

Testimony HB 1312
January 28, 2021
Karen K. Ehrens

Chair Kasper and Members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee:

Good day. I am Karen Ehrens, a resident of Bismarck and member of the League of Women Voters. Voting by mail or “absentee” ballot works for North Dakotans as demonstrated by 2020 election results, which were certified by the state canvassing board. The ability to conduct elections by mail was proven safe and secure in 2020 and in previous years.

As an election worker in Burleigh County in 2020, I asked hundreds of people the 3 following questions to determine eligibility:

- Are you a citizen of the United States?
- Are you at least 18 years of age?
- Have you lived at your current address for at least 30 days?

These questions, along with voter identification, are current voter requirements for North Dakota, and they work.

HB 1312 attempts to set up additional subjective and arbitrary “requirements” for voting. There are 15 provisions for electors set out in this bill. It is nearly inconceivable that city and county auditors will have the time and staff to make determinations for every individual who requests an absentee ballot on who is “qualified” to vote in this manner. And then for the election clerks and board members, when opening ballots submitted through the mail, again determine if the voter has met an added subjective and arbitrary voter “qualification”?

What does it contribute to the fair and democratic process to add additional questions, such as these, to determine if a voter is “qualified” to vote in a certain manner?

- Are you an individual with a physical disability?
- Are you someone who chooses not to vote on a Saturday?
- Were you admitted to the hospital within four days before election day?
- Do you have a relative who died or had a funeral within 3 days before election day?

These proposed changes to the Century Code will obstruct voting rights and keep eligible voters from exercising their right to vote. I call on you to vote “no” on this bill and end this attempt to suppress votes.

Karen Ehrens
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