

Testimony
House Bill 1166
Agriculture and Veterans Affairs | March 16 | 10:15 am

Chairman Luick,

My name is Barry Ramberg and I have been a Williams County Commissioner since 2009. One of my portfolios as Commissioner is Weather Modification. Thank you for accepting this written testimony in opposition of HB 1166 as I am not able to be in Bismarck today.

In November 2000, the citizens of Williams County voted to establish a Weather Modification Authority (WMA) with about 80% of 'yes' votes to 20% 'no' votes. The vote established the WMA for a 10-year period and beyond that, the Williams County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) has the authority to renew the WMA, by resolution, for additional 5-year periods. We did this in November 2010, November 2015, and November 2020. Five citizens of Williams County serve on the County Weather Modification Authority.

Since 2000, the Williams County WMA has contracted with the ND State Water Commission's Atmospheric Resource Board (ARB) to participate in the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project (NDCMP). This is an operational program that seeds clouds for hail damage reduction and rain enhancement in western North Dakota. The program currently has four participating counties: Bowman, McKenzie, Mountrail, and Williams. Part of Slope County also participates.

The state's operational and funding support has been key to the success of the NDCMP. The state also plays a crucial part in facilitating University of North Dakota aviation and meteorology internships that have a role in the NDCMP.

If passed, as written, HB 1166 would significantly change how the NDCMP operates. The biggest changes – removing state cost share and eliminating the authority of the Board of County Commissioners to renew a WMA – are changes in search of a problem, not problems that need a solution.

Weather modification has been proven to be beneficial for both rain enhancement as well as hail suppression in western North Dakota (<https://www.swc.nd.gov/arb/ndcmp/pdfs/facts.pdf>). A recent study published in 2021 used 30 years of data to quantify the benefits for our farmers (<https://journals.ametsoc.org/view/journals/wcas/13/4/WCAS-D-21-0010.1.xml>). In general, citizens and farmers across the state benefit from the program in terms of increased agricultural productivity and historically lower insurance rates.

A DO NOT PASS for HB 1166 is respectfully encouraged.

Thank you for your consideration,



Barry Ramberg, Williams County Commissioner