

2025 HOUSE AGRICULTURE

HB 1479

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Agriculture Committee Room JW327C, State Capitol

HB 1479
1/30/2025

A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the designation and establishment of North Dakota Constitution Day.

8:00 a.m. Chairman Beltz opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Beltz, Vice Chairman Hauck, Representatives Anderson, Dobervich, Henderson, Holle, Hoverson, Kiefert, Nehring, Olson, Rios, Schreiber-Beck, Tveit, Vollmer

Discussion Topics:

- October 1
- Study of States Constitution
- 167 amendments

8:00 a.m. Representative Karen Karls, District 35, Bismarck, ND, introduced, testified and submitted testimony #33008.

8:02 a.m. Brian Pechtl, Bismarck, ND testified in favor and submitted testimony #33009.

8:09 a.m. Arik Spencer, President/CEO of Greater North Dakota Association, testified in support.

8:09 a.m. Representative Tveit moved Do Pass.

8:09 a.m. Representative Hauck seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Mike Beltz	Y
Representative Dori Hauck	Y
Representative Karen A. Anderson	Y
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	AB
Representative Donna Henderson	Y
Representative Dawson Holle	Y
Representative Jeff Hoverson	Y
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y
Representative Dennis Nehring	Y
Representative SuAnn Olson	AB
Representative Nico Rios	Y
Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck	Y
Representative Bill Tveit	Y
Representative Daniel R. Vollmer	Y

Motion passed 12-0-2.

8:12 a.m. Representative Rios will carry the bill.

Additional written testimony:

Charles Steinberger, Bismarck ND, submitted testimony in favor #32566.

Mark Jorritsman, Executive Director, ND Family Alliance Legislative Action, submitted testimony in favor #32694.

8:12 a.m. Chairman Beltz closed the hearing.

Diane Lillis, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1479 ([25.0957.02000](#))

Agriculture Committee (Rep. Beltz, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1479 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

I am Charles L. Steinberger, and I am an attorney in Bismarck. I am a graduate from Kenmare, North Dakota and I Support HB 1479. During middle school, I took North Dakota history as a class. My teacher made us review the North Dakota Constitution. We understood little to nothing about it. We knew that the U.S. Constitution was the law of the land, however we did not think to put much effort into understanding a document not many folks in our community seemed interested in.

My view of the North Dakota Constitution has drastically changed. As an attorney, the North Dakota Constitution is a key document for understanding how and why North Dakota law has adjusted over the past century. I see the importance of celebrating the day it was enacted to push schools to have a legal professional talk about the importance of the document. I know my high school classmates chose careers based on guest speakers or by attending local career and technical events. Thus, having a day to celebrate the North Dakota Constitution would give schools the opportunity to have a legislator, attorney, or judge into the school to discuss this important document, which would open the door to North Dakota youth to seek out a legal career.

This simple bill will not only celebrate North Dakota's past, it could stem the tide in brain drain of our youth. There is a shortage of legal professionals in North Dakota. The shortage includes State's Attorneys, paralegals, attorneys, and other interrelated careers. By introducing North Dakota's students to the North Dakota Constitution and showing the importance of said document, more students may enter a legal profession and stay within the State. Conversations with legislators, judges, and even attorneys could assist in bringing more youth into this field and would build connections to rural areas where legal assistance is in extreme demand. During my time as a clerk for the North Dakota Supreme Court, I attended school visits with the Court. The conversations between the Court and Students brought the law to the students, but the Court opened

the conversation about how it works, how attorneys and the court system manage a case beyond the half-truths of TV and movies, and how the interworking's of North Dakota law is applied inside and outside the court room. This bill would move the discussion beyond the legislature and court room and open the discussion with the public to discuss the fundamental document that grounds all North Dakota law.

Youth apply as much importance to a document as we adults do. Thus, if this bill passes and we, as North Dakotans, start to celebrate our state's history; it is more likely the students will too. By implementing this bill, the Legislative branch has taken a step celebrate our history and protect our state's future.



