

SB 2026 Regarding Foreign Ownership
Testimony presented by Rep. SuAnn Olson
Senate State and Local Government Committee
1.10.25

Testimony in support of SB 2026 as introduced by Legislative Management on behalf of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and in support of Proposed Amendments to SB 2026.

Chairwoman Roers and members of the committee, I urge you to support the diligent work that was done by the large Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee during the interim and support SB 2026. It is a good bill and substantially improves the first attempt that was made in the 2023 session to control activities by foreign adversaries, now called foreign country of concern or foreign organization of concern by the CFR (Code of Federal Regulations).

There are 195 countries in the entire world. This bill restricts citizens of 5 countries, China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Russia as well as the Venezuelan Maduro regime, from owning property in ND and has no impact whatsoever on the remaining 189 countries. Surely, we can find investors among our own citizens and the other 189 countries to develop good business ideas and create new endeavors.

We as North Dakotans should not be apologetic for our state, for our weather, for our rural-ness, for our apparent lack of sophistication. I am here to tell you that we are not the vision of North Dakota as a Buffalo Commons that the Poppers described in 1987. We are an Agriculture, Energy and Military powerhouse and we need to act that way. We as legislators need to protect and defend these important industries and activities in order to protect our own citizens and indeed the entire country. Our ag, energy and military are important to our national security. Critically important. We need to act like it and take steps to protect all three. Controlling who owns property or businesses in our state is an important step. Are we serious about protecting this state and country or not?

I am presenting an amendment to SB 2026 which does the following:

1. In Sections 1, 3 and 4 of the bill, the same paragraph is added in each that states that an organization which is exempt under this bill loses that exemption if it becomes owned/partially owned by a foreign country or organization of concern. This closes a back door to foreign ownership by coming in through an established business.
2. In Section 4, leasehold interests are also added to acquiring title to property by a foreign country or organization of concern. This is important because the ability to lease a property would, in fact, be easier to accomplish by a foreign entity than purchasing a property.

As I campaigned this last year for re-election, I got into conversations with District 8 voters about what they thought about foreign adversaries owning property or businesses in ND. Not one of them said they thought this was a good idea. I don't think it's a stretch to believe that most North Dakotans feel the same way.

During the interim committee meetings, we heard from several presenters, several of which had significant experience at the federal level with foreign activities and who still held high level security clearances. They are aware of the dangers adversaries present. We heard from Sen. Cramer who told the committee that we couldn't wait for the federal government to act.

Chairwoman Roers and the committee, I urge you to support this bill with a DO PASS recommendation.

Thank you.