

Representative Austin Foss
Testimony in Support of HB 1495

Chairman Warrey and Members of the Committee,

I am here to emphasize the critical role that this bill plays in preserving the foundation of North Dakota's citizen-led legislature.

North Dakota has always been a state where governance is rooted in the values and voices of its people. Our legislature was designed to be made up of everyday citizens—farmers, teachers, factory workers, engineers and community leaders—not career politicians. This principle ensures that our government reflects the real-world experiences and challenges faced by our residents.

However, the ability for citizens to serve in the legislature is increasingly hindered by systemic barriers. Time commitments, financial burdens, and the fear of losing employment deter many talented individuals from stepping forward to serve. This bill reduces those barriers by protecting employment rights that are currently extended to those employed by the state and ensures that all North Dakotans are not penalized for taking part in the legislative process. These protections also mirror those we have given our active duty military members through the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994.

We need to do more than simply encourage participation; we must actively create an environment that welcomes varied insights and skills. Term limits will place a greater responsibility on us to recruit and support new voices. This legislation helps foster a culture where public service is seen as a duty that is both accessible and honorable, rather than an unattainable goal for many.

By passing this bill, we send a clear message: North Dakota values its citizen-legislators and recognizes the importance of making public service an achievable aspiration for all.

Thank you for your consideration, and I will stand for questions.

Occupation Breakdown

Occupation	Lawmaker	State
Management Occupations	19.15%	5.84%
Business and Financial Operations	6.38%	4.76%
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	0.71%	1.87%
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	1.42%	1.41%
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	1.42%	0.98%
Community and Social Services Occupations	1.42%	1.29%
Legal Occupations	4.26%	0.53%
Education Instruction and Library Occupations	3.55%	5.80%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	0.71%	1.25%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	3.55%	6.53%
Healthcare Support Occupations	0.00%	4.42%
Protective Service Occupations	2.13%	1.81%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	0.00%	8.35%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	2.13%	3.21%
Personal Care and Service Occupation	1.42%	3.06%
Sales and Related Occupations	2.84%	8.47%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	2.13%	11.13%
Farming, Fishing, Forestry, Occupations	19.86%	0.25%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	2.13%	7.67%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	0.71%	5.47%
Production Occupations	0.71%	5.66%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2.13%	10.24%