

**2021 HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**HB 1182**

# 2021 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Government and Veterans Affairs Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1182  
1/21/2021

Relating to permitting party designations for candidates for county and local elections;  
relating to party designations for candidates for municipal offices

**Vice Chairman B. Koppelman** opened the hearing at 10:44 a.m.

Representatives	Roll Call
Representative Jim Kasper	P
Representative Ben Koppelman	P
Representative Pamela Anderson	P
Representative Jeff A. Hoverson	P
Representative Karen Karls	P
Representative Scott Louser	P
Representative Jeffery J. Magrum	P
Representative Mitch Ostlie	P
Representative Karen M. Rohr	P
Representative Austen Schauer	P
Representative Mary Schneider	P
Representative Vicky Steiner	P
Representative Greg Stemen	P
Representative Steve Vetter	P

### Discussion Topics:

- Choice of declaring a party designation
- Transparency issue

**Rep. Louser** testified in favor.

**Don Morrison, ND Voters First**, testified in opposition with testimony #2083.

**Stanley Dick, President, ND Association of Counties**, testified in opposition with testimony #1971.

**Blake Crosby, ND League of Cities**, testified in opposition with testimony #2095, #2151.

**Additional written testimony:** #1193, #1325, #1380, #1753, #1874, #1906, #1917, #1987, #2004, #2037, #2050, #2057, #2066, #2856

**Vice Chairman B. Koppelman** closed the hearing at 12:03 p.m.

*Carmen Hart, Committee Clerk*

**Testimony HB 1182**  
**House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee**  
January 21, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, good morning. My name is Don Morrison. I live in Bismarck and I am here as a volunteer for North Dakota Voters First, which is a non-partisan, grassroots North Dakota group working to strengthen our democracy, help make our elections and public policy more transparent, ethical, and accountable to the people of our state.

We have a positive, long-standing tradition in North Dakota of electing our local government officials to non-partisan offices. That tradition has served us well.

Local officials work together to build and repair roads, provide and administer public schools, develop and maintain parks, work to have a good economy, collect and dispose of garbage, build and maintain good clean water systems, and provide other services that citizens of the local community want.

Most of the time on most issues, local government officials work together, hear concerns, solve problems, are transparent, and focus their work on finding agreeable ways to make their communities better. Sometimes, there can be great disagreements on local issues. Certainly, the division about a road in my area of town might have neighbors disagreeing with neighbor or where to draw neighborhood school lines may cause some parents to disagree with other parents. But I don't remember disagreements on these kinds of issues being based on positions that are rooted in Republican Party or Democratic-NPL Party differences. These are not red versus blue issues. Why would you want to add partisan rancor to this?

Usually, bills are introduced to fix a problem, repair something, add something constructive or positive to our state and community that most people would see as beneficial, or would help us have more effective, better government or services.

What is wrong with the current non-partisan local elections? Is something broken or in need of repair in our local elections that interjecting Republican Party and Democratic-NPL Party politics would repair or fix? Does adding partisan politics and divisions solve some underlying problem? Just think of the national anger, divisions, violence, inability of partisan bodies to solve problems or move past tit for tat stalemates. Why would you want to give a dose of that to North Dakota local governments?

This bill is a solution in search of a problem. We urge you to give HB 1182 a DO NOT PASS.  
Thank you.

Testimony Prepared for the  
**House Government & Veterans Affairs**

January 21, 2021

By: Stanley Dick, Cavalier County Commissioner  
President, North Dakota Association of Counties



**RE: OPPOSE House Bill 1182 – Party Affiliation for County/City Election Candidates**

Good morning Chairman Kasper and committee members. For the record, my name is Stan Dick, Cavalier County Commissioner, and current President of the North Dakota Association of Counties. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony opposing HB1182 which permits party designations for candidates for local elections.

Current law provides that city and county officials are to be elected on a no-party ballot. HB1182 permits candidates for city and county offices to identify a party of their choosing on the nominating petition form that is filed with the county auditor.

North Dakota county officials have been elected without representing a party for many years. Voters select county officials on a variety of factors not related to party affiliation; whether they feel you can do the job, are likeable, and are the person (rather than the party) for whom they want to vote. County and city elections are about electing candidates the voter believes will efficiently administer local community services rather than of differing political party policy.

County no-party elections reduce the influence of political parties for candidates who make decisions on what is best for their community rather than what is best for the political party. As a commissioner of a county, we are a local government, facing local problems, using local people, to have a local solution to that problem. State and National party affiliation would not help in the discussion of local issues. As you know, there is not a Democrat or Republican way to plow roads, replace a bridge, gravel roads, or record deeds.

HB1182 could have unattended consequences. Without party endorsement, candidates may be encouraged to list an “electable” party without verification or proof that they support that party’s policies. This could potentially be confusing and misleading for



voters who have learned to trust the Party Ballot candidates as having been vetted through the North Dakota political party process.

County elected officials serve their county residents who are also their neighbors, in-laws, classmates, parents, children, and fellow church members. These relationships and the commitment to serve their constituents in a responsible manner is what inspires county elected officials to run for office. Politicizing county elected offices may deter future leaders from running for local public office.

Chairman Kasper and committee members, on behalf of our 53 member counties, the ND Association of Counties urges a DO NOT PASS on HB1182, as it will negatively impact grass roots, nonpartisan, county elections and those who run for county office.



HB 1182  
House Government and Veterans Affairs  
Rep. Jim Kasper, Chair  
January 21, 2021

Good morning Chairman Kasper and members of the Committee. For the record, Blake Crosby, Executive Director of the North Dakota League of Cities.

I appear today to oppose HB 1182. A version of this bill was introduced last session and was defeated. The difference between this bill and the bill last session, is the move from a requirement to identify a political party, to making it optional. While that change did soften the language, it does not change the objections from over 50 cities that you have before you and objections from those online.

The objection is to the consequences of the bill itself. Local governing is difficult enough without the insertion, or potential insertion, of partisan politics. As Mayor Dardis from West Fargo so aptly writes, "there is no Democrat or Republican way to collect garbage".

Cities use taxpayer money to provide services...fire, police, water, sewer, etc. I am still waiting for someone tell me there is a Republican or Democrat way to fix a water main break, to pave my street or plow my snow.

And you say "but this is optional", when the reality is if only one candidate indicates a party affiliation, the others will be compelled to do likewise...so there really is no option. You either affiliate or don't run or don't win.

As I told you last Session, this bill will particularly create problems in small cities. Over 60% of the 357 cities in North Dakota have a population of 500 or less. They have great difficulty finding candidates as it is...this will not help.

If a candidate declares a party, there is nothing in this bill that indicates the party will vet and endorse the candidate. If you do not, how do you know the candidate is really an "R" or a "D"? It is no secret that in most districts it is much easier to get elected with an "R" than a "D" and persons are figuring this out. What is to stop a person who is against oil from running as an "R" if there is no vetting?

Page 2  
HB 1182  
January 21, 2021

If candidates are endorsed, they should be eligible just as you are, for party campaign finance funds. Keeping in mind we could be talking hundreds of candidates each election cycle.

What about the effect of outside money? Or even inside money? We don't seem to like either and we know that money follows political parties. If it did not, you would not need to raise money or request campaign funds. We cannot ignore the fact that money moves votes.

We pride ourselves on being the "citizen legislature". The documents you have in front of you are citizens telling you they don't want partisan politics in local governance. They are respectfully asking you to not pass this bill.