Testimony Supporting House Bill 1479

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
January 30, 2025

Dear Chairman Beltz and honorable members of the House Agriculture Committee,

My name is Mark Jorritsma, and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. I am testifying on behalf of our organization in support of House Bill 1479 and respectfully request that you render a "DO PASS" on this bill.

House Bill 1479 would commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of North Dakota on August 17, 1889, and its ratification by vote on October 1, 1889. By passing this bill, it will encourage our state's citizens to seek greater knowledge and understanding of the North Dakota Constitution by designating October 1st each year as North Dakota Constitution Day.

We recognize the importance of the Constitution of North Dakota and its significance in our daily lives as citizens of this great state. As our state's governing document, it protects our inalienable rights, free speech, freedom of worship, and defines the role of government. Several of our daily tasks could simply not be undertaken without the protection it offers. Unfortunately, many of our citizens simply don't understand its critical role in our freedoms; this bill will shine a well-deserved light on this founding document.

For these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action requests that you vote "DO PASS" on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and please contact us with any questions.

Mark Jorritsma
Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action

HB 1479 Testimony – House Ag Committee

Rep. Karen Karls – January 29, 2025

Good Morning! I am here today to present HB 1479 which seeks to designate October 1st as ND Constitution Day. This comes at a request from my constituent Bryan Pechtl after he interviewed me for his 701 Civics podcast. I've included his email message which contains a lot of information about his mission.

Rep. Karls,

As noted in our visit a few weeks ago, I am hoping to interview you for the newly created '701 Civics' podcast, an effort to help inform students and citizens across North Dakota about the role of state government offices and officials that serve in state government.

I am in the process of setting up interviews with agency leaders for the '701 Civics' podcast. The goals of the 701 Civics podcast are simple and straightforward:

- Provide a non-political format for listeners to increase one's knowledge about state government.
- Provide teachers and students with a succinct, useful resource to find information about state government offices and office holders.
- Increase listener understanding of the role and purpose of state government offices.
- Develop an understanding of the role of elected officials in their positions.

Each month during the normal school year, I email over 650 social studies teachers in North Dakota and provide them with resources and links to civics-related materials. The monthly mailings have been well-received, and I want to add more to North Dakota 'teacher toolboxes.' As a former social studies teacher, and someone that conducts educational outreach, I am asking for your help in bringing awareness of state government to North Dakota students in an effort to increase their understanding of, and participation in, state and local government.

How can you help? In your role as a legislator in state government, I would like to schedule a time to visit and record a short podcast session regarding what it is like to be a legislator in state government and how the House works, from the point of view of a legislator. I will bring an audio recorder and a microphone, and the session will be as conversational as possible, lasting approximately 20 minutes.

Below, you will find questions that I would like to include in our discussion, and that I feel will be of most benefit to listeners. My goal is to have you as comfortable and prepared as possible as we reach out to educate the citizens of North Dakota about state government.

I would very much like to schedule a time that works best for your schedule in a location that is most convenient for you. If you have any questions, please reach out any time. Thank you,

Bryan Pechtl Email: bryan.pechtl@gmail.com

House Legislator and State Government

Life as a Legislator

1. Please provide a brief biography about yourself and your motivation to run for a seat in the North Dakota House of Representatives.
2. How do you balance the demands of legislative work with your personal life?
3. Describe the typical day as a representative during the session.
4. How many committees do legislators serve on and how are assignments determined?
5. How do legislators prepare for committee meetings and hearings?
6. How do legislators collaborate with other representatives, both within one's party and across the aisle?

Legislative Process

1. Please explain the process of drafting a piece of legislation from idea to introduction?
2. How does a bill move through the North Dakota House of Representatives?
3. What role does research play in legislative work?
4. What are some of the most challenging aspects of legislative work?
5. What is the role of lobbyists in the legislative process?

