

State Government Conference Committee – 2021

Chairs and Members of this committee,

My name is George Beck. I am a retired administrative law judge, a former Chair of the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board and presently Chair of Clean Elections Minnesota, a non-partisan non-profit working for democracy reform in our state.

Clean Elections Minnesota strongly supports the long overdue restoration of the right to vote for released felons. We also support automatic voter registration that will simplify registration for citizens and make it less costly. And we need to end a dark money loophole in Minnesota by expanding the definition of “expressly advocating” as 19 other states have done.

The Secretary of State should be authorized to mail ballots to registered voters without a request. Many states do this successfully. All of these provisions will support and expand voting in our state which should be the goal of this legislature for a successful and thriving democracy.

But we are asking you not to include the provisional ballot language in the Senate bill in the final legislation. It is unnecessary in Minnesota and has an unknown cost.

During the committee process supporters emphasized that some forty other states had adopted provisional ballots. What wasn't mentioned was that this didn't happen because the states thought this was the best method for voting. The federal government *required* states to adopt it. Minnesota was exempt because we had same day registration, a superior way of encouraging voting. Having both is unnecessary.

An even more serious problem is that this proposal will and is designed to discourage voting. When potential voters learn that can't register and vote on election day, that will discourage voting.

When voters using a provisional ballot have to show up again at the county auditors' office to finalize their vote, some will not, especially if they have to take more time off of work. This proposal will cripple same day registration.

There was no evidence in committee to show that our present same day registration process has been abused. Normally data supports legislation, but not here.

This proposal is part of a nation-wide effort to narrow the electorate. Voting is the crown jewel of our democracy. Please don't let Minnesota join Georgia.

Thank you.

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