Local government is doing just fine as they are. Let's appreciate the work they do for their communities, and the State, and not further complicate their jobs. I respectfully ask for a DO NOT PASS on HB 1182.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will do my best to answer any questions.

January 20, 2021

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

HB 1182

Chairman Representative Kasper and members of the committee, for the record I am Diane Affeldt, city auditor for the City of Garrison and President of the North Dakota League of Cities. I am providing written testimony today to express opposition to HB 1182, relating to party designation for candidates for county and local elections.

I would like a big DO NOT PASS from the committee on HB 1182. We need to keep partisan politics out of local government elections.

Diane Affeldt,  
Garrison City Auditor  
NDLC President

1/20/21

Rep. Kasper  
Chairman  
House Government & Veteran's Affair Committee

Dear Mr. Kasper,

This letter is to inform you that I am opposed to having City Council election candidates select a political party when they run for office.

I have worked for the City of Bottineau for 33 years & I can tell you that there is no need for party politics at this level. Recent unfortunate activities in our nation back this up as well. Let's leave those things to others.

Thank you for your time & consideration!

Penny J Nostdahl  
City Auditor, City of Bottineau

Chairman Kasper and members of the House Government and Veteran Affairs,

For the record, I am Lee Anderson, Mayor of the City of Casselton, and I would like to share my opinion of HB 1182 as I understand it.

I do not feel local government has the need for any declarations of party affiliation for those people interested in running for local office and serving their communities.

You just have to look at what has been happening in Washington, and across the nation to see that we have enough problems with people having to take sides, not because of issue differences but simply because it doesn't necessarily serve the party's agenda.

Please put this notion to bed once and for all.

Thankyou for your time.

Lee Anderson

Mayor, City of Casselton

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** jtheidorn@ictc.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 6:34 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

I DO NOT think that a person running for a Mayor or Council should declare a political party . Its hard enough to get people to run for these positions in a small town without this ! Im an independent voter and have been elected several times without people knowing what political party I support at the time . No No No

Thank You  
Jim Heidorn  
Mayor Page ND

On 2021-01-20 11:37, North Dakota League of Cities wrote:

> Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much  
> time. Sorry.  
>  
> Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill  
> to require candidates running for local office to declare a political  
> party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a  
> political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it  
> optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the  
> preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan  
> politics out of local government.  
>  
> If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me  
> ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short.  
> Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name,  
> city and title. Please share this email with city council and city  
> commissioners.  
>  
> Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep.  
> Kasper.  
>  
> Blake  
>  
> R Blake Crosby  
>  
> ND League of Cities | \_Executive Director\_  
>  
> 410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504  
>  
> 701-223-3518 800-472-2692

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Susan Steinke <Rugbycitysue@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 5:20 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Blake:

When I ran for Mayor, I dropped all partisan affiliation.

I wanted the residents to understand that I represented all of the citizens who lived in Rugby, not just the party I had previously been affiliated with.

I wanted to walk the walk and not just talk the talk.

I do not believe that partisan politics be it Democrat, Republican, Libertarian or any other affiliation has any place in local government.

Susan Steinke

Mayor

City of Rugby

---

**From:** postmaster@membeemail.com <postmaster@membeemail.com> on behalf of North Dakota League of Cities <blake@ndlc.org>

**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:37 AM

**To:** rugbycitysue@outlook.com <rugbycitysue@outlook.com>

**Subject:** HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518 800-472-2692



As Mayor of Fargo and one of five members of the Fargo Board of City Commissioners, I must express my opposition to House Bill 1182. The nonpartisan local elections are not a place to announce allegiance or ties to any specific political party. Foregoing political designations allows voters to objectively weigh the merits of candidates in local races based on candidates' track records and platforms rather than their party. Remaining nonpartisan also allows City Commissioners to speak with the legislative body purely as representatives of the City of Fargo without injecting partisan politics. I would not want to jeopardize the excellent relationships the commission has with legislative leaders or impede upon our open and honest communication with the Legislature.

In this time of ever-growing political derision, adding party distinctions to local elections simply does improve governance. Additionally, it is important to note the City of Fargo utilizes an approval-voting process, which adds an additional challenge to incorporation of this idea. Cooperation between elected officials of different beliefs is vital in the mission of all municipalities providing services to. Partisan politics do not belong in local elections, and I implore the Committee to oppose HB 1182 for these reasons.

- **Dr. Timothy J. Mahoney**  
***Mayor, The City of Fargo***

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Sheila Klevgard <cassaudit@casselton.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 4:57 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** HB 1182

Chairman Kasper and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee.

I am Sheila Klevgard from the City of Casselton and I am the city auditor. I am opposed to HB 1182 as we don't need declaration of political party causing people to sway their opinion of a candidate. A candidate's support should be based on the candidate's own merit. This is especially bad when there is so much division between political parties and could tear a small city apart.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sheila K Klevgard  
Casselton City Auditor  
702 1st St N, PO Box 548  
Casselton, ND 58012  
Phone: 701-347-4861 ext. 10  
Fax: 701-347-4505

<https://www.facebook.com/City-of-Casselton-118086345496953>

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Nick Parslow <nickparslow@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 3:36 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

My name is Nick Parslow. I'm mayor of the city of Leeds. I do not believe having a party affiliation on the ballot for city level government is a good idea. Optional or not I believe having party affiliation on the ballot would be a too much of a factor depending on your location. Example, having an R next to your name with all but make it a slam dunk in rural communities and all but make it impossible for a Democrat. Vice versa having an R next to your name in larger cities like Fargo or Grand Forks would make it extremely difficult and make it much more likely for the candidate with the D next to his or her name. City level politics and county level politics should not be about partisanship it should be about what's best for your Local demographic. You should not be aided or hindered because of your political outlook at a federal level. Republican and Democrat should have zero to do with local politics. I believe it would be a mistake at the state level to force or even give the option to local level to inject partisanship into their city government. It's a huge hurdle but nobody needs at that level.

Thank you.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 20, 2021, at 11:37 AM, North Dakota League of Cities <blake@ndlc.org> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

### **Testimony on HB 1182**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1182. I do not support this bill and am asking that this bill not be considered. I think it is important to leave partisan politics out of local governments. The partisan environment that we are currently facing in the country should not flow into our counties, small communities, and townships. Even though this bill is written in a way that gives you a choice on political orientation, I think it still may deter individuals from serving on these local boards. Most of these individuals are not pursuing a political career, they are stepping up and serving their communities to make it better. We don't need to insert partisanship into local elections, it will only make it more uncomfortable to serve and possibly more costly.

Thank you for your time today and allowing me to testify against this bill.

Luke Anderson  
City Council President  
Forman, ND



City of Cavalier  
301 Division Ave N  
P.O. Box 750  
Cavalier, ND 58220  
Ph. 701.265.8800  
Fax 701.265.8720

January 20, 2021

RE: HB 1182

To Whom It May Concern:

In a time where we are trying to build unity, declaring a political party at the local government level only creates unnecessary division. Party politics do not belong in local government as it distracts from community issues. As the mayor of Cavalier, I do my best to focus less on political party policies and more on what policies are best for the citizens of my community. I do not think HB 1182 is best for the citizens of Cavalier or North Dakota.

