



*Representing the Diocese of Fargo
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To: House Industry, Business and Labor Committee
From: Christopher Dodson, Co-Director
Date: Jan 15, 2025
Re: House Bill 1150 - Sunday Morning Closing

Plato noted that when it comes to lawmaking prudence is chief among the virtues. Every public policy proposal ought to be judged by its probable long-run consequences and not merely its temporary advantage or popularity. Moreover, a presumption should rest in favor of retaining the wisdom of our predecessors.

In this respect, allowing all commerce on Sunday morning is an aberration in North Dakota. It is not too late to right a wrong for the sake of families and the common good.

There is a common misperception that the purpose of the prior law and this bill is to impose times of worship and adherence to religious doctrine. This is not the purpose of this bill or the Conference's reason for supporting it. The purpose of this bill is to reasonably restore a common period of rest and recreation for everyone.

In fact, the concept of a Sabbath itself rests on this idea. "The memory and the experience of the Sabbath constitute a barrier against becoming slaves to work, whether voluntarily or by force, and against every kind of exploitation, hidden or evident. In fact, the Sabbath rest . . . was instituted in defense of the poor. Its function is also that of freeing people from the antisocial degeneration of human work."¹

Rest from work and commerce is, therefore, a human right. Moreover, a common day of rest allows people to tend to family, cultural, social, and religious life. Only when communities set aside time devoted to these functions can human persons truly prosper and develop. The great 20th-century philosopher, Joseph Pieper, warned against the encroaching danger of a world of "total work." He wrote: "More and more . . . the world of work is becoming our entire world; it threatens to engulf us completely, and the demands of the world of work become greater and greater, till at last they make a 'total' claim upon the whole human nature."²

A free market is a good thing, but without reasonable parameters that place it at the service of the human person, the economy can become a powerful force that removes true choice and freedom. Most often it is small businesses and the poor who are hurt the most.

The people who helped make North Dakota the great state it is understood this. Their collective experience taught them that some things are more important than profit and convenience. We owe it to them and future generations to restore this part of the North Dakota way of life.

We urge a **Do Pass** recommendation on House Bill 1150.

¹ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, No. 258.

² Josef Pieper, *The Philosophical Act*, 78.