Constituent Engagement

1. How do legislators stay informed about the needs and concerns of your constituents?
2. How do legislators gather input from your constituents on proposed legislation?
3. What strategies do legislators use to effectively communicate with your constituents?
4. How do legislators engage with local businesses and organizations to inform your policy decisions?
5. What steps do legislators take to ensure transparency and accountability in your work?

Policy

1. How do legislators measure the success of legislative efforts?
2. How do legislators stay current with national and state-level policy changes?

Final Notes

1. What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing a career in politics?
2. What do you see as the biggest opportunities and challenges for North Dakota in the coming years?

Final thoughts?

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

PROCLAMATION

NORTH DAKOTA CONSTITUTION DAY

OCTOBER 1, 2024

WHEREAS, on October 1, 1889, the people of North Dakota, by an overwhelming majority, voted to ratify the state Constitution, about one month before North Dakota became the 39th state to join the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, by the Constitution, the State of North Dakota goes forth to pioneer a statehood which aids in protecting the freedoms of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and

WHEREAS, the North Dakota Constitution consists of a preamble and 15 articles, which includes the North Dakota Declaration of Rights, the elective franchise and powers reserved to the people, the separation of powers between the three branches of government and the duties and powers of each and more; and

WHEREAS, the North Dakota Constitution was implemented to protect and promote the rights and liberties of all citizens of the great State of North Dakota; and the ideals and values embodied in the North Dakota Constitution serve as the foundation of our state's responsibilities, powers and purpose; and


WHEREAS, the civic culture of the citizens of North Dakota depends on a well-informed society with an understanding of the North Dakota Constitution and the rights afforded to all citizens therein; and


WHEREAS, through the Constitution of North Dakota we obtain guidance and structure as to operate the state in a way that allows the citizenry to participate and elect those who govern our state with an unceasing commitment to said freedoms and the rule of law; and

WHEREAS, North Dakotans continue to encourage and foster a greater knowledge and understanding of the North Dakota Constitution to help preserve the classical democratic-republic ideals celebrated and protected in this momentous document.

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim
October 1, 2024, **NORTH DAKOTA CONSTITUTION DAY** in the State of North Dakota.




Doug Burgum
GOVERNOR


Michael Howe
SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, my name is Bryan Pechtl, from Bismarck, and I'm here in support of HB 1479.

As a former social studies teacher, and now someone who conducts outreach to social studies teachers throughout the state and conducts a podcast on civics in North Dakota, I know the need is greater than ever to encourage our students, and all citizens of our state, to commemorate the work of the drafters of the state constitution in 1889 and of the support by voters, who ratified the constitution on October 1, 1889 by a vote of 27,441 to 8,107.

Study of our state constitution beyond eighth grade is virtually non-existent in our schools today. Both in the public and in schools, we focus heavily, and justifiably so, on our federal Constitution. But there is little time to focus on the founding document of our state. Comparing our state constitution versus federal, I would guess that many of us don't realize our state constitution:

- Is about 17,500 words versus just over 4,500 words in the U.S. Constitution.
- Consists of 16 articles versus 8 in the U.S. Constitution.
- Has been amended 167 times versus 27 at the federal level.

Nationally, our civics scores are very low and in decline. Only about 66% of American adults can name three branches of government. And data from the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP testing, show only 22% of eighth grade students are considered 'proficient' in civics. Perhaps it is because for every \$50 we spend on STEM education, we spend \$0.50 on civics education. Solving the civics proficiency problem is going to take long-term solutions and a dedicated effort. Maybe this bill recognizing our state constitution can constitute a small, first step towards increasing civics awareness in our state.

I urge a 'Do Pass' recommendation from this committee.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

2025 SENATE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

HB 1479

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

State and Local Government Committee
Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1479
4/3/2025

Relating to the designation and establishment of North Dakota Constitution Day.

3:11 p.m. Vice Chairman Castaneda called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Vice Chair Castaneda; Senators: Barta, Braunberger, Lee and Walen.

Members Absent: Chairman Roers

Discussion Topics:

- 701 Civics
- October 1st

3:11 p.m. Representative Karls, District #35, introduced the bill and submitted testimony #44627.

