

To the ND House Political Subdivisions Chairman Donald Longmuir and fellow committee members

My name is Kenny Rogers, chairman of the Strengthen ND board. I am here to represent rural North Dakota. I still live on a farm and been a life long resident of Maxbass in Bottineau county. Educated at Maxbass, North Dakota School of Forestry and NDSU receiving both a bachelors and master degrees. I then went home to farm after getting burnt out from education ( another story ) . The date was 1972 and since that time until now I have watched rural ND die, schools close and consolidate, multiple businesses close, churches close, town councils and townships having a hard time finding people to serve among other things. Most of you know the story.

I now believe things are beginning to change. In a zoom meeting, I described Maxbass as on its last breath because it does not have a bar but we still have a post office, a very good construction business and a small church who now has some noise in it because of a number of young families. We were the only town in the last census in Bottineau county, to grow, 86 to 89, plus twins were born to a young family a couple days ago, so there is some hope in rural ND communities.

Now is the time to do something for rural ND, that is what Strengthen ND is all about, but we need your help. In most of our towns are a mix of elderly and young families. The demands of life do not give them the time to devote or the energy to do what it takes today to get there communities reinvigorated. They are busy trying to keep family and their town functioning. The answer is simple, they need HELP and that is what Strengthen ND does. We already have excellent working relationships with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Commerce with some current projects.

We thought, SB2097, was a good start but it got changed. I don't know what to think. I have worked for approximately 30 years with rural water, Garrison Diversion, NAWS, local and county townships and I spent 12 plus years working part time with the ND Ag Mediation Service trying to help distressed farm families to survive. I have made public comments that rural ND is dying and if it dies ND won't be the same state it is today an certainly not like our past. Today we are at a critical point in rural ND. Farms are getting larger and larger. Our smaller towns under 1000 population need to change and find new visions of how to address their problems and a future. When you look at all the problems over the US; we can see future growth for our communities because of the services that help individuals and business work from home, potential to produce most of their own food or to by quality food local and send their children to local schools or home school them. I believe in rural ND and it has a great future. Our state is expanding its city populations and we need to look seriously at growing rural ND. Much of this can be done by using existing utilities and attracting new pioneer type people seeking more safety and freedom.

We just need help with new ideas and some financing; that is why we thought that the original SB2097 was a very good ideal. My country boy math just seems that you should be able to fund this worth while project when you think about our ND history and what rural ND has contributed to our state. The majority of North Dakota's wealth comes from petroleum and agriculture, rural. This is a one time funding bill since the future funding will be provided to rural ND by the interest from the endowment fund.

Thank you and thank you for your service to rural North Dakota

Kenny Rogers