



April 30, 2023

Dear Chair Klevorn, Chair Murphy, and Members of the State and Local Government Conference Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the League of Minnesota Cities, Association of Minnesota Counties, and the Minnesota Association of County Officers regarding the elections provisions contained in H1830-3, UEH1830-1, and S1362-2.

We thank Chair Freiberg and committee members for their support of local election administrators and recognition of the costs of administering elections through the Voter Operations, Technology, and Elections Resources Account, in the House language (H1830-3) on page R3A5 of the side-by-side comparison. We greatly appreciate the inclusion of the VOTER Account in the omnibus bill and accompanying formula policy language that provides a clear, clean, and efficient way for local communities to receive annual election operations funds to budget for equipment purchases, cybersecurity updates, staffing needs, and more.

We recognize the Committee's budget target limitations but want to reemphasize the critical need for these funds, especially in light of new election requirements surrounding early voting that further highlight the critical roles the State places on local election administrators.

Further, local governments support the following provisions:

- The expanded timeline for conducting health care facility voting, contained in Sec. 41 (H1830-3) and Sec. 22 (UEH1830-1) on page R33A5. We support providing our cities and counties as much time to complete this process as possible within the absentee balloting period.
- The provisions regarding write-in candidates contained in Sec. 58 (H1830-3) and Sec. 36 (UEH1830-1) on page R45A5. Currently, election officials spend considerable time and resources to count and individually record write-in votes cast, many of which are frivolous. This would eliminate unnecessary work while still ensuring that legitimate write-in votes are counted.
- Sec. 61 (H1830-3) and Sec. 37 (S1362-2) on page R49A5 regarding the passing of an ordinance or resolution for the changing of polling places. For many cities, polling places do not change from year to year, so it is not necessary to have to pass a resolution each year unless those locations change.
- Sec. 68 (H1830-3) and Sec. 39 (S1362-2) on page R52A5 to expand mail balloting to jurisdictions to all eligible jurisdictions, not just those located outside of metropolitan counties.
- Sec. 70 (H1830-3) on page R53A5 which would allow county auditors the option to make available a ballot counter and ballot box for use for voters in mail ballot precincts on election day. Adopting this provision will allow for mail ballot voters to have a choice to return their ballot by mail, drop it off, or cast their ballot in person at their in-person polling place on election day.

- Sec. 105 (H1830-3) and Sec. 70 (UEH1830-1) on page R70A5 regarding counting write-in votes when a name has been written in, but the oval or other target shape is not marked. This provision creates an administrative efficiency while still ensuring that the voter intent will be determined and the vote will be counted.
- Sec. 112 (H1830-3) and Sec. 46 (UEH1830-1) on page R76A5 regarding the intimidation and interference related to the performance of duties by an election official.
- We greatly appreciate the inclusion of the sample ballot notice process update provided in Sec. 86 (H1830-3) and Sec. 55 (S1362-2) on page R62A5. This updated process will reduce confusion for voters who may receive a newspaper publication that serves multiple jurisdictions and thus show sample ballots that may not reflect the actual ballot that voter will receive for their jurisdiction's election. This will also update the publication information to ensure that voters who would like to receive a sample ballot have direct contact information for the election official in their jurisdiction so that they can request a sample ballot.

Cities and counties appreciate the Chair's and members' willingness to meet and discuss the proposed expansion of early voting hours contained in both H1830-3 and UEH1830-1 on page R32A5. These additional mandated hours, particularly the additional required weekend days, will cause some challenges as it relates to personnel and resources during an already stressful time of the year. We hope to continue conversations related to this provision to balance the bill's goals with what is feasible for local elections administrators and does not result in a diminishment in the number of accessible in-person voting locations.

We appreciate your consideration of this letter and look forward to working with you throughout the conference committee process.

Sincerely,



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