3:13 p.m. Brian Pechtl, Outreach and Podcast, testified in favor and submitted testimony #44640.

3:17 p.m. Arik Spencer, President and CEO Greater North Dakota Chamber, testified in favor.

Additional written testimony:

Charles Steinberger, submitted testimony in favor #44549.

Jacob Thomsen, Policy Analyst ND Family Alliance Legislative Action, submitted testimony in favor #44630.

3:19 p.m. Vice Chairman Castaneda closed the hearing.

Susan Helbling, Committee Clerk

I am Charles L. Steinberger, and I am an attorney in Bismarck. I am a graduate from Kenmare, North Dakota and I Support HB 1479. During middle school, I took North Dakota history as a class. My teacher made us review the North Dakota Constitution. We understood little to nothing about it. We knew that the U.S. Constitution was the law of the land, however we did not think to put much effort into understanding a document not many folks in our community seemed interested in.

My view of the North Dakota Constitution has drastically changed. As an attorney, the North Dakota Constitution is a key document for understanding how and why North Dakota law has adjusted over the past century. I see the importance of celebrating the day it was enacted to push schools to have a legal professional talk about the importance of the document. I know my high school classmates chose careers based on guest speakers or by attending local career and technical events. Thus, having a day to celebrate the North Dakota Constitution would give schools the opportunity to have a legislator, attorney, or judge into the school to discuss this important document, which would open the door to North Dakota youth to seek out a legal career.

This simple bill will not only celebrate North Dakota's past, it could stem the tide in brain drain of our youth. There is a shortage of legal professionals in North Dakota. The shortage includes State's Attorneys, paralegals, attorneys, and other interrelated careers. By introducing North Dakota's students to the North Dakota Constitution and showing the importance of said document, more students may enter a legal profession and stay within the State. Conversations with legislators, judges, and even attorneys could assist in bringing more youth into this field and would build connections to rural areas where legal assistance is in extreme demand. During my time as a clerk for the North Dakota Supreme Court, I attended school visits with the Court. The conversations between the Court and Students brought the law to the students, but the Court opened

the conversation about how it works, how attorneys and the court system manage a case beyond the half-truths of TV and movies, and how the interworking's of North Dakota law is applied inside and outside the court room. This bill would move the discussion beyond the legislature and court room and open the discussion with the public to discuss the fundamental document that grounds all North Dakota law.

Youth apply as much importance to a document as we adults do. Thus, if this bill passes and we, as North Dakotans, start to celebrate our state's history; it is more likely the students will too. By implementing this bill, the Legislative branch has taken a step celebrate our history and protect our state's future.

**HB 1479 Testimony – Senate State & Local Government Committee
Rep. Karen Karls – April 3, 2025**

Good Morning! I am here today to present HB 1479 which seeks to designate October 1st as ND Constitution Day. This comes at a request from my constituent Bryan Pechtl after he interviewed me for his 701 Civics podcast. I've included his email message which contains a lot of information about his mission.

Rep. Karls,

As noted in our visit a few weeks ago, I am hoping to interview you for the newly created '701 Civics' podcast, an effort to help inform students and citizens across North Dakota about the role of state government offices and officials that serve in state government.

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Bryan Pechtl Email: bryan.pechtl@gmail.com

House Legislator and State Government

Life as a Legislator

1. Please provide a brief biography about yourself and your motivation to run for a seat in the North Dakota House of Representatives.
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Policy

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1. What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing a career in politics?
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Final thoughts?

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NORTH DAKOTA CONSTITUTION DAY

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WHEREAS, the North Dakota Constitution was implemented to protect and promote the rights and liberties of all citizens of the great State of North Dakota; and the ideals and values embodied in the North Dakota Constitution serve as the foundation of our state's responsibilities, powers and purpose; and


WHEREAS, the civic culture of the citizens of North Dakota depends on a well-informed society with an understanding of the North Dakota Constitution and the rights afforded to all citizens therein; and

WHEREAS, through the Constitution of North Dakota we obtain guidance and structure as to operate the state in a way that allows the citizenry to participate and elect those who govern our state with an unceasing commitment to said freedoms and the rule of law; and

WHEREAS, North Dakotans continue to encourage and foster a greater knowledge and understanding of the North Dakota Constitution to help preserve the classical democratic-republic ideals celebrated and protected in this momentous document

NOW, THEREFORE, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim
October 1, 2024, **NORTH DAKOTA CONSTITUTION DAY** in the State of North Dakota




Doug Burgum
GOVERNOR


Michael Howe
SECRETARY OF STATE



Testimony in Support of House Bill 1479

Jacob Thomsen, Policy Analyst
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
April 3, 2025

Madam Chair Roers and honorable members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee,

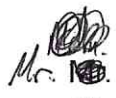
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action would like to testify in support of House Bill 1479 and respectfully request that you would render a "DO PASS" on this bill.

House Bill 1479 would commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of North Dakota on August 17, 1889, and its ratification by vote on October 1, 1889. By passing this bill, it will encourage our state's citizens to seek greater knowledge and understanding of the North Dakota Constitution by designating October 1st each year as North Dakota Constitution Day.

We recognize the importance of the Constitution of North Dakota and its significance in our daily lives as citizens of this great state. As our state's governing document, it protects our inalienable rights, free speech, freedom of worship, and defines the role of government. Several of our daily tasks could simply not be undertaken without the protection it offers. Unfortunately, many of our citizens simply don't understand its critical role in our freedoms; this bill will shine a well-deserved light on this founding document.

For these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action requests that you vote "DO PASS" on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and please contact us with any questions.

Jacob Thomsen
Policy Analyst
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action

 Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, my name is Bryan Pechtl, from Bismarck, and I'm here in support of House Bill 1479.

I am a former social studies teacher, and now is someone who conducts outreach to social studies teachers throughout the state and conducts a podcast on civics in North Dakota. The need is greater than ever to encourage our students, and all citizens of our state, to commemorate the work of the drafters of the state constitution in 1889 and of the support by voters, who ratified the constitution on October 1, 1889 by a vote of 27,441 to 8,107.

Study of our state constitution beyond eighth grade is virtually non-existent in our schools today. Both in the public and in schools, we focus heavily, and justifiably so, on our federal Constitution. But there is little time to focus on the founding document of our state. Comparing our state constitution versus federal, I would guess that many of us don't realize our state constitution:

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Nationally, our civics scores are very low and in decline. Only about 66% of American adults can name the three branches of government. And data from the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP testing, show only 22% of eighth grade students are considered 'proficient' in American civics. We have no measure regarding North Dakota civics. Perhaps it is because for every \$50 we spend on STEM education, we spend \$0.50 on civics education. Solving the civics proficiency problem is going to take long-term solutions and a dedicated effort. Maybe this bill recognizing our state constitution can constitute a small, first step towards increasing civics awareness in our state among ALL residents.

I urge a 'Do Pass' recommendation from this committee.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.



2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

State and Local Government Committee Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1479
4/3/2025

Relating to the designation and establishment of North Dakota Constitution Day.

3:49 p.m. Vice Chairman Castaneda called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Vice Chair Castaneda; Senators: Barta, Braunberger, Lee and Walen.

Members Absent: Chairman Roers

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

3:51 p.m. Senator Walen moved Do Pass.

3:51 p.m. Senator Braunberger seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Kristin Roers	AB
Senator Jose L. Castaneda	Y
Senator Jeff Barta	Y
Senator Ryan Braunberger	Y
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Chuck Walen	Y

Motion Passed 5-0-1

Senator Castaneda will carry the bill.

3:52 p.m. Vice Chairman Castaneda closed the hearing.

Susan Helbling, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1479 ([25.0957.02000](#))

State and Local Government Committee (Sen. Roers, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (5 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1479 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.