



NDSBA
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HB 1482
Testimony of Amy De Kok
Senate Finance & Taxation Committee
March 10, 2025

Chairman Weber and members of the Senate Finance & Taxation Committee, my name is Amy De Kok. I am the executive director of the North Dakota School Boards Association. NDSBA represents all 168 North Dakota public school districts and their governing boards. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 1482, which would require school districts seeking to increase their limit of indebtedness and/or authorize the issuance of bonds to hold the required election at either a statewide primary election or the November general election. While the intent of the bill—to increase voter participation in these elections—is understandable, the practical implications pose significant challenges for school districts and their ability to address urgent facility needs in a timely manner.

Concerns with HB 1482:

1. Potential Administrative Issues with Election Management:

The majority of school districts currently administer their own elections, including bond elections. While school districts may enter into agreements with county election officials to facilitate the process, counties have the authority to decline such agreements. HB 1482 does not address this issue, potentially leaving school districts without a clear path to conducting elections in compliance with the law.

2. Limited Election Windows Delay Critical Infrastructure Needs:

The bill restricts bond elections to either a statewide primary election in June or the general election in November. These statewide elections occur only every two years, meaning that if a school district misses an election cycle or experiences an unexpected facility emergency requiring bond issuance, it may face a prolonged waiting period before securing the necessary funding. Schools must be able to respond to urgent facility repairs, increased student enrollment, or safety concerns without being constrained to infrequent election dates.

3. Challenges for School Planning and Construction Timelines:

School construction and infrastructure improvements require careful planning and coordination. Limiting bond elections to biennial statewide election dates could cause schools to miss construction cycles,

resulting in increased costs due to inflation, supply chain delays, and seasonal weather constraints. The flexibility to hold bond elections when needed allows school districts to manage their projects more efficiently and cost-effectively.

4. **Potential for Increased Voter Confusion and Overloaded Ballots:**

Bond elections involve detailed financial and infrastructure planning that requires careful voter consideration. When placed on a statewide election ballot alongside numerous other issues and candidate races, these important local matters risk being overlooked or misunderstood by voters. The ability to conduct dedicated bond elections ensures that the public is fully informed and able to focus on the implications for their local schools.

While the goal of HB 1482 to enhance voter participation is commendable, the bill ultimately creates significant challenges for school districts. The restrictions on election timing, the lack of assurance that counties will support election administration, and the impact on school facility planning all contribute to reasons why this bill should not move forward. School districts require flexibility to address their infrastructure and funding needs efficiently and effectively, without being bound by the constraints of statewide election cycles.

I respectfully urge you to oppose HB 1482 to ensure that our schools retain the ability to manage their financial and facility planning in a way that best serves students, educators, and communities.