

# Minnesota Association of Townships



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The Honorable Michael Nelson  
Chair, State Government Finance & Elections Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
585 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

VIA EMAIL

Dear Chair Nelson:

We would like to thank you, the Committee, and House staff who worked on the Omnibus State Government Finance & Elections Committee Bill as it contains many issues of interest related to township governance. Regarding changes to election laws, we thank Rep. Greenman for working with us early in the session to address township concerns with earlier versions of the election law changes.

There are several additional items within the bill that are appreciated by townships, including:

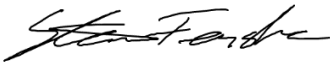
1. **Mail-In Balloting:** Expanded access to all-mail balloting for townships in the Twin Cities area that choose to adopt it. (Art. 4, Sec. 46). Right now, towns outside the Twin Cities area may adopt mail balloting or in-person balloting, at their option, but metropolitan-area townships cannot. While MAT encourages towns to keep an in-person polling location, we recognize townships should make the decision for their community. Townships outside the metro-area have had this option since 1987, and some towns have run mail balloting elections for decades.
2. **Full Use of Federal HAVA Funds:** As election administration costs can be burdensome, we are thankful to Federal HAVA funds made available.
3. **Open Meeting Law Clarifications:** The proposed changes to the Open Meeting Law clarify the use of interactive technology and record-keeping mechanisms (use of minutes as a single place to record the acts of the public body). *See* Art. 6. These changes should benefit both towns and the public.
4. **Additional Hotel Licensing Authority:** While hotels rarely operate within townships, the licensing authority in Art. 5, Sec. 12, is helpful to townships. It will facilitate land use

management without wider-scale land use controls being needed, and offer towns information on the use of their infrastructure related to the hotel and its visitors.

Townships do have some concerns with proposed changes in the omnibus bill to the election administration system because towns have had good experiences administering the current system without widespread problems. In particular, MAT is concerned with added reporting requirements such as additional notices to the Secretary of State that duplicate notices already provided to the County Auditors. Alone, these compliance issues are not over-burdensome, but election administrators feel the weight of additional measures added over time. MAT is concerned that changes to the election administration system will overburden township clerks, reduce the number of election judges willing to serve, and increase the costs of providing an in-person election within the townships. We ask you to remember the many volunteers who will need to carry out the mandates of election laws and the costs that are imposed on local communities to do so.

Thank you again for your time and dedication to public service. We appreciate your consideration of the issues brought forward by MAT in this letter and would be happy to be a resource to you during the conference committee stage of the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Steve M. Fenske

Cc: Gov. Tim Walz  
Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan  
Secretary of State Steve Simon  
Sen. Mary Kiffmeyer  
House State Government Finance & Elections Committee Members