

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
HB 1446
7 February 2025

Ed Schafer

Chairman Schauer,
Committee members,

My name is Ed Schafer, a North Dakota citizen residing in Fargo and a member of District 46. I come in strong opposition to House Bill 1446 today and appreciate you allowing me time in front of your committee.

I was nominated for Governor in the North Dakota Republican Party's convention having emerged from a field of three candidates on the second ballot. My eventual opponent was not awarded his party's nomination and chose to gather the required signatures and run in the primary against the nominated candidate. He won the primary vote. I was deemed to have no chance to win because the Democratic Party had controlled the state house for 40 years. I was not opposed in the primary and went on to win the general election in 1992.

As the new Schafer administration entered the political arena, we applied Republican principles and values to the governance of our state. I mention this because it is amazing how one election can change the face of the culture and values of the community. Since that election day in 1992 Republicans have earned the trust of the electorate and have risen to be the dominant political philosophy we see today. We need to continue to use that party strength if we are going to earn the trust for Republican leaders.

So, I am very familiar with the nominating and primary process which illuminates my concern about the proposed legislation this committee is contemplating here today.

HB 1446 seeks to eliminate the political party nomination process by no longer advancing a party nominated person to the primary election. This will, in effect, cause office seekers to see no advantage in pursuing a party nomination.

You will hear testimony from the sponsors of this proposed legislation that this doesn't change anything, and the party can still have a convention and endorse candidates. Sure; to what end? In the situation proposed in the bill before you, what would be gained by asking the party for an endorsement? Since one would have to gather signatures to get on the ballot anyway, why seek a nomination from a political party? I know I would not, and believe others would pursue meeting the requirements and just go directly to the primary to seek voter approval.

Those requirements DO NOT contain any alignment with a political party's philosophy, values or goals. If a certain political party has an electoral advantage, one can simply declare party nomenclature and be elected without the obligation to adhere to a set of directional principles.

Do you see the problem? An elected candidate is there only for oneself with no responsibility to political philosophy or values. The primary election becomes one for the wealthy, the elite and the chosen few. No longer will someone be able to rise up from main street to carry party values and philosophy to the performance of an elected office. No longer will a political party be able to convince voters that their values will be carried to office by an endorsed candidate.

Money and special interests will rule the day.

You might also hear testimony from a former Governor, bill sponsors and deep pocket folks and from Chicago, DC and right here in Bismarck that 44 other states use this proposed process. You know, it is in the best interests of those who want to take away the voice of the people and control the election process through big money and overwhelming media presence to pass this legislation.

What these people will NOT tell you is if you ask the political party folks in those 44 states what they think about this whole deal, you will hear they hate their politicians. There is no foundation, no values, no loyalty to principles in their representatives. The voters send candidates to office only to be disappointed as those elected are not representing the people but beholden to big money and power. Why do you think our country carries a 34 Trillion dollar debt?

In 12 ½ years, North Dakota's political party's values and governing philosophy will be irrelevant. Money and special interest groups will be in command..

I understand the motivation of this proposed legislation's sponsors. They are made up of people who have had hassles of one kind or another with the nominating process. They are angry and disappointed and insulted. And, I would be too. However, HB 1446 is not the way to correct the fractures in the process today. It is the party that needs to correct the dishonesty and inappropriate behavior that has entered into the nominating process. I believe it can.

Government should not be dictating how a private organization presents its candidates' values and character to the public.

Since everyone is turning to artificial intelligence these days, I thought I'd check to see what the answer to this problem is. The diodes and electrons came back with the pros and cons of the proposed legislation. It's final comment was: "Don't burn down the house to get rid of a rat!"

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for your time today. Please consider a no vote on House Bill 1446! Thank you.