To: North Dakota Senate
State and Local Government Committee
Date: 2/9/2023
Re: SCR 4007

Chairwoman Roers and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing today to offer neutral testimony on SCR 4007. My testimony focuses on events that I experienced firsthand searching for a young North Dakotan that drown in Montana. It was arguably one of the most beautiful things I've been a part of in my life. Which is the irony of a search for a deceased. But allow me to explain, this was a heart-wrenching tragedy; yet, when the community of Watford City rallied around this family to find their boy, to bring him home, it brought out the best in everyone. The love of the community was inspiring, as was the life of this young man, and the faith of his family. It was disappointing that we couldn't save him, but through the search we learned a lot about living from this young man.

The pro-life community and the churches were really the driving force of volunteers canvasing the Yellowstone for days at a time. Everyone chipped in with what they had, horses, boats, drones, canoes and kayaks. My wife reached out to the McKenzie County Emergency Manager, and that is when the horsepower started coming in. The Search & Rescue and the diving crews, etc., but that was a couple days in. In the end it was the great assistance of a zodiac boat and crew from Williston that made for the successful recovery.

It was a beautiful American experience of neighbors helping neighbors. It was however disappointing as a taxpayer to see the lack of initiative with the Montana Sheriff's department, who offered little help other than to discourage the volunteers. It was a helpless feeling. And that's why the community stepped up. I do understand the limitations of manpower, the risk of creating more tragedies, as well as the economics and probabilities of searching for a drowning victim. Yet, we're an advanced civilization with massive technologies. I'm certainly not a proponent of the government wasting more of the taxpayers' money. But the government does have a responsibility for missing persons. This event did shed light on the great disconnect our government has had from its' fundamental responsibilities. Our government is bogged down in health care, welfare, education and other places it has no business being and has forgotten how to defend borders, protect citizens, and serve the public trust.

In this situation, it was the churches and the volunteers stepping up. Free of charge. Something all public "servants" could learn from. I firmly support trying to improve communication and education to get search & rescue teams to the scene earlier. I think studying the efficacy of the government sounds like a great step in the right direction. Although, I have concerns about the government studying itself. Perhaps an unbiased study group, such as a private university. Beyond just the search and rescue aspect, but really looking at where the government belongs, and how to improve that role. Perhaps a study would be a good time to get back to the basics of government and carrying out its' proper duties more responsibly. With larger populations and human trafficking breaking records, missing persons will continue to grow. It certainly wouldn't hurt to look at how to use the taxpayer's resources more effectively in tragic cases to serve and protect the needs of the community. Thank you for your consideration.

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