Lacey Hinkle  
Mayor of Cavalier

Mayor  
Lacey Hinkle

Council Ward I  
Craig Vaughn  
Sara Stevenson

Council Ward II  
Mike Carpenter  
Kelly Cluchie

Council Ward III  
Tom Beard  
Al Berry



## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** City of Davenport <davenportnd@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 3:14 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** RE: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Dear Mr. Blake; in regards to HB 1182, I urge you to submit my opinion/stance on my behalf.

Offering "optional declaration of a political party" is just allowing partisan politics in local government to raise its ugly head.

I urge the committee recommend to vote no/do not pass HB 1182 and let it die in committee.

Best regards,  
Mark Roster  
City of Davenport Auditor  
PO Box 217  
115 Fourth Ave  
Davenport, ND 58021  
Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

**From:** [North Dakota League of Cities](#)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:37 AM  
**To:** [davenportnd@outlook.com](mailto:davenportnd@outlook.com)  
**Subject:** HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Matt Thorpe <matthorpe@drtel.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 2:54 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

I am not in favor of this bill, by declaring affiliation this adds possibly a conflict in local government

Thanks

Matt Thorpe  
Mayor  
City of Ellendale

On Jan 20, 2021, at 11:36 AM, North Dakota League of Cities <blake@ndlc.org> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518 800-472-2692

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Marlyn Vatne <marlynvatne@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 2:51 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

I oppose any bill that puts a party in city politics. We have too much partisan politics as is!  
Marlyn Vatne  
Mayor  
Wildrose

On Jan 20, 2021, at 11:37 AM, North Dakota League of Cities <[blake@ndlc.org](mailto:blake@ndlc.org)> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518    800-472-2692



## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Dan Lund <dlund@ictc.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 2:47 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

HB1182 looks like a solution looking for a problem city governments run smoothlu because we keep politics out .  
Dan Lund mayor Alice ND

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 20, 2021, at 11:37 AM, North Dakota League of Cities <blake@ndlc.org> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518 800-472-2692

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Marlyn Vatne <marlynvatne@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 2:51 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

I oppose any bill that puts a party in city politics. We have too much partisan politics as is!  
Marlyn Vatne  
Mayor  
Wildrose

On Jan 20, 2021, at 11:37 AM, North Dakota League of Cities <[blake@ndlc.org](mailto:blake@ndlc.org)> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

## R Blake Crosby

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518 800-472-2692

January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Representative Kasper, House Government and Veterans Affairs:

I am writing to declare non-support of HB 1182, which encompasses the optional declaration of a political party among elected officials.

As a City Auditor for two small cities, I do not support encouraging candidates to choose a political party. Harwood's 2020 election was almost entirely write-in candidates, and North River's 2020 election was mostly re-elected officials with a few new officials. Obtaining new interested candidates to fill City Council positions was harder than pulling teeth last year. To have candidates declare a political party will discourage participation in elections. City leaders at the level of Harwood and North River are not politically influenced; they want to do good for their local governments, and their local residents.

As a City Councilwoman for the City of Galesburg, I strongly discourage passing HB 1182. City Council meetings are to be business based, with the mindset of "What is the best for our city residents?". I feel once a political party is tied to an elected official's name that there will be drama within a city. Candidates who want to represent and enrich their hometowns may be judged based on their political beliefs, and small towns will lose hard working city representatives.

Thank you for your time,

Casey Eggermont  
Auditor, City of Harwood  
Auditor, City of North River  
Councilman, City of Galesburg

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Dan Buchanan <bulaw@daktel.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 2:09 PM  
**To:** Sarah Hellekson  
**Cc:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL]HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP  
  
**Importance:** High

Blake,

Please advise the committee for me that partisan politics, now disguised as an optional declaration, is totally inappropriate for candidates seeking local office. We don't do city business depending on one's political affiliation, nor is it relevant to know what party seeks business with the city. I have no idea, and couldn't care less who leans which way or another politically with whom I serve our city. Making decisions about clean water, proper solid waste disposal, street snow removal, special assessments, and many other tasks aren't colored by political affiliation. The idea proffered is pure nonsense writ large and shows excess partisanship running amok.

Dan

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Dan Buchanan <bulaw@daktel.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 2:14 PM  
**To:** Sarah Hellekson  
**Cc:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Political affiliation

Forget to give my name that you already know, but tell the committee it's Dan Buchanan, Jamestown city councilperson and president of the council, serving since 2012

Dan

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Lydia Ronningen <lnronningen@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 1:23 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** HB1182

Mr Crosby,

My name is Lydia Ronningen and I'm on the Kindred Parks and Rec board.  
I find the idea of requiring political affiliation for local office a bit concerning. What we do for the city or parks has no relevance to our political positions and could create bias at voting time.

Thank you.  
Lydia Ronningen

Sent from my iPhone

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Dave Carlsrud <dave.carlsrud@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 1:39 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** HB 1182. Testimony

Blake,

Can someone forward my short testimony below to the appropriate place? Sorry, I am having a computer issue.....

Thanks for all you folks do,

Dave

Date: 1/20/21

From: Dave Carlsrud, Mayor, Valley City, ND

Bill: Testimony for HB 1182

RE: Oppose

To whom it may concern:

We have a difficult time finding candidates for city councils and commissions without involving political parties. That I don't have a party affiliation and don't believe I could commit to either political platform, I could not run for office.

I urge you to please **oppose HB 1182** and keep political declarations to elected offices higher than mayor.

Sincerely,

*Dave Carlsrud*

Dave Carlsrud



**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HB 1182 RELATING TO PERMITTING PARTY  
DESIGNATIONS FOR CANDIDATES FOR COUNTY AND LOCAL ELECTIONS**

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee  
Meeting Scheduled at 8:30 AM 1/21/2021.

Honorable Chairman Kasper & House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee  
Members:

HB 1182 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact sections 15.1-09-08 and 16.1-11-08, subsection 1 of section 16.1-11-11, subsection 1 of section 16.1-11-16, and sections 16.1-11-19, 16.1-11-24, and 40-21-08 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to permitting party designations for candidates for county and local elections; and to repeal section 40-21-06 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to party designations for candidates for municipal offices.

I strongly **OPPOSE** the injection of political party affiliation into municipal government. Each city is unique and diverse as its elected leaders. Giving candidates the option to add their political party designation may encourage people to be subjected to outside influences and persons that have little concern or knowledge of the priorities or challenges of a North Dakota city. We have real work to do and no time for political parties and partisan politics.

Submitted with high regard;

Steve Dale, Mayor  
City of Wahpeton

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** LaVonne Cameron <lavonnecameron@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 1:38 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Blake,

See my testimony below:

LaVonne Cameron, Mayor, City of Deering

I am against any placement of an option to place a declaration of a political party. Especially at this time when there is such a chasm between parties, it's important to keep politics out of the business of running a city.

Thank you  
LaVonne Cameron

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 20, 2021, at 11:37 AM, North Dakota League of Cities <blake@ndlc.org> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504



## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Mcville City Auditor <mcvillend@gondtc.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 12:48 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** RE: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

I absolutely think local government should remain nonpartisan. Party lines have no place in decisions being made for the betterment of the local tax payers.

*Chanda Arneson, City Auditor*

City of McVile  
PO Box 275  
McVile, ND 58254  
(701) 322-4343

**From:** postmaster@membeemail.com <postmaster@membeemail.com> **On Behalf Of** North Dakota League of Cities  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:37 AM  
**To:** mcvillend@gondtc.com  
**Subject:** HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518 800-472-2692

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** City of Leeds <cityofleeds@gondtc.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 12:42 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** RE: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

If candidates were required to name a political party, many viable residents would choose not to run. Naming a political party has become a controversial thing in today's world, and many choose to keep their beliefs and party affiliations close to their chest. It is difficult to get people involved and willing to serve in our small communities. This bill would deter many from placing their name on the ballot for a local office.

