



May 7, 2022

Dear Chair Nelson, Chair Kiffmeyer, and Members of the State Government, Elections, Pensions and Transportation Conference Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the League of Minnesota Cities' 837 members in comment to the election's provisions in the State Government, Elections, Pensions and Transportation omnibus bill. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Conference Committee and the opportunities we have had to comment on many of these provisions throughout the legislative session. The comments below highlight provisions that the League supports and provisions the League continues to have concerns with, with reference to Article 3 of the revisor's side-by-side document prepared for the committee.

There are several provisions League **Supports**:

Additional absentee ballot processing time. The League supports the extension of time for opening and processing absentee ballots and allowing voters to deposit their absentee ballots in the ballot tabulator from 7 to 14 days. This additional processing time would provide administrative relief along with extending the time period for direct balloting, a process voters prefer. *(R9/R19/R25/R34/R38/R39/R46, House Sec. 8/21/26/27/36/42/43/53)*

Guidance for documentation and collection for ballot drop boxes. While elections administrators have been collecting much of this information already, this language provides clear, uniform guidance. *(R21, House Sec. 23/Senate Sec. 19, Subd 5a)*

Mail balloting. This provision expands mail balloting to communities of up to 400 registered voters to any city in the state, regardless of whether it is in the metro or Greater Minnesota. The League supports allowing all cities to conduct mail balloting, as it is an efficient way of conducting an election for cities that have lower numbers of registered voters. *(R38, House Sec. 41)*

Sample ballot publication simplification. The League supports the simplification of sample ballot information required to be published for each election, which will reduce voter confusion and ensure that voters that would like a sample ballot receive one specific to their address. *(R41, Senate Sec. 34)*

Clarifications for non-government elections mailings. The League supports the requirement that committees and private organizations make clear that absentee ballot applications and sample ballots they send to voters are not official government mailings, which will reduce confusion for voters. *(R48, House Sec. 58/Senate Sec. 37)*

Protections for elections officials performing official duties related to elections. This will provide election volunteers, judges, and staff confidence in their security and protection from harassment and attempts to hinder their service as elections staff. *(R49, House Sec. 59)*

Help America Vote Act Funds. The League supports the appropriation of Help America Vote Act (HAVA) matching funds to improve the administration and security of elections by providing educational materials to combat election misinformation, implementing physical security improvements for polling places, election

workspaces, and other spaces supporting the administration of election, and additional efforts to strengthen elections administration and infrastructure. (*Article 1, R9, House Sec. 14*)

The League **Opposes**:

Ballot board livestreaming requirements. Elections administrators have reported concerns regarding the recruitment and retention of elections judges and ballot board members, key roles in ensuring secure and efficient elections, due to heightened scrutiny towards local elections volunteers in recent years. The League is concerned that the requirement to livestream these elections processes will only heighten the feelings of increased scrutiny and discourage participation in the elections administration process. In addition, many cities simply do not have the technical staff necessary to run the proposed livestream system and continue to have concerns regarding the privacy of data, ensuring elections activities can continue if a technology failure occurs, and ongoing costs of equipment. While the League appreciates that the bill provides onetime appropriation for local governments to comply with livestreaming requirements and statewide assistance and management of all data and IT requirements in the proposal, the League opposes this provision. (*R28, Senate Sec. 24-25*)

The prohibition of a deputy city clerk from completing ballot board activities unless they have been appointed an election judge. Many local jurisdictions, particularly those that face challenges recruiting a sufficient number of elections judges, rely on staff to ensure that ballots are processed efficiently and elections results are timely. Local elections administrators have expressed concerns regarding this provision, which would require that city staff conducting these activities disclose political party affiliation. (*R23, Senate Sec. 20*)

Limiting elections tools that aid in elections administration. The League opposes the limiting of additional absentee polling places to those open all 46-days of absentee voting (*R18, Senate Sec. 18*), the limitations on the flexibility of drop box locations and requirement to livestream drop boxes (*R20, Senate Sec. 19, Subd. 2*), and the requirement that jurisdictions that choose to utilize ballot drop boxes must have one location for every 50,000 registered voters (*R20, House Sec. 22, Subd. 2*). Additional absentee polling places and ballot drop boxes are both tools that local elections administrators use to ramp up efforts to reach voters where it makes best sense for the needs of their communities. Cities request the continued flexibility for these tools and oppose these limitations.

We appreciate the committee's consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Alex Hassel

Intergovernmental Relations Representative