

Written Testimony for the
House Government and Veterans Affairs
January 21, 2021
Erika White, Burleigh County Election Manager



RE: OPPOSITION for HB 1119

Greetings, Chairman Kasper, and members of the Committee. My name is Erika White and I am the Election Manager in the Burleigh County Auditor/Treasurer's office. I'm submitting testimony in opposition of HB 1119.

I understand the basis for this bill and agree that voters should be educated on the material presented on the ballot. I disagree that measures should be stated in full on the ballot. This can and will lead to substantial and significant issues when it comes to executing an election.

Space on a ballot is limited due to size restrictions the tabulating equipment can handle. The current tabulation equipment can scan ballots 8.5 inches wide and up to 19 inches in length. While this may seem like a sizeable area, there are restrictions for the amount of text that can be placed in a singular column. In addition, space is further restricted due to header and footer information, required by law, as well as border space for the tabulators to correctly scan each ballot.

If the information can not fit on a one-page, double-sided ballot, the only option is to have a two-page, double-sided ballot. Having a two-page ballot opens up a myriad of issues. Voters will forget or even choose to only send back a singular page in their absentee envelope. Scanning one page versus two pages will create discrepancies with the number of absentee voters checked-in to our Central Voter File and the quantity of ballots scanned on the tabulator. Having these discrepancies in the count will lead to increased voter distrust and election integrity concerns.

Having a two-page ballot will also lead to early vote and Election Day problems. The dedicated election workers who are at the polls will have more to manage

with a two-page ballot. This could lead to increased wait times at the polls as well as balancing issues when the polls close, all of which will lead to a delay in reporting the election results.

The key is really voter education. Many states across the nation send voter information packets to their electorate. These packets are mailed from the Secretary of State prior to absentee ballots being mailed. These information packets can be as robust or lean as desired for the ballot measure information.

Voter education is on the priority list of many Auditors throughout North Dakota. We agree that transparency and communication is key when executing successful elections. However, there are great alternatives established by other states that could be adopted that would increase voter education while at the same time maintaining the current one-page two-sided ballot. This will allow us to confidently uphold the integrity of North Dakota Elections.

Please contact me at 701-222-6697 or erwhite@nd.gov if I can provide further information.

Thank you for your time and I urge a DO NOT PASS on HB 1119.