Matt Odermann

President of All Seasons Rural Water Users District

Chairman, Towner County Commission

In Opposition of Senate Bill 2299

Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee

February 13, 2025

Senator Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I am writing in opposition to Senate Bill 2299.

**Section 1:**
While I can concur with this section, and I believe water districts already exceeding expectations relative to audits, I still have concerns with this section. Our routine audits ensure transparency and fiscal responsibility. If needed, we can provide details on the frequency and cost of these audits, which further demonstrate our commitment to financial oversight.

**Section 2:**
I am requesting an increase in the petition threshold from 150 to 300, or 10% of members, whichever is fewer. This increase is essential to protect the water district's members from unnecessary financial burdens caused by state-initiated audits or reviews triggered by a petition. Currently, users—not the state—bear the costs of these audits. Given that we already conduct thorough annual audits, this additional oversight is redundant and places an undue burden on members.

**Section 3:**
The only practical solution for all 20 Water Districts is to remove Subsection 3 of Section 3. This provision could negatively impact water district operations, shifting critical decision-making away from the local level. Local control ensures decisions are tailored to our district's unique needs and best serve our members. Eliminating this subsection is necessary to maintain efficiency and autonomy.

**Section 4:**
I support removing references to the county and county auditor, as well as the proposed vacancy language. However, I oppose Subsection 4 and recommend its removal or amendment. The language as written is overly broad and open to interpretation, which could lead to confusion, conflicting applications, and unnecessary disputes. This uncertainty risks bringing us back to the Legislature in two years to resolve local issues that should have been addressed properly in the first place. A more precise and locally driven solution is needed.

Respectfully,


Matt Odermann