

## **Re: HF 2474 and Corresponding Sections of HF 2073**

Chair Freiberg and Members of the Committee:

Campfire tales are told of the kid who foolishly strayed from the path through the woods and was never seen again. Judge Perzel's findings of fact in the HD 54A election contest are such a story, detailing how a long-time City Clerk took inappropriate shortcuts — and now all we can say is that she is “no longer employed by the city.”

But the point of such a story is never about the individual, and the problem is not solved with their disappearance. Rather, the story is about the temptation of shortcuts, and the solution lies in more clearly delineating the proper path, with the alternative being to stay out of the woods in the first place. It is in that spirit that I write in support of Rep. Tabke's HF 2474, as well as the corresponding sections of HF 2073.

Sections 2 and 3 (numbered 9 and 10 in HF 2073) delineate the proper path, putting into statute existing best practices for ensuring that the number of ballots extracted from absentee envelopes and tabulated corresponds with the number of voters whose envelopes have been accepted. Section 2 also puts into statute the important back-up practice of retaining ballot envelopes, so that if any discrepancy does arise, it can be rectified. With the heart of the matter addressed in those two sections, Section 4 (numbered 11 in HF 2073) is a conforming amendment.

But what about the alternative of staying out of the woods? That's Section 1, corresponding to Section 5 of HF 2073. This section allows a municipality to stay out of the business of processing absentee envelopes entirely. Already municipalities can leave this to the county, but now they would be able to do so and still provide their voters the convenience of early voting at the municipal location, with each voter inserting their own ballot directly into a tabulator. By focusing on this particularly valuable aspect of voting before Election Day, the municipality stands to achieve a better return on its investment of time and money. And to the point of my testimony, the simplest way to avoid improper handling of envelopes is to avoid envelopes entirely.

As a Minnesota voter, I thank the representatives who have brought these bills forward and the Office of the Secretary of State. These bills ought to receive bipartisan support as improvements to our election procedures.

Max Hailperin  
March 18, 2025