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January 21, 2021

TO: Chairman Kasper and Members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

FR: Jim Silrum, Deputy Secretary of State on behalf of Secretary of State Al Jaeger

RE: HB 1119 – Printing full text of measure on the ballot

This bill amends NDCC § 16.1-01-09 to require that the full text of the measure be placed on the ballot. Under current law when the measure is too long to make it practicable to print in full on the ballot, the law authorizes the Secretary of State in consultation with the Attorney General to print a concise summary that must fairly represent the substance of the measure. This procedure has been law since at least 1981.

We understand that this bill would hopefully make for a more-informed electorate, whereby voters can read the measure before they cast their vote. However, the Secretary of State's office wonders if the mere presence of the full text will encourage the voters to read it in full. We are certain that the adoption of this amendment will be the cause for:

1. Ballots that will include more than one ballot card for each voter;
2. More time involved in processing returned ballots, potentially delaying election night results;
3. The ballot printing costs will go up for the counties at a rate of not less than \$0.30 per ballot card (e.g., a two-page ballot would be \$0.60 per voter – 700,000 ballots x an extra \$0.30 = \$210,000; a three-page ballot would be \$0.90 per voter – 700,000 ballots x an extra \$0.60 = \$420,000);
4. Confusion for the voter as to what to do with the extra ballot cards – especially if they have no interest in voting on the measures;
5. Complication with the results reporting unless every voter inserts all ballot cards into the tabulator;
6. Increased mailing costs for both the absent voter and for the counties; and
7. Increased programming costs for the voting system.

While it is important for voters to be fully informed about a measure on the ballot, we believe the passage of this bill would have unintended consequences beyond those listed above and that this bill does not provide the solution to having an informed electorate. For example, will the voter read the full text that is on the ballot? As a reminder, the inclusion of a set of instructions for putting together a child's birthday present does not mean that the parents will read them.

On behalf of the Secretary of State and his election team, we request the committee to vote for a do not pass recommendation.