

SUPPORT HB2317

March 11 2025

Dear House Energy & Natural Resources committee members,

My name is Sandra Rupp, shortly after High School, I was hired by Burlington Northern Railroad to satisfy their so called 'Quota' of the gender minority. This testimony could be pages and pages of the challenges met being one of the first female railroad track employees. I will say it was not an easy job as there were not only the significant physical challenges, the emotional were equal and at times even greater. Within a few years the other females had moved on, however in my case, I simply could not give up. Thankfully, my reward for staying would become evident. 4 years after my career began, I married a FARMER. He was very involved in his community, primarily Township and Church. He remained township Supervisor for 27 years, until I ran for his position. Ha! something, we still laugh about. Perhaps it's a mark in ND township history. A wife beats a 27 year old incumbent, and it's her mate. My years as township supervisor were rough, as the years of 2009, 2010 and 2011 showed a vengeance of Mother Nature's Power. Flood waters had taken most of our roads, culverts and bridges. Our LaMoure County was wide spread with disaster. Being the new kid on the block, and no stranger to being 'Pro-Active', our Wano Township Board was put into the 'Fast Track.' It was up to us to make our township people whole again and we couldn't wait for upper management, because it was all for us, as a township board to decide. Granted, the process of FEMA was certainly acknowledged and aided all of County with financial assistance. But HOW would those transportation routes be put back into safe order and WHO would be doing it? I recall making trips to Bismarck to get a quick education on the FEMA process. Taking that knowledge back to my home county of LaMoure where I was asked to put on a 'Power Point' presentation for all our townships, at the Omega Room in LaMoure, North Dakota. Those efforts aided many townships who needed the necessary information in order to avoid denial of FEMA funding. Year one, 2009 was so terribly challenging, yet WANO township was ahead of the game in getting their roads, culverts repaired or replaced. The bridges would follow, as that was the responsibility of the LaMoure County. Come 2010, townships were challenged with another year of flooding! The tax-payers depended on the Wano Township Board once again to make them whole.

Following the third flooding in 2011, our township, along with others could write a book, "A Township Flooding Trilogy." As ordinary folks, a township board may not always get things done proper, but what they do is they CARE for those closest to them. If legislation bills continue to erode the lowest political subdivisions in North Dakota, the concerns and voices of people will continue to be quashed.

During my nearly 20 years as a Maintenance of Way, Burlington Northern Railroad employee, I went from the 'lowest level' laborer employee who would wear a 'Yellow' colored hardhat to one of authority, a Foreman, who would wear a 'White' colored hardhat. I was responsible for the men on my crew and listening to those concerns of our workplace and the conditions. The day I clearly recall, was when my superior told me I had to inform some of my crew the expectations of that day from upper management. Not easy being in the middle, so I truly understand and respect. Yet, the core of my being is this, one simply cannot ignore both sides. I stood for those employees and still recall Burlington Northern Railroad upper management reminding me to look at the color of my 'White' hardhat. I took a deep breath, and responded, "I will, but I will not forget where I came from." I returned back to my crew and we did what was right! After all, it Our Blood, Sweat and Tears that was getting those 2 miles of recorded production, for the monetary gains of the Burlington Northern Railroad and their stock holders. To this day, I still wonder what would happen if 'Upper Management' would be required to walk in the shoes, or in my case the Steel-Toed boots of their subordinates.

Today, I took this time to bring more to any testimony that I have ever written. These two pages are very close to my Heart!. Please bring back or protect the voice of the townships and their people. If you are still reading, I will go one step further - "Leaders of North Dakota, if law continues to threaten North Dakota's Political Sub Divisions, please remember these words as you Vote!"

"Don't Forget Where You Came From!"

Support and Pass HB2317

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