



# MCKENZIE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

1201 12th St SE Ste B • Watford City, ND 58854

**Matthew Johansen, Sheriff**

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To: North Dakota Senate, State & Local Government Committee

Date: 03/08/2023 RE: SCR 4007 – Testimony Against

Chairwoman Roers and committee members,

My name is Matthew Johansen, and I am the Sheriff of McKenzie County. I am writing this email to you regarding SCR-4007, a study to form a search and rescue volunteer association. I am writing you to share my thoughts and concerns on this matter. I appreciate you taking the time to read this, and I hope that the legislature will take these concerns, and the concerns shared by others, into consideration moving forward. While SCR-4007 includes language saying that it's a study to form a search and rescue volunteer association, there is already a volunteer search and rescue group formed by the name of Badlands Search & Rescue (BSAR) out of Watford City, ND. I believe BSAR is the driving force behind SCR-4007 and this concerns me. I'm aware of several instances where BSAR attempted to self-dispatch as well as show up on scenes of various incidents within the state without being requested. As sheriff, I know my local resources as well as other resources available to me. I do not appreciate a private volunteer group inserting themselves in the middle of critical incidents. Behavior like this makes it more difficult to conduct emergency operations as well as wasting time to determine who has shown up at a scene and what their intent is.

As the Sheriff of McKenzie County, my primary responsibility is the safety and protection of the citizens who live and work here as well as those tourists that visit our county. My office is committed to achieving that goal and is always seeking innovative ways to ensure our citizen's well-being. However, I do not feel that a study like the one that this legislature has proposed under SCR-4007 is best for our county.

There are several areas of the proposed study that I have reservations about and that I hope the legislature will consider. As you know, NDCC 37-17.1-28 lays out the search and rescue activities. It designates those operations to the chief law enforcement officer of the specific political subdivision where the operation is being held.

Not only would the formation of this type of association hinder the discretion that local law enforcement has in these matters, but it also would undoubtedly hinder the department heads from being able to best utilize the resources they have readily available to them. This is not only detrimental to our resources but has the potential to be detrimental to the citizens we serve.

I also fear what this will mean moving forward with future legislative sessions. I believe legislation like this opens the door for private industries to enter local communities like ours and overwhelm them with regulation—stripping away the local government's authority and control.





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As the chief law enforcement officer of McKenzie County and a citizen of North Dakota, I implore you to vote no on SCR-4007

Sincerely,

Sheriff Matthew Johansen

McKenzie County Sheriff

