be required to file a campaign finance report, but only in districts where the student enrollment is over 750 students,

Today, North Dakota law requires candidates for statewide office, the state legislature, county commission, and city commission to file campaign finance reports which includes the total amount they receive and itemized donations of amounts over \$200. This bill would apply the exact same requirements to school board candidates in larger school districts, similar to how only candidates for city commission races in larger cities must file a report.

This bill is the result of constituents concerns following recent school board elections in Fargo. With greater interest in school board elections, and the increase in campaign contributions, it makes sense to ask candidates to provide the source of their campaign funds. In the last election in Fargo, with no requirement regarding reporting of donations to school board candidates, the Forum asked candidates to share the information with them willingly in the last election in Fargo, which many of them did. It is in the voter's best interest to have this information.

HB 1257 adds a provision requiring school district candidates to file a campaign contribution statement (Page 1, lines 10 and 11 in section 1). The reports would be filed with the school district business manager 64 days prior to the election.

HB 1257 also adds a school district enrollment population number that determines which districts candidates must file a campaign contribution statement. On page 3, lines 25 through 28, you'll see that a district with a fall enrollment of 750 students or less would NOT have to file, and would be exempt from this section. The reason for this is simple. In smaller communities it is hard enough to get candidates to run—and we do not want to discourage participation or add a burden to a small community.

Page 4, lines 1 through 4, states that a candidate for a school district office would file with the school district business manager.

Page 5, line 20, states that candidates for school district offices are exempt from audits from the Secretary of State as are county office seekers.

There are currently 18 school districts in North Dakota that this would affect. If we were to put the requirement for reporting at 1000 students instead of 750, that would cut the list to 15 schools.

I believe adding campaign reporting requirements to districts with over 750 students provides necessary transparency for larger districts without unduly burdening smaller school districts. And most importantly, it lets voter know who is trying to influence their vote.

That concluded my presentation and I welcome any questions you may have.