

Testimony Prepared for the
House Government & Veterans Affairs

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Donnell Preskey, NDACo



RE: Support for HB 1161: Closing of Polls

Good morning Chairman Kasper and committee members, I'm Donnell Preskey with the North Dakota Association of Counties. In that capacity, I serve as Executive Director for the County Auditors Association which supports of HB 1161.

This bill seeks to implement a time limit for the last voters to cast their ballot. By law, voters in line at a polling location at the time polls are set to close, are allowed to vote. This bill further provides that ballots must be marked and cast thirty minutes after the last elector at the polling place who is allowed to vote receives a ballot.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, this bill is in no way intended to rush voters. It is not about the poll-workers who just want to get home. This is about the unnecessary holding up of an election.

This bill will address circumstances one of our counties has experienced, more than once.

Ward County has had two instances of the same voter going to the polling place on election day approximately 30 minutes prior to closing time. This individual stays in the voting booth for at least an hour past closing time. According to the County Auditor, this individual comes to the office to pick up a sample ballot as soon as it is available. This indicates they are taking the time to research items on the ballot ahead of time.

This situation results in the delaying of results for that precinct. Currently, there is no other option by law other than for election officials to wait it out. Without a change in code, imagine how long this could go on for. Essentially, this behavior holds a polling location and results hostage. This also has financial impacts as county employees need to wait for the inspector and judges to bring in the results and ballots and cannot leave until this is done along with the additional pay for the poll workers in that effected polling location.

We ask the committee to give HB 1161 a Do Pass recommendation.