*Kari Follman*  
*City of Leeds*  
*P O Box 331*  
*221 Main St. W*  
*Leeds, ND 58346*  
*Office 701-466-2930*  
*[cityofleeds@gondtc.com](mailto:cityofleeds@gondtc.com)*

**From:** postmaster@membeemail.com <postmaster@membeemail.com> **On Behalf Of** North Dakota League of Cities  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:37 AM  
**To:** cityofleeds@gondtc.com  
**Subject:** HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

## R Blake Crosby

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518 800-472-2692

**From:** Sarah Hellekson <[shellekson@jamestownnd.gov](mailto:shellekson@jamestownnd.gov)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 12:11 PM

**To:** Blake Crosby <[blake@ndlc.org](mailto:blake@ndlc.org)>; Stephanie Dassinger <[Stephanie@ndlc.org](mailto:Stephanie@ndlc.org)>

**Subject:** FW: [EXTERNAL]HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

The declaration of a political party is likely to limit the field for local candidates who do not want to be perceived as competing within their political parties for the same seats (school board, township, city council or commission, county commission and so on). This concept whether mandatory or appearing to be optional is severely limiting.

**Sarah Hellekson**

City Administrator / City Auditor

[shellekson@JamestownND.gov](mailto:shellekson@JamestownND.gov)

[www.jamestownnd.gov](http://www.jamestownnd.gov)

Main 701-252-5900 | Direct 701-952-5938

**From:** [postmaster@membeemail.com](mailto:postmaster@membeemail.com) <[postmaster@membeemail.com](mailto:postmaster@membeemail.com)> **On Behalf Of** North Dakota League of Cities

**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:37 AM

**To:** Sarah Hellekson <[shellekson@jamestownnd.gov](mailto:shellekson@jamestownnd.gov)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. If in doubt, contact the IT department.

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Jennifer Barta <solivelocity@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 12:27 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Jennifer BARTA  
Commission President  
Velva, ND

I do not feel it's right to have to declare what political party you are at a local level. My current beliefs in running my city is to do what is right and according to ordinances. I am not part of any political party, I am a citizen of Velva that lives my city.

On Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 11:37 AM North Dakota League of Cities <[blake@ndlc.org](mailto:blake@ndlc.org)> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518    800-472-2692

--

Jen Soli  
Commission President- City of Velva





221 S. Main St.  
PO Box 249  
Stanley, ND 58784-0249  
701-628-2225  
701-628-2232 Fax  
1-800-366-6888 TTY  
[allyn@stanleynd.us](mailto:allyn@stanleynd.us)

---

January 18, 2021

RE: HB #1182 (1/21/2021 Hearing – 8:30 A.M.)

Dear Chair Kasper and Honorable Members of the House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee:

I am requesting you to support a **“DO NOT PASS”** on House Bill #1182 relating to permitting party designations for county and local elections.

City elective offices in our great State of North Dakota have been elected without party designation likely since statehood. Why the change, party affiliation is irrelevant to providing quality services at the local level. The decision making process amongst elected city officials is not based or influenced by party affiliation; decisions are made for the common good of all the citizens.

Further, in city elections, local candidates are known for the person they are, not for the party they are affiliated to. Do we want local candidates elected to the party they represent or for the people they represent. Keep city elected offices non-party affiliated, whether the proposed bill makes it optional.

Again, your support for a **“DO NOT PASS”** on House Bill #1182 is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Allyn Sveen  
Stanley City Auditor

E-mail: District #2 & #4 House Representatives  
[bertanderson@nd.gov](mailto:bertanderson@nd.gov)  
[dlongmuir@nd.gov](mailto:dlongmuir@nd.gov)  
[cfegley@nd.gov](mailto:cfegley@nd.gov)  
[tbjones@nd.gov](mailto:tbjones@nd.gov)

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Shane Amundson <shane@reilesacresnd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:52 AM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Mr. Crosby,

Our collective team in Reile's Acres feel the party identification label will serve us negatively.

We feel this identification can and will foster division within our municipality. The division will be rooted solely in identity politics. We, ND cities, have thrived regardless of party and because of not identifying as Red, Blue, or Purple.

Respectfully,  
Shane J. Amundson  
Mayor, Reile's Acres, ND

On Jan 20, 2021, at 11:37 AM, North Dakota League of Cities <blake@ndlc.org> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

## R Blake Crosby

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518    800-472-2692

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** dr diode <drdiode@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 11:53 AM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** Re: HB 1182. Responses needed ASAP

Mr. Crosby,

I'd like to express that I oppose requiring candidates running for local office to declare a political party. My role as Mayor of Sharon (as well as the members of the council) is mainly administrative. We have been asked in the past to endorse a candidate to the State Legislature but declined as we didn't feel it was appropriate for us to do so.

Sincerely,

Rick Bergenheier, Mayor  
City of Sharon, ND  
(701) 789-0217 Cell  
(701) 524-1602 Office

On Wed, Jan 20, 2021 at 11:37 AM North Dakota League of Cities <[blake@ndlc.org](mailto:blake@ndlc.org)> wrote:

Reminder from last Friday call. Hearing tomorrow at 8:30 so not much time. Sorry.

Many of you testified, or sent in testimony, last Session on the bill to require candidates running for local office to declare a political party. That same bill is back as HB 1182 except the declaration of a political party is now optional. My reaction is that making it optional does not really change the concern you expressed that the preference among elected/appointed city officials is to keep partisan politics out of local government.

If you want to make your views known, please send your testimony to me ASAP and I will submit on your behalf. Your testimony can be short. Just give your position, and a sentence or two why. Also your name, city and title. Please share this email with city council and city commissioners.

Committee is House Government and Veterans Affairs. Chairman is Rep. Kasper.

Blake

**R Blake Crosby**

ND League of Cities | *Executive Director*

410 E Front Ave | Bismarck, ND 58504

701-223-3518    800-472-2692

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Jackie albrecht <jveryla@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 7:09 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** HB 1182

Thank you Blake for the reminder.  
Local government cannot afford to to be involved in partisan politics.

..Even if claiming a political party is listed as an optional choice it will discourage citizens for running for office. Many communities have difficulty filling positions now

..The option for a party to claim a candidate would create an unfair advantage during an election, financially (advertising and such) between candidates.

..Most importantly, decisions rendered in our local government need to be based on what is best for the citizens of our community as a whole. This is not accomplished with partisan politics but with local government officials that have invested their heart and soul into the community.

To allow partisan politics to get an edge at the local level could change the dynamics of councils, schools and all areas of local government. It would pit councilmen against each other when they need to work together. We accept testimony from all in our council meeting equally. Our congress has shown us that partisan politics does not work fairly or give the people equal representation. Before this is considered we need to take a hard look at our country's partisan politics and the bad behavior that goes on there.

I do not belong to a political party  
Rugby City Council woman Ward 1  
Jackie Albrecht



## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** Bryan Schmidt <bschmidt@cityofhorace.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 9:38 PM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Cc:** Brenton Holper  
**Subject:** House bill 1182 - Opposition

Chairman Kasper and members of the House committee,

For the record, I serve as a City Council member and Council President for the City of Horace. I oppose any legislation changes that would require or allow city officials to declare a political party when running for a city position.

