

**Chairman Kasper and members of the House Government and Veteran Affairs Committee:**

The four (4) Republican District Chairs in Grand Forks as well as the leadership of the Grand Forks United Republicans and Grand Forks Republican Women respectfully request your support for **HB 1447** – a bill to allow college students to utilize their student IDs to vote.

HB 1447 is sponsored by 8 legislators from Grand Forks and Fargo. The bill will enable college students to vote using their university-issued ID. Engaging students to vote will help retain them in our state's workforce. HB 1447 <https://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/67-2021/documents/21-0967-01000.pdf>

This bill enables college students to vote - who are U.S. citizens, over 18, and were residents for over 30 days - and often first-time voters with their first driver's license listing their parent's address. This bill provides a path for students to vote by utilizing *another government-issued ID*, their university ID which does utilize their college address. At least ten other states allow use of student IDs for voting.

In the **Nov. 2020 election**, 364,251 North Dakotans cast their ballots or **62.65% of eligible voters** - a record high turnout. That beats the record turnout in the 2016 General Election of 349,945 voters — an increase of 14,306 voters - or 4%.

<https://vip.sos.nd.gov/PortalListDetails.aspx?ptlhPKID=133&ptlPKID=4>

One county did not have record turnout - **Grand Forks County!** With 9% of the total eligible state voters, Grand Forks should have seen an increase of 1200 voters. We did not, as only **55%** of our eligible residents did vote, compared to statewide of 62.6%, or 7.6% less voter participation. Here are vote totals for Grand Forks County from the last five presidential elections.

2020 – 31,142 Ballots Cast (55%)

2016 – 30,709 Ballots Cast (54%)

2012 – 30,177 Ballots Cast

2008 – **31,464** Ballots Cast - record vote for Grand Forks County.

2004 – 30,650 Ballots Cast

**District 42**, which surrounds UND, only cast **3,641 votes** - the very lowest voter total in the state - as the 47 districts in the state averaged 7,750 votes cast, and some over 10,000 votes. Who did **NOT** vote and why? **First-time voters** - UND students - did not vote in large numbers as they are often first time voters unfamiliar with voting and are handicapped with driver's licenses that have their parents address on them. They are eligible voters - residents for more than 30 days, over the age of 18, and US Citizens – but not having a driver's license with their university address prevents them from voting where they live.

Going through the 47 Districts in North Dakota to determine which ones have the lowest vote totals for US President is enlightening, as the bottom seven (7) districts all host a university or an air base - good American residents to be sure – people we want to encourage to vote.

District 42 Grand Forks 3,641

District 40 Minot 5,103

District 21 Fargo 5,592

District 18 Grand Forks 5,659

District 12 Jamestown 5,982  
District 19, Grand Forks 6,018  
District 43 Grand Forks 6,176

Who and how many eligible voters does this impact?

**UND** had 13,615 students this fall (about 20% of city population); 8,918 are enrolled full time; 33.6% are from North Dakota (4571), 30% from Minnesota (4113). 93% are American citizens. I could not find a number of those who reside in Grand Forks, but we can estimate that 10,000 live in our community, and 33.6% (3,363) of those students have a North Dakota Driver's License from somewhere. **6,000** do not but who are American citizens from other states. With about 2,000 freshmen and 2,000 sophomores, there may be as many as **4,000 first-time voters**...who were discouraged from voting. We want them to be engaged residents for the long haul, and be North Dakota voters and residents long-term.

Another vital population that is impacted is at **Grand Forks AFB** which has 1,800 Airmen. 55-60% of those are married - another 1000 adults – a total voting population **of 2,800 voters**. Some of those may have a North Dakota Driver's License, but a small percentage. They all should be allowed to vote in North Dakota if based here in our community, serving our country. Many are first time voters, too, as 40% of the airmen have their first assignment at the Grand Forks AFB - ages 18 to 22.

All together there are about **8,800** residents of Grand Forks who are - in effect - disenfranchised because of a North Dakota Driver's License requirement, a requirement that not there a few years ago. Some of them probably voted by absentee where their parents reside, but many tried to vote and were turned away because they did not have a ND Driver's License – a sad situation. This is why Grand Forks voting totals are much lower than they should be, and why voting percentages are 7.6% lower than they should be.

HB 1447 allows university students to utilize another government-issued ID to be able to vote, using their University ID which does provide their college address and date of birth. We have no concern if there was a requirement they sign an affidavit swearing they did not vote anywhere else in that election which leaves a voter audit trail, a requirement that may also be needed for any parent or grandparent who has more than one residence in North Dakota or another state. This would leave an audit trail for county auditors and the Secretary of State.

Allowing legal residents to vote legally, is a good thing to do. Getting first time voters engaged and involved will help retain them in our state, becoming residents for their professional career – meeting our workforce needs.

We would greatly appreciate your support! Let us know if you have any questions!

Respectfully,

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