



## Minnesota Association of County Officers

March 4, 2025

Re: HF1800 (Quam) – Modifying certain voting administration provisions

Chair Quam, and members of the House Elections and Government Operations Committee,

**The Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO) provides this written testimony, on behalf of county election administrators, to express concerns with HF1800.**

County election administrators are tasked with an important responsibility of conducting elections. They pride themselves in ensuring every election is administered as fairly and efficiently as possible while effectively spending local taxpayer dollars and ensuring their nonpartisan standing in the processes. Election administrators face complex laws and processes already, and so they also review each proposed change in law from a perspective of administrative burden.

While HF1800 includes provisions that may attempt to provide clarity or improvements to election processes, MACO has varying levels of concern or question about the administrability, necessity, or effectiveness of nearly every provision.

Some concerns and/or questions of specific note include:

- **Section 5 – utilization of electronic rosters in municipal and school district elections.**  
Electronic rosters and other election technology are a significant investment and provide security, efficiency, and accuracy to election processes. Counties need to be able to reliably and consistently use the technology they have invested in to effectively administer elections.
- **Section 11 – political party election judge lists of alternative judges.**  
Election administrators will have significant challenges in administering a separate list of judges for alternate appointment due to the timing of training and the complexity of assignments and ensuring party balance, among other logistics.
- **Section 15 – election judge advice telephone line.**  
While providing another resource for election judges is a commendable idea, each jurisdiction's election processes are determined by a range of factors including type of equipment, type of supplies, etc. and each county or municipality is in the best position to provide direction to their election judges. Additionally, all counties and municipalities already have systems in place to respond to questions.
- **Section 16 – retention of absentee ballot envelopes for 22 months; felony penalty.**  
Election administrators must already retain most election materials for 22 months, but specifically adding ALL absentee ballot envelopes creates a significant logistical and space

challenge for counties. These should be retained for an appropriate amount of time, and our suggestion is through the contest period. Additionally mail ballot envelopes should have the same retention requirements. Of significant concern is the felony penalty for early disposal with no recognition of inadvertent or accidental disposal.

- ***Section 17 – observers in polling places.***

Creating a role for observers in polling places who can take photographs or videos during the election day, regardless of when the dissemination can occur, creates significant concern for election administrators in the safe and efficient operation of polling places on election day, not to mention concern of voter privacy and election security.

- ***Section 19 – explanation of changes of reported unofficial results.***

Results reported on election night have been and will always be unofficial. Those totals may and do change as election administrators review, verify, and audit results. While it may be possible and even helpful to clearly identify on the public website when those results have last changed, requiring a list of required update explanations will add even more tasks to an already overloaded election night and will ultimately further delay even the first report of unofficial results.

- ***Section 23 – transmission of election results after the polls have closed.***

Some counties and municipalities have securely utilized federally and state certified equipment that is capable electronic transmission of results only after the polls have closed to quickly and efficiently report unofficial results. Removing this option will delay unofficial results on election night.

- ***Section 24 – cast vote records.***

Expanding the information available as part of a “cast vote record”, specifically including images of ballots, will significantly jeopardize the voter’s right to a private vote.

- ***Section 26 – postelection review scope.***

Expanding the postelection review to all offices and questions on the ballot will add significant amounts of time to that process, so if this change is enacted changes to the canvass timelines may be necessary. Additionally, this change will increase election costs for the postelection review, publicly-funded recounts already are provided in close contests, and there may be some confusion on what “uncontested” means as used in the section.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on HF1800 with the committee. MACO appreciates your attention and consideration. We look forward to additional conversations on this subject and other election administration items that election administrators hope can be considered that address the cost effectiveness of election activities, reduce administrative burden, and enhance voter understanding and transparency.



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