

HB 1273

Rep. Ben Koppelman- Testimony

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank You for the opportunity to introduce HB1273 to you today.

I introduced this bill with the intent of honoring the time tested method of voting in our state by ensuring that all of our citizens have an equal vote in our elections.

North Dakota uses a voting method known as **plurality voting**. This method is also used in nearly all the political subdivisions in our state. In fact, this system is the traditional way of voting in the United States for nearly all elections. Under the **plurality voting** system, the top vote getter wins the election, regardless if they achieve a majority or merely a plurality of the votes. This system is sometimes augmented with primary elections if the desire is to narrow the field and try to ensure the winner is more likely to receive a majority of votes. It can also be augmented by adding a run-off election provision to ensure the winner gets a majority of the votes. The combination of **plurality voting** and the run-off provision is sometimes known as **majority voting**.

Other systems of voting have been tried in other parts of the country with various outcomes in mind. Probably the most common and controversial alternative is known as **ranked-choice voting**. This method is also sometimes known as instant-runoff voting. The way this system works is that you vote for as many candidates for a given office as you wish by ranking them in priority order, and since this system is often used without being prefaced by a primary election, the field of candidates is often crowded. On the first round of counting votes, every voter's first choice is counted, and if a candidate receives a majority of the votes, then that candidate wins. This system works the same as **plurality voting** if a candidate received a majority in the first round. If a candidate fails to receive a majority in the first round is when it gets interesting. To conduct the second round of counting votes, the candidate who received the lowest number of votes is eliminated from contention, and the ballots cast for that candidate are reassigned to the second ranked choice candidate on each of those voters. If after the second-round votes are tallied there is still not a majority winner, the counting goes on to additional rounds of eliminating candidates and reassigning votes until

for the voter to learn about the candidates. If it is desirable to narrow the field of candidates, a primary can be used as it is now for statewide and some political subdivision elections. If there is a desire to achieve a **majority voting** system, a run-off election can be added to augment the **plurality voting** system.

Please join me in respecting our right to a fair and equitable election by banning alternative systems that dilute the value of one-man-one-vote and the ability of each voter to cast a single vote for a single office.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I request that you give this bill a Do-Pass recommendation. I would be happy to attempt to answer any questions that you may have.