



SB 2178
Senate State and Local Government Committee
January 23, 2025

Chair Roers and Members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee, my name is Carol Sawicki, and I am a Board member and representative of the League of Women Voters of North Dakota.

Senate Bill 2178 would require state primary election voters to select a ballot based on political party. That information would be stored in our state's central voter file for six years and would be available to a political candidate, political party, or political committee.

The bill represents an abrupt departure from our current electoral process. Currently, voters receive a single ballot in the primary that includes candidates listed in the column of their respective political party. The voter privately selects candidates in their preferred party's column and may not "crossover" to vote for another party's candidates.

The League of Women Voters of North Dakota opposes SB 2178 for the following reasons:

- **Voters' political party selection would no longer be private information, which would be objectionable—and even uncomfortable—for many North Dakotans.** The bill would require voters to publicly request their party ballot of choice at the polls within hearing of other voters and election workers. If passed, the bill would overturn North Dakota's tradition of voter privacy and may make voters hesitant to vote in the party primary, resulting in voter suppression. The League of Women Voters of North Dakota supports legislation that empowers, rather than discourages, citizen participation in the electoral process.
- **The bill would track voters' political party selection and keep it on record, whether voters want to be identified with one or not.** Voters' political party selection for primary elections would be recorded in the central voter file and made accessible to candidates, political parties, and political committees. This would be a vast change to the privacy of North Dakota voters' information.
- **It would decrease the timeframe a voter could request a primary election absentee ballot.** The petition to establish a political party in North Dakota has a deadline in April and the state primary is in June. If this bill were to pass, voters would have to wait until after that deadline to request an absentee ballot to know what political parties are available to them. This would create more barriers for



absentee voting, as under the current system, voters can request an absentee ballot for all the elections in the year starting in January of the election year.

- **If the bill passed, voters would know less information about candidates when requesting an absentee ballot.** Voters would need to research candidates much sooner, possibly before much information is available, to decide in which political primary they would like to vote before requesting an absentee ballot. Our nonpartisan voter guide on VOTE411.org isn't available until mid-May to help voters to compare candidates and make their decisions.

This bill would impact voter privacy and increase barriers for absentee voters; therefore, the League of Women Voters of North Dakota **urges committee members to give SB 2178 a Do Not Pass recommendation.**

Thank you, Chair Roers and members of the committee, for your consideration of our testimony.