

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Appropriations committee.

My name is Austen Schauer, District 13, West Fargo.

**House Bill 1408** is a major change in North Dakota government.

**HB 1408** calls for annual sessions beginning in **2027**.

This bill represents a proactive approach to modernizing our legislative process while preserving the integrity of our existing framework.

**Here are the objectives of this bill.**

**1. HB 1408 would enhance fiscal and economic responsiveness by our legislature in terms of decision making.**

More frequent legislative sessions will allow us to better manage the state budget, respond to economic shifts in real-time, and provide necessary adjustments without delays.

**2. HB 1408 maintains the 80-Day Legislative Limit.**

This bill does not increase the total number of legislative days. Instead, it strategically distributes the existing 80 days over two years, ensuring efficiency without extending government operations.

**3. HB 1408 responds to term limits.**

With term limits comes the reduction of institutional knowledge potentially creating more power to State office holders, agency heads, and lobbyists.

Annual session ensures (as best as possible) equal branches of government. New lawmakers can gain more experience and knowledge to make better decisions on public policy and fiscal challenges.

**4. Under HB 1408, interim committees will have the opportunity to conduct more meaningful research, analysis, and public engagement, ensuring that policies are better developed, reviewed, and refined before final legislative action.**

This will increase the effectiveness of policy decisions and reduce rushed legislation.

**5. HB 1408 will help attract high-quality legislative candidates.**

By implementing annual sessions, we provide greater flexibility and accessibility for individuals who wish to serve while still actively employed.

Instead of four months every two years, it would be two-plus months each year.

**HB 1408** is more than a change in our meeting schedule. It's a strategic step toward more **effective governance**.

It ensures North Dakota remains competitive, responsive, and well-prepared to meet the evolving needs of our citizens and economy.

By granting legislative management the flexibility to determine the structure of annual sessions, this bill enhances adaptability and efficiency in lawmaking.

Crafted with input from many legislators who recognize the importance of this moment, **HB 1408** reflects a shared commitment to progress.

By a **12-2** vote, your **GVA** committee gave a **DO PASS** to **HB 1408**. We now ask for your support. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I stand open to questions.