- 1) The focus of a city official should be to serve the community without regard for political affiliation. We should place our focus on city issues voters care about rather than if we vote in alignment with a political party.
- 2) If candidates would be required to declare a party, it may dissuade residents from serving in an elected role as it could create friction with neighbors and friends.
- 3) Declaring a political affiliation is fine at the state level. Representatives consider multiple communities and a district that leans politically left or right can choose the best candidate for their area. At the City and local level, it is much more personal in our daily duties to help our community. If politics is added to the mix when dealing with difficult resident situations it will only make matters worse. Elected officials have enough on our plate to balance the demands of our residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Bryan Schmidt



Bryan Schmidt | City Council

Horace, ND | [www.cityofhorace.com](http://www.cityofhorace.com) | [bschmidt@cityofhorace.com](mailto:bschmidt@cityofhorace.com)

City Hall 701-492-2972 | Mobile 701-361-2978

Honorable Committee Members:

I am writing in opposition to HB 1182. Those of us that take the time to serve our communities on school boards, county commissions, community boards or city government are not concerned about political affiliations or agendas. We serve, to the best of our ability, to work together to serve all constituents without concern of someone's political affiliation. Even though, marking a party affiliation is voluntary, this is a first step to making party affiliation a permanent choice prior to running for office or accepting a membership on a board. There are no party endorsements or contributions made at the local level and it should remain that way. Having to declare a party affiliation would run the risk of discouraging individuals from taking the time to serve their local community. Many worthy individuals do not want to get involved in local decisions now and this bill could deter more individuals. Local issues are not political and all elected officials need to work together without creating political wedges. I urge for a do not pass on this HB 1182.



221 S. Main St.  
PO Box 249  
Stanley, ND 58784-0249  
701-628-2225  
701-628-2232 Fax  
1-800-366-6888 TTY  
[allyn@stanleynd.us](mailto:allyn@stanleynd.us)

---

January 18, 2021

RE: HB #1182 (1/21/2021 Hearing – 8:30 A.M.)

Dear Chair Kasper and Honorable Members of the House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee:

I am requesting you to support a **“DO NOT PASS”** on House Bill #1182 relating to permitting party designations for county and local elections.

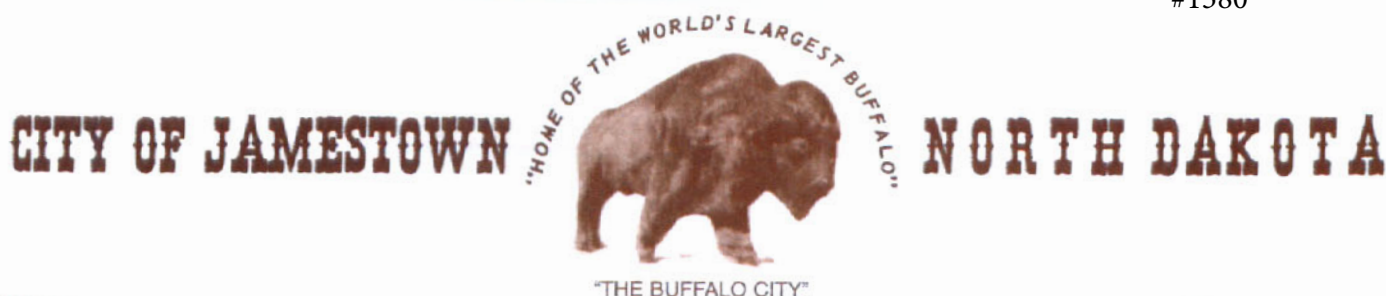
City elective offices in our great State of North Dakota have been elected without party designation likely since statehood. Why the change, party affiliation is irrelevant to providing quality services at the local level. The decision making process amongst elected city officials is not based or influenced by party affiliation; decisions are made for the common good of all the citizens.

Further, in city elections, local candidates are known for the person they are, not for the party they are affiliated to. Do we want local candidates elected to the party they represent or for the people they represent. Keep city elected offices non-party affiliated, whether the proposed bill makes it optional.

Again, your support for a **“DO NOT PASS”** on House Bill #1182 is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Allyn Sveen  
Stanley City Auditor

E-mail: District #2 & #4 House Representatives  
[bertanderson@nd.gov](mailto:bertanderson@nd.gov)  
[dlongmuir@nd.gov](mailto:dlongmuir@nd.gov)  
[cfegley@nd.gov](mailto:cfegley@nd.gov)  
[tbjones@nd.gov](mailto:tbjones@nd.gov)



OFFICE OF MAYOR  
102 THIRD AVENUE SOUTHEAST  
JAMESTOWN, NORTH DAKOTA 58401

PHONE (701) 252-5900  
FAX (701) 252-5903

January 18, 2021

Honorable Jim Kasper, Chair  
House Government and Veterans Committee  
North Dakota House of Representatives

RE: House Bill 1182

Dear Chairman Kasper and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today to speak in opposition to House Bill 1182. Although I am currently the Mayor of Jamestown, I have not asked our City Council to offer an opinion on this bill, so I am writing on my own behalf in opposition to this bill.

It is not difficult at all for anyone with any concern regarding a candidate's political leanings to learn if someone running for a non-partisan position such as city council member or county commissioner tends to be a Democrat, Republican, or a member of a fringe party. What we need on city council and similar local political subdivision elected positions are people whose priority is serving their community. I believe in our two party system and I commend those of you willing to make that commitment and reap the rewards or endure the sufferings of those decisions. Most everyone in Jamestown knows that I am a Republican. I ran for the legislature as a Republican, and I still currently serve on our local party's executive committee. I do not however, wear that hat at City Hall.

Quite frankly, it is difficult to get good, hardworking, mainstream individuals be they Republican or Democrat to get involved in local politics. I am sure that many of you have experienced that at the State level in your own legislative districts.

This is something that is not wanted, not needed, would serve no useful purpose, and one which I respectfully urge you give a Do Not Pass recommendation.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dwaine Heinrich".

Dwaine Heinrich, Mayor  
City of Jamestown, North Dakota

**LARRY J. RICHARDS**  
**ATTORNEY AT LAW**

711 N. Washington Street #202  
Grand Forks, ND 58203  
Tel: (701) 795-5100  
larry.richards@lawyer.com

January 19, 2021

To: Representative Jim Kasper  
Chairman, North Dakota House of Representative Committee on  
Government and Veterans Affairs

From: Larry Richards, Attorney at Law

RE: Testimony Regarding House Bill No. 1182—Partisan Designation on Local Elections

I have reviewed this proposed bill and wanted to express my general agreement and support for this legislation, with perhaps some modification as well as the basis for my support.

In June, 2018, I ran a contested campaign for Grand Forks Municipal Judge in Grand Forks, ND. This was an election for city-wide office in one of North Dakota's largest cities. In addition, I campaigned vigorously for the position, including spending more than what Grand Forks mayoral candidates had spent in the most recent past election. Despite the prominence, the Grand Forks Herald didn't run a single article dedicated to the race during the campaign—not even a one-inch in-column “blurb” article discussing the election. Excluding the paid for Letters to the Editor and a couple of ads, the readers of the Grand Forks Herald wouldn't have even known there was an election for Grand Forks Municipal Judge that spring. It was not until three days before the election (after the conclusion of all the early voting) that the Grand Forks Herald published anything on the race which was then a mere fifty (50) word statement from each candidate. The lack of coverage impacted the race and left most of the issues I was bringing up unaddressed. For lack of resources or maybe for some reasons I am unaware of, I firmly believe the voters were done a disservice by the lack of coverage by the Grand Forks Herald.

