



HCR 3003
House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
January 16, 2025

Chair Schauer and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, I am Carol Sawicki, Board member and representative of the League of Women Voters of North Dakota.

HCR 3003 increases the vote threshold for approving a constitutional amendment, which would hamper the role of citizen participation in the governance of our state. **The League of Women Voters of North Dakota opposes HCR 3003.**

The citizen initiative process is a hallmark of direct democracy. It promotes civic engagement, increases government accountability, and provides a channel for North Dakotans to elevate an issue that might otherwise not be addressed. For example, property taxes became a priority this session due in large part to a citizen initiative in 2024 to address it. There is power in North Dakotans organizing around an issue through the initiative process.

The League of Women Voters of North Dakota opposes HCR 3003 for the following reasons:

1. HCR 3003 increases the percentage of voters needed to approve a constitutional amendment from a simple majority to 60%. This proposed change in the initiative process would limit direct democracy in North Dakota and impact citizen participation in the governance of our state.
2. Majority-vote initiated and referred measures have a long and proud history in North Dakota. State Legislator L.A. Ueland of Edgeley—founding member of the Executive Committee of the national Direct Legislation League in 1896—and Mrs. Katherine King of McKenzie—founder of the state chapter of the Direct Legislation League in 1902—spent 20 years promoting initiative and referendum processes, and the people of North Dakota ratified an initiative and referendum amendment to the North Dakota Constitution in 1914.¹ Since that time, our state Constitution has required a simple majority of votes for an initiated or a referred measure to be enacted. The people of North Dakota have supported the long-standing and current constitutional process for initiatives and referendums and repeatedly rejected efforts to change this process.
3. North Dakota voters have protected the initiative process. The people have defeated 3 out of the last 4 legislative attempts to change Article III (see table below).

¹ Initiative and Referendum Institute. Jan 11. 2025. initiativeandreferenduminstitute.org/north-dakota



Initiated and referred measures play an important role in supporting citizen participation in the governance of the state. HCR 3003 would limit that role; therefore, the League of Women Voters of North Dakota **strongly urges committee members to give HCR 3003 a Do Not Pass recommendation.**

Thank you, Chair Schauer and members of the committee, for your consideration of our testimony.

Recent Attempts to Change the Initiative Process

Year	Election	Ballot Measure	Type	Vote Outcome
2024	General	Measure 2	Referred by Legislature	56.41% No
2020	General	Measure 2	Referred by Legislature	61.61% No
2014	General	Measure 4	Referred by Legislature	56.59% No
2014	Primary	Measure 1*	Referred by Legislature	53.55% Yes

**The 2014 Primary Election measure authorized the state legislature to create a procedure for determining the fiscal impact of initiated measures.*

Source: www.sos.nd.gov/elections/election-results