

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I stand in strong opposition to HB1444.

Why are bills being introduced to specifically target one area, in this case, one road near Applied Digital in Ellendale, yet when passed into law, will affect the entire state? We know this because it was printed in the LaMoure Chronicle under the District 28 Legislative Report (see below – even though the bill number is a typo).

This bill represents a continual and concerning shift in taking power away from local communities and private landowners. Yet another blatant overreach of government.

Local township boards, which are closer to the people and more responsive to community needs, must retain the authority to make these determinations in collaboration with their citizens—not big corporations.

This bill opens the door to forced land acquisition and top-down control that undermines our rural values, our land rights, and our belief in local governance.

We are part of a large group of concerned citizens from District 28, where our very own representatives are choosing to side with big corporations rather than the constituents they were elected to represent. Therefore, I am asking Senators to please speak up on our behalf...for the rights of landowners and small communities. I urge you to protect private property rights and maintain local authority by **voting NO on HB1444**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Susan R. Long
Berlin ND

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

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DISTRICT 28 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

DICKEY COUNTY • LAMOURE COUNTY • LOGAN COUNTY • MCINTOSH COUNTY • SARGENT COUNTY



**Senator
Robert
Erbele**



**Representative
Mike
Brandenburg**



**Representative
Jim
Grueneich**

Sen. Robert Erbele, Rep. Mike Brandenburg and Rep. Jim Grueneich are working for property tax relief and reform for agriculture and small businesses as well as for residential property. The property tax has been a major issue for many legislative sessions which is why the state currently pays nearly \$5.5 billion per biennium to political subdivisions to ease the burden on taxpayers.

Final decisions on tax reform will not be made until the closing hours of the session; however, the first bill of the session signed by Gov. Kelly Armstrong, SB 2201, expands North Dakota's Primary Residence Credit to include homes held in trusts, ensuring more homeowners benefit from property tax relief.

HB 1441 Passes 74-16

1441, a bill sponsored by the District 28 Team to clarify the Century Code to allow a county to add a township road to the county road system, has passed the House and next will be considered by the Senate. Rep. Grueneich carried the bill on the House floor with support by Rep. Brandenburg, and Sen. Erbele will provide leadership in the Senate. The clarification was necessary for public

safety because of the heavy traffic on the township road serving the \$20-billion data center now under construction near Ellendale. Nearly 700 vehicles use the narrow road, and the data center is contributing funds to pay for upgrading it. To add a township road, county commissioners would hold a public hearing and make a decision at a future meeting.

The data center will bring 300-350 good-paying jobs and related economic development to the area as well as new tax revenue for Ellendale and Dickey County.

Legal Drain 11

Legal Drain 11 in Sargent County dates back to 1916 when farmers organized to dig a drain so land that did not drain naturally could be farmed. In 2013 the N.D. Department of Transportation increased the flow of water under Highway 13 from Ransom County by five times when new culverts were installed. The increased flow has led to massive flooding to the south of the highway. In addition, there have been disputes among landowners about paying to maintain and use the drain under the control of the Sargent County Water Board.

The District 28 Team has introduced legislation to remove Ransom County from voting on Legal Drain 11 issues since it does not pay assessments for the drain. The legislation also creates a process to resolve landowner disputes. HB 1280 passed the House 91-0. Reps. Brandenburg and Grueneich moved it through the House, and Sen. Erbele will be its Senate advocate.

Health Care Bill Passes Senate

Sen. Erbele led a bipartisan effort in the Senate to win passage of SB 2286 to fund a Health Professions Collaborative Facility to the School of Medicine and Health Sciences building at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. The bill passed 47-0 and awaits action by the House.

Having nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy and the medical school in the same complex rather than in multiple buildings will mean health professionals train together to prepare them to work together in a real world environment.

Sen. Erbele said a needs-based study for the medical school has led to retaining more UND-educated medical professionals in North Dakota and to attracting more North Dakota students to medical careers.