While the election for the office I ran for would not be impacted by this current bill, my experience demonstrates the woefully inadequate coverage our local government races have in North Dakota media, even in a major media markets. In my opinion, the use of non-partisan elections are fine when 1.) the election is for a geographic area with few voters and where practically everybody knows everybody personally, or 2.) when you have an active, engaged local media who provides adequate coverage for local politics. Sadly, the state of our local media in North Dakota is in sharp decline. For example, since that election, budget cuts have only made things at the Grand Forks Herald worse, which is now published (along with The Forum in Fargo, ND) two days a week. Local TV news coverage is diminished. Other local newspapers are printing fewer and fewer editions and those that are printed have less and less meaningful content. While party labels will not solve the problem of poor voter education, it will at least provide the voter some general idea where an individual stands on some principles.

Testimony on Bill 1182

Pg. 2


1/19/2020

However, as a product of rural North Dakota, I do understand some of the points by those opposed to this legislation. As noted above, I concede that in many rural areas the need for party labels in local election is probably unnecessary. As a potential compromise, I would suggest that you consider treating races in larger geographic and population areas differently. North Dakota law already does so in many other areas and, as discussed already, there is plenty of justification to do so. As a potential dividing line, I note that North Dakota election law already provides an example. Under North Dakota law, candidates for county elections and for city election in cities with a population in excess of 5,000 are subject to more stringent reporting requirements. I believe that would provide a fair dividing line which can be adopted for such a compromise.

Finally, please note that, while I am an attorney, I present this testimony in my individual capacity. I do not present this testimony on behalf on any individual, corporation or other entity. I have not and will not receive any compensation for the presentation of this testimony.

Thank you for your time and consideration as well as your service to the State of North Dakota

Sincerely,



Larry J. Richards  
Attorney at Law



**Testimony on HB 1182**  
**Presented to the Government and Veterans Affairs House Standing Committee**  
**Prepared by Bernie Dardis, West Fargo City Commission President**  
**Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021**

1 Chairman Kasper and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs  
2 Standing Committee: I would like to take this opportunity to submit my opposition to HB  
3 1182, which would provide candidates running for local office the option of declaring a  
4 political party affiliation.

5 I have been active in North Dakota politics for much of my adult life, so it may  
6 seem odd that I oppose this bill. However, when it comes to providing services and  
7 making important decisions at the local level I believe it is of utmost important to set  
8 partisan differences aside and focus on the residents. In fact, there are very few  
9 situations where a local elected official's political leaning would affect a vote or policy  
10 decision. As they say, "There is no Democratic or Republican way to collect garbage."  
11 Furthermore, cooperation between elected officials is more likely when the focus is on  
12 getting the job done and not the added complication of party politics.

13 Non-partisan elections at the local level also create a more competitive  
14 landscape, where candidates are not limited to a single party representative. This  
15 opens the door for many more residents to consider stepping into local politics and  
16 contributing to the betterment of their community. Additionally, voters learn more  
17 about the candidates and their views on specific topics, instead of relying on their  
18 interpretation of the political party's platform.

19 As an elected official without the pressure of partisan politics, I have a greater  
20 ability to learn about specific issues and make decisions based on what is best for my  
21 community – a value I strongly believe in and will continue to espouse regardless of  
22 party politics. We can also expect that once one candidate declares a party, the



23 option will be taken away from the rest of the candidates because they will feel  
24 pressure to declare.

25 For these reasons, I oppose HB 1182. If you have any questions, I am available at  
26 [bernie.dardis@westfargond.gov](mailto:bernie.dardis@westfargond.gov).



**TO: Chairman Jim Kasper, Government & Veterans Affairs Committee**

**From: Debbie Kroshus, Burleigh County Recorder**

**RE: HB 1182**

Chairman Kasper and Committee Members,

My name is Debbie Kroshus and I am the Burleigh County Recorder. I am here to oppose HB 1182, a bill relating to references to party affiliation of candidates for local elective offices. I would like to take this opportunity to request a **Do NOT Pass** on **HB 1182**.

I strongly oppose any designation of a party affiliation for county offices, which include Commissioner, Recorder, Auditor, Treasurer, State's Attorney, and Sheriff. Though I have no disagreement with simple word changes to Century Code, the fact is this bill is trying to remove my independence from running for an office in local government that should not be defined by party lines. This bill, if passed, could have unintended consequences. If two candidates are running for a local office and one candidate chooses to declare party affiliation and the other chooses not to, the candidate that chooses to declare party could have an unfair advantage over the other.

The county recorder's office is probably one of the least political elected offices in the state as most of what we do is already defined in North Dakota Century Code, as are other local government offices. I would tend to believe that candidates run for local offices because they do not wish to declare party lines. 15 years ago when I first ran for County Recorder I did so because I knew I was qualified for the office and could effect change and move the office forward with great customer service, efficiency, and good management skills. Not because of politics or because I was a democrat or republican.

Local government offices should be run by an individual who knows how to create and balance a budget, manage staff, stay abreast on technology, and work well with constituents, business partners, and legislators to effect change to better serve our tax payers. I believe there is not one job function in local government that a Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, or other party member could do better because they are affiliated with a party, nor do decisions made in these offices run along a party line.

I see many unintended consequences if this bill passes. I envision less candidates wanting to run for local offices. The past several years has created enough division at the federal and state level between party lines causing great frustration to all. We don't want to enhance this division even more at the county and city level. This division is not blatantly prevalent in non-partisan local government. If this bill passes it could create more tension and less firm decision making at the local level causing more cost to tax payers. Several counties appoint their Auditors, Treasurers, and Recorders. If the elected would have the ability to declare party, I question if there is really balance and consistency in how these offices are managed. If an elected official is more focused on their party affiliation than they are in managing the office to meet requirements outlined in Century Code, are they really serving the needs of the tax payers?

If this bill passes and local government candidates could choose to declare a party, I wonder how many candidates would put an R behind their name just so they would have a better chance of being elected? I don't believe this would be fair to the other candidate if they choose not to list a party on the ballot. OR what happens if both candidates choose the same party? Wouldn't this cause confusion for the voters? Therefore, I strongly urge you to keep local government local and away from political party politics with a **DO NOT PASS on HB 1182.**

Thank you for your time.

Debbie Kroshus, Burleigh County Recorder

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

RE: House bill no. 1182

Chairman Kasper and members of the House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee:

For the record, I am from the City of Carrington and I am the City Auditor. I would oppose any legislative changes that would allow city officials to declare a political party when running for city offices.

- The focus of local elections should be on community issues and voters should vote for candidates that have similar concerns. The goal for running for city offices should be to better the city, not focus on party politics.
- While I have only been in my position for two election cycles, our city struggles with finding candidates willing to run for office. If legislative changes are made allowing the candidate to declare a political party, I feel there would be further hesitation from candidates in getting involved in city government.
- Allowing candidates to declare a political party would result in forcing all candidates to declare a political party because if a candidate left their party declaration blank, voters may make assumptions or demand that the candidate identify their political affiliation.
- Implementing these legislative changes at a local level is a distraction from the task at hand, i.e. bringing elected officials, city employees, and residents together to better serve the cities in which we live and work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Gast". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Gast



North Dakota House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee  
Chairman – Representative Jim Kasper  
January 20, 2020

**Testimony**

By: Carrie Evans

Email: [carrie.evans@minotnd.org](mailto:carrie.evans@minotnd.org)

Phone: 701-660-5520

**House Bill 1182  
Urging a “Do Not Pass” Recommendation**

Good morning Chairman Kasper, Vice Chairman Koppelman and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Carrie Evans, and I am the Vice-President of the Minot City Council.

I testify today to urge you to recommend a “do not pass” on House Bill 1182. The intention of House Bill 1182 is to add party affiliation to our local elections. This is not a benign measure. While it may seem adding a party affiliation is a good idea on the surface, it is unclear why this is needed. It seems like a solution in search of a problem.

I cannot speak for our colleagues across the state, but I can tell you that not one member of the Minot City Council or Mayor has requested this bill. Moreover, when we discussed this at our meeting on Tuesday night of this week, not one member of Minot’s City Council voiced support for this measure,

Carrie L. Evans  
Vice President, Minot City Council  
[carrie.evans@minotnd.org](mailto:carrie.evans@minotnd.org)  
701-660-5520



One of the appeals of running for local office is the lack of partisanship during the campaign and in the work of governing of our communities. To be sure, members of local governing bodies have differences, but at the end of day our differences are just that, and do not arise from our party affiliations. The work of local government is different than the state legislature and Congress. We have witnessed on a state and federal level partisan politics at its worst.

I urge all of you to reject this measure and to keep our local elections and governing bodies free of party affiliation.

Carrie L. Evans  
Vice President, Minot City Council  
[carrie.evans@minotnd.org](mailto:carrie.evans@minotnd.org)  
701-660-5520

255 N. 4th St.  
PO Box 5200  
Grand Forks, ND 58206-5200



Mayor Brandon Bochenski  
(701) 746-4636

## **TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1182**

### **House Government & Veteran Affairs Committee**

**January 21, 2021**

**Dana Sande, City Council President, City of Grand Forks, ND**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Dana Sande and I'm the City Council President for the City of Grand Forks. I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and express my opposition to House Bill 1182.

While campaigning in Grand Forks, I get a lot of questions about specific city issues, not about party politics. Neighborhood traffic concerns, road construction and snow removal are all things local elected officials deal with while in office. None of these local issues have an "R" or a "D" on them.

Yes, as City Council Members we do have our own ideological philosophies. Some are more conservative while some are more moderate, but as a City Council we tackle each issue individually and do what is best for our city on each particular issue.

With this form of local politics in mind, the Grand Forks City Council voted to oppose a similar bill in 2019 and I continue to stand behind that decision. We feel that keeping party politics out of local elections is the right thing for The City of Grand Forks.

The passage of House Bill 1182 is not in the best interest of the City of Grand Forks. Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask for a DO NOT PASS on House Bill 1182.

ALVIN A. JAEGER  
SECRETARY OF STATE

HOME PAGE [www.nd.gov/sos](http://www.nd.gov/sos)



PHONE (701) 328-2900  
FAX (701) 328-2992

E-MAIL [sos@nd.gov](mailto:sos@nd.gov)

**SECRETARY OF STATE**  
STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
600 EAST BOULEVARD AVENUE DEPT 108  
BISMARCK ND 58505-0500

January 21, 2021

TO: Chairman Kasper and Members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

FR: Jim Silrum, Deputy Secretary of State on behalf of Secretary of State Al Jaeger

RE: HB 1182 – Allowing political party designation for school, county, and city candidates

This bill would allow candidates for county, city, and school offices to have a political party designation next to their name on the ballot. This language is permissive rather than mandatory so candidates for these offices would not need to declare a political party designation.

The Secretary of State's office is offering neutral testimony because the outcome will impact the creation of the ballot for an election.

In a statewide general election, there are three distinct ballots, all included on the single ballot given to the voter. Those are: the political party ballot for many statewide and all legislative offices; the no-party ballot for Superintendent of Public Instruction, Justice of the Supreme Court, Judges of the District Court, multi-county, county, city, and school offices; and finally, the measures ballot. If county, city, and school candidates may request a political party designation, but some candidates for those contests do not, where on the ballot would these contests be placed?

In a statewide primary election, the ballot includes all of the "sub-ballots" that are included on a general election ballot, but for the political party primary ballot, there are separate ballots for each political party that is officially recognized in the state. Where would the county offices be placed on the ballot since the candidates may or may not be associated with a political party? Also, because city and school offices only have a general election that is held most often in June, where would those contests be placed on the ballot?

It has been said that the June election is the most complicated election in the state because the ballot contains both primary nominations and no-party general elections for cities and schools. It is also required that voters only vote for the candidates of one political party listed on the ballot. The answers to the questions above are critical to ensure that the voters will know how to mark their ballots if this legislative change is adopted.

Respectfully submitted.





**NDSBA**  
NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL  
BOARDS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 7128  
Bismarck ND 58507-7128  
1-800-932-8791 • (701)255-4127  
[www.ndsba.org](http://www.ndsba.org)

**HB 1182**  
**House GVA Committee**  
**January 21, 2021**  
**Testimony of Alexis Baxley**

Good morning Chairman Kasper and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Alexis Baxley, and I serve as the executive director of the North Dakota School Boards Association. NDSBA represents the elected school boards of all 175 public school districts and several special education units in North Dakota.

The North Dakota School Boards Association stands in opposition to HB 1182. The office of school board member has long been a non-partisan office, and we believe it should remain that way. Student achievement does not have a political party.

School board members are elected by their fellow citizens because of their passion for students and commitment to the community and because they are someone fellow citizens are willing to entrust with their children or grandchildren's education rather than their political party affiliation.

Allowing candidates for locally elected offices to designate a political party will have negative consequences to those offices and boards. School board members do not need to declare a party to be an effective member. In fact, doing so would likely cause unnecessary debate and disagreement over issues not pertinent to operating a school district. Citizens are likely already aware of the beliefs of candidates for local office. Additionally, allowing candidates to declare a party may mean attracting outside contributions to school board elections or deterring candidates who do not easily identify with a party from running.

We all expect our children to receive a balanced education when it comes to history and politics. Parents and communities become upset, and rightfully so, when a teacher or curriculum push a particular viewpoint. Just as we expect public school district staff to leave their party affiliations at the door when they come to work, so too is it appropriate for school board members.

NDSBA respectfully urges you to give HB 1182 a Do Not Pass recommendation. Thank you for your consideration.

January 20, 2021

To: North Dakota House of Representatives  
Government and Veterans Affairs Committee  
Re: HB 1182

On January 21<sup>st</sup>, you will hear testimony for and against HB 1182. As an elected official, with 11 years' experience, I understand the challenges of balancing opposing opinions. In advance of my testimony, I want to thank all of you for considering a variety of insights.

HB 1182 seeks to attach political party affiliation to petitions and ballots for individuals running for positions at the school, municipal and county level. It is my assumption that the goal of this bill is to help voters better choose candidates that they believe represent their ideals. This goal is noble and certainly serves a purpose at a state or national level. However, decisions made at the local level, rarely, if ever, include philosophical or political ideals. I have served on Minot's City Council for 11 years and I could count on one hand the decisions that leaned left or right. As local representatives, we are in direct communication with our constituents, who are able to share their views on agenda items. Involving a political party would complicate, typically simple decisions to make. I am making an assumption with my next statement, but I sense that neither party will be interested in investing resources into local campaigns, so the printed "R" or "D" will not necessarily indicate the candidate's party affiliation.

In a nutshell, I believe that HB1182 is a solution looking for a problem, and I strongly encourage you to vote "No" on its passing.

Respectfully,  
Lisa M. Olson  
Minot City Council, President

Testimony Prepared for the  
House Government & Veterans Affairs Committee  
January 21, 2021  
By: Linda Svihovec, NDACo



**RE: OPPOSE House Bill 1182 – Party Affiliation for County/City Election Candidates**

Good morning Chairman Kasper and committee members. For the record, my name is Linda Svihovec, with the North Dakota Association of Counties. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony opposing HB 1182 which allows candidates for city and county offices to identify a political party to be listed on the ballot next to the individual's name.

The historical practice of electing county officials on a no-party ballot has been successful for many years. It encourages grass roots citizens to run for office and serve their communities whether they have chosen to affiliate with a political party or not. This promotes greater participation and interest in running for city, county, and school elections. Fourteen candidates filed petitions to run in the most recent county commissioner race in my home county of McKenzie. Three new commissioners were elected to that board, replacing two retiring commissioners and defeating an incumbent. The voters in McKenzie County did not know the party affiliation of those candidates when they elected six of the fourteen to advance from the primary election in June to the general election in November, and they didn't know it when they ultimately selected the three commissioners they felt would serve them best.

Local elected officials understand that it is in the best interest of their community to provide the services to their citizens efficiently and cost effectively, without political bias. Whether you are the county auditor calculating property tax levies for political subdivisions according to state law, or you are a county commissioner prioritizing a road maintenance program with limited funds so that your neighbors can reach their fields and children can be delivered safely to and from school, politics does not have a place.

The recall and election processes provide local citizens with a way to replace officials they are not happy with. There are several examples of North Dakota citizens expressing their dissatisfaction with the job a local official was doing and have used their voices at the ballot box. Those decisions were not made based on the officials' party affiliation, but rather because the voters in that community did not feel the official was effectively serving them.

Chairman Kasper and committee members, the ND Association of Counties and its members request a DO NOT PASS on HB1182, as politics has no place when it comes to efficiently delivering local services to county residents.

## Blake Crosby

---

**From:** ljames@ndsupernet.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2021 9:19 AM  
**To:** Blake Crosby  
**Subject:** HB1182

House Committee on Government and Veterans Affairs  
Attn: Chairman Kasper

Please consider a do not pass on HB1182. Being forced to declare a party affiliation at the local level is an unnecessary means to divide a community based on party politics. Local leadership has always been and should remain nonpartisan.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lyn James  
Commission President  
City of Bowman

## **Omdahl: Politics: When enough Is enough**

Absolute power at the state level is not enough politics for some who now want to open up county, city, township, school board and other local offices to partisan elections by starting with an innocent marking on the ballot of party preference.

Written By: Lloyd Omdahl | Jan 20th 2021 - 6pm.



North Dakota Republicans own the executive branch, the legislative branch and the judicial branch of state government, lock, stock and barrel. But having absolute power at the state level is not enough politics for some who now want to open up county, city, township, school board and other local offices to partisan elections by starting with an innocent marking on the ballot of party preference.

A strong two-party system is necessary for a democracy to function. There are policy issues streaming from voter ideologies that must be resolved. Local governments make secondary decisions, most of which are tightly controlled by state legislation. In reality, local governments are administrative units of the state government.



One advocate of partisan elections pointed to all the money local governments spend. He apparently wants to apply a more conservative financial system to local government. Apparently, he hasn't been around enough to know that local finances involve mostly "sunk" costs or state regulations that permit local governments limited financial flexibility.

Other than creating political opportunities for the two parties, what are the benefits of a partisan system at the local level? A more conservative spending ideology?

Local governments in North Dakota are pretty clean. Our governments are small; almost everyone in the county knows what is going on in the courthouse, including the unofficial as well as the official. About the only transgressions committed in local government are long coffee breaks.



[LISTEN LIVE](#)

[WATCH LIVE](#)



For sure, partisan elections will not make local governments more effective, more efficient or any more honest.

In fact, they will do just the opposite.

Local offices will be flooded with junior politicians who will see public office not as an opportunity to serve the public so much as a stepping stone to some higher partisan office.

Partisan ballots will generate new levels of conflict in local governments as parties fight for offices or as party loyalists fight each other to gain a rung in the political ladder. Everyone will spend more time campaigning and less time serving the public.

With politically-minded partisans running local government, how often will political considerations be uppermost when choices have to be made and priorities established? Will politics decide on highways? On arrests? On human services?



Partisan ballots will eliminate at least half of the county officials. Even if they are Republicans, the partisan atmosphere day-in and day-out does not fit their idea of public service. In some local governments, ambitious partisans will run against incumbents regardless of party.

Many local officials do not have competition because the public is satisfied with their service. Partisan elections will create competition where competition isn't necessary and it will force any officeholders to raise new money for races they never had in nonpartisan offices. There will be new personal costs to serving the people. That will discourage present officeholders.

With the rancor permeating both parties at present, this is hardly the time to bring that sort of partisan disease into local governments that have been performing so well. When it comes to partisan politics, at some point we must say that enough is enough. Enough.

*Omdahl is a former N.D. lieutenant governor and retired University of North Dakota political science teacher.  
Email [ndmatters@midco.net](mailto:ndmatters@midco.net)*

# 2021 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Government and Veterans Affairs Committee Pioneer Room, State Capitol

HB 1182  
1/29/2021

Relating to permitting party designations for candidates for county and local elections;  
relating to party designations for candidates for municipal offices

**Chairman Kasper** opened the committee work meeting at 10:41 a.m.

Representatives	Roll Call
Representative Jim Kasper	P
Representative Ben Koppelman	P
Representative Pamela Anderson	P
Representative Jeff A. Hoverson	P
Representative Karen Karls	P
Representative Scott Louser	P
Representative Jeffery J. Magrum	P
Representative Mitch Ostlie	P
Representative Karen M. Rohr	P
Representative Austen Schauer	P
Representative Mary Schneider	P
Representative Vicky Steiner	P
Representative Greg Stemen	P
Representative Steve Vetter	P

### Discussion Topics:

- Permits party designations for county and local election candidates

**Rep. Louser** summarized the intent of the bill.

**Rep. Vetter** moved a **DO PASS**. **Rep. Hoverson** seconded.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Jim Kasper	Y
Representative Ben Koppelman	Y
Representative Pamela Anderson	N
Representative Jeff A. Hoverson	Y
Representative Karen Karls	Y
Representative Scott Louser	Y
Representative Jeffery J. Magrum	Y
Representative Mitch Ostlie	N
Representative Karen M. Rohr	Y
Representative Austen Schauer	Y
Representative Mary Schneider	N
Representative Vicky Steiner	Y
Representative Greg Stemen	Y
Representative Steve Vetter	Y

The motion passed 11-3-0. **Rep. Schauer** is the carrier.

**Chairman Kasper** closed the meeting at 10:52 a.m.

*Carmen Hart, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**

**HB 1182: Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Rep. Kasper, Chairman)**  
recommends **DO PASS** (11 YEAS, 3 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB  
1182 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.