

House Bill 1235

Presented by: Randy Christmann, Chair
Public Service Commission

Before: Senate State & Local Government Committee
The Honorable Senator Kristen Roers, Chair

Date: March 16, 2023

TESTIMONY

Mr. Chair and committee members, I am Randy Christmann, chair of the Public Service Commission.

While I understand the potential benefits of starting terms of elected officials earlier, I am very concerned that there is more to the equation than has been considered.

There are a few of us who go back to the times of more competitive statewide elections in November. The situation for the winners of those elections was quite different. In the most recent election, the reality was that many candidates pretty much knew who would be elected the previous summer. For those who were destined to be elected in November there was plenty of time to deal with their previous livelihoods, make housing arrangements, and prepare for their new positions.

Not so long ago it was completely different. Some of us absolutely did not know who would win the November election until the votes were counted. Then it was time to deal with our previous livelihoods. For some that means resigning from jobs and preparing successors. For some that could mean shuttering small businesses and laying off employees. For me that meant selling livestock, finding a renter, arranging a share-

agreement for the livestock I retained, and exploring housing options in or near Bismarck. It was actually a significant challenge to hit the ground running by January 1.

I do understand that the Governor already has an earlier start time, but it should be noted that he or she at least has housing pre-arranged. Other comparisons include the President who doesn't start until January 20 and U.S. Senators and Representatives who do not start until after January 1.

The competitiveness of election cycles will ebb and flow but the current system has worked well for a lot of years. At the very least, please consider turning this bill into a study so the Legislature can more thoroughly study the pros and cons of this idea.

Chairman Roers, this concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions.