

Testimony on SCR 4013 ▪ Senate State and Local Government Committee ▪ Feb. 9, 2023

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Senator Roers and other committee members:

My name is Ellie Shockley, and I am a social scientist and writer living in Mandan, North Dakota. I have earned a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago with a particular emphasis on political psychology and research methods/statistics. During my time at UChicago and in my years in North Dakota that have followed, I have studied the voter experience, and voter decisions, when it comes to ballot measures. I have published on the topic in a peer-reviewed academic journal¹ as well as in several of my columns in the Bismarck Tribune.² I also provided my social-scientific perspective on these issues as a panelist during the 2021 GNDC Policy Summit.

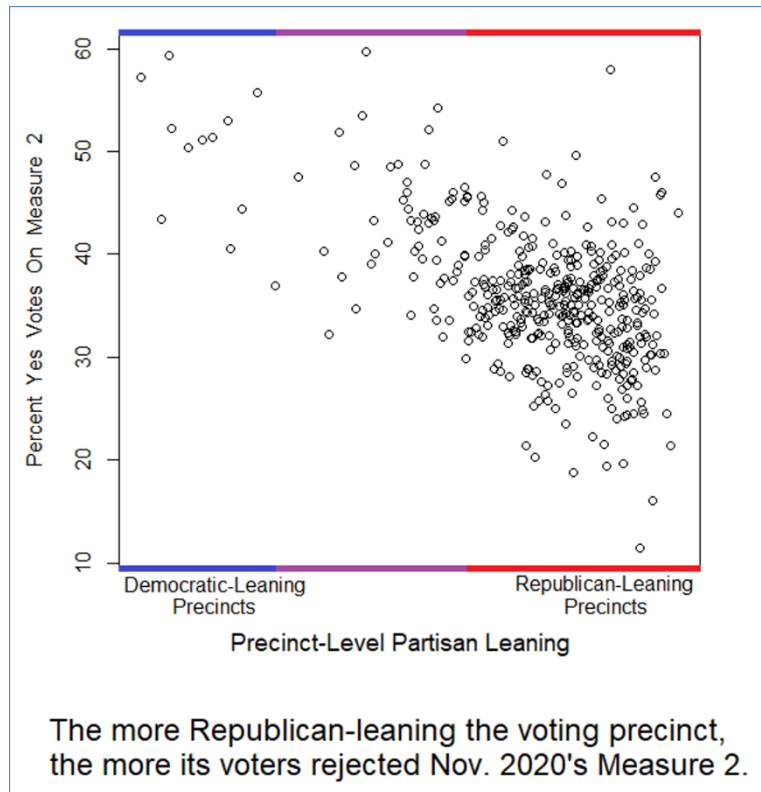
I share testimony today to highlight reasons that SCR 4013 should receive a “Do Not Pass” designation from your committee. These reasons stem from my empirical research but also from the spirit of our state constitution and the representational nature of our state government.

First, I can tell you that the idea of modifying our initiated measure process to make it more difficult for citizens to shape our laws and government – including constitutional amendments via initiatives – is unpopular among constituents.

For instance, Measure 2 from 2020 was defeated with 61.61% ‘No’ votes. This measure came from SCR 4001 in the 2019 legislative session. It sought to require that an initiated constitutional measure must pass in *two* separate general elections, unless both chambers of the legislature approve the measure after its first election. **Worth noting, 2020’s Measure 2 was especially unpopular among voters in the most strongly Republican precincts. This is illustrated in the graph to the right.**

Ultimately, the North Dakota State Senate is a representational body. Given your representational roles, I ask you to vote “Do Not Pass” on SCR 4013 because it makes it harder for citizens to enact constitutional measures, especially given the resolution’s requirement that 67% ‘Yes’ votes should be required for such measures to pass. This is *not* what the people of North Dakota want.

I ask that you protect the rights of North Dakota citizens to enact legislation and constitutional amendments via the initiative process. Our state constitution is clear that the initiative is a foundational element of our state’s governance,³ and the people of North Dakota clearly value maintaining these petition rights. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding my testimony or research. Thank you for your time.



¹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1948550614568159>

² Find columns at <https://www.elliesshockley.com/>

³ Article III of our state constitution: <https://www.ndlegis.gov/constit/a03.pdf>