

Thursday, March 25, 2021

Senate Political Subdivisions Committee HB 1349
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CHAIRMAN BURCKHARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

My name is Jack McDonald. I'm appearing on behalf of the North Dakota Newspaper Association and the North Dakota Broadcasters Association. We support this bill as is, but strongly oppose any amendments that will in reality make all applications for public employment at any level in the state – from college presidencies to a director of the Minot Water Plant to manager of the Turtle Lake cemetery - closed to the public that is paying the salaries for those positions.

We recognize that the open meeting and open records laws that were substantially revised in 1997 – 24 years ago – need updating. No cell phones, internet, social media, web pages, etc. in 1997.

The changes for the most part recognize that public meetings are now often conducted by various electronic means, and will likely continue that way even after COVID.

We ask especially that you leave Section Two of the bill, beginning on page 2, line 13, intact. This retains the original intent of this legislation. Proposed amendments to allow the selection of one finalist means in reality that the whole selection process will be done in secret. The public will have absolutely zero chance to participate and no opportunity to review the backgrounds of the candidates or offer opinions on them. This is the situation in Minnesota and it's not good.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions.