



Bismarck-Mandan
Convention & Visitors Bureau
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Testimony of Sheri Grossman
Bismarck-Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau
Senate Bill 2035
January 13, 2025

Chairperson Larson and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Sheri Grossman, and I am the CEO for the Bismarck-Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). I appear in opposition to Senate Bill 2035.

We are not new to gaming and have been conducting gaming since 1993. At that time, the legislators passed legislation to include Convention & Visitors Bureaus as a public-spirited organization for charitable gaming. We were always included in the original intent. We are not a part of the issues caused by the recent surge in gaming and have been conducting gaming for three decades. We only have five sites and removing us from gaming wouldn't do anything to change the expansion of gaming but would have a devastating effect on our organization and the benefit we provide for our community. There are only three CVB's in North Dakota that conduct gaming. We are a very small part of the overall gaming community.

Our gaming funds aren't spent to benefit just one group, instead our work benefits the entire community. Our gaming funds are used to bring more people to Bismarck-Mandan to spend money in our restaurants, hotels and stores, and visit our attractions, and to showcase our communities to others who might want to live here. These visitors generate sales tax which can be used by local governments to fix roads, give property tax relief and more.

Gaming funds help market Bismarck-Mandan to meeting and event planners and leisure travelers. Some specific uses include:

- Pledged \$500,000 to Riverfront Festival Grounds for the matching Destination Development grant program appropriated by the legislature last session.
- Grant program for new meetings and events such as recreational, artistic or cultural events partnerships.
- Provide financial assistance and other complimentary services to established meetings, conventions, sports and events.
- Extensive media plan that touts the attributes of our communities through two campaigns:
 - Leisure traveler
 - Conventions, meetings and events



In 2023, we assisted 290 multiple-day meetings and events that drew 269,000 attendees who spent \$23.5 million dollars while in our community. That is a significant return on investment.

Our gaming funds account for about half of our annual budget, or approximately \$900,000. Without this current and continued source of income the Convention and Visitors Bureau will be unable to provide all the local benefits on our communities at large, such as helping fund the Riverfront Festival Grounds, or financially supporting Bismarck's 4th of July fireworks, Mandan Rodeo Days, or Mandan Holiday Lights, United Tribes Technical College's International PowWow and McQuade's Charity Softball Tournament (which is the USA's largest charity softball tournament and distributes all proceeds to charities), to name a few.

For many reasons, including those mentioned in these comments, we certainly believe our mission would fall under the added language as an "organization conferring a direct benefit on the community at large." However, these words are subjective and create statutory uncertainty that could later result in an issue of whether our organization is, in fact, eligible to engage in charitable gaming.

We respectfully ask that Convention and Visitors Bureaus be allowed to continue conducting charitable gaming that has been authorized for three decades. Removing this funding mechanism would have a devastating effect on the BMCVB, Bismarck-Mandan and the groups throughout the state that meet in our community. We respectfully ask for a do not pass on Senate Bill 2035.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

