

February 23, 2026



Dear Co-Chairs Quam and Freiberg and Members of the House Elections and Government Operations Committee:

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO) respectfully writes in opposition of HF68, a bill creating mandated “retention” elections of certain county officials.

At a high level, if passed, this bill would undo the recent bipartisan work done by the Legislature to provide county governments a process in Minnesota Statutes 375A.1205 that allows for the appointment of certain county offices under certain circumstances and with public input and opportunity for reversal. The fact that our two organizations, representing both elected county boards along with the appointed and elected officers targeted under this proposal, came to such an agreement in 2019 is indicative of the thoughtfulness, hard work, and genuine commitment to bipartisan focused policy solutions.

As counties—the layer of local government with the most elected office positions in statute—we fully understand the dynamics surrounding any public conversations on changing certain elected offices over to appointed positions. That is why the bipartisan framework of 2019 was so groundbreaking and solid in that it had the foresight and vision to ensure:

- 1) A decision to change a qualified elected position to appointment can only be the result of a vacancy (retirement or departure) OR a contracted agreement with the elected office holder and may not be done without the consent of any active elected officer.
- 2) The list of qualified elected positions for appointment is *limited* to only a county auditor, treasurer, or recorder, NOT county sheriff or attorney positions.
- 3) Any County Board consideration of appointing qualified county officer positions requires a public hearing and posting of notice to ensure the public is aware of the potential decision AND has guaranteed public commentary periods.
- 4) The ultimate Board vote to approve a move to appointment under qualified circumstances requires a supermajority elected county board vote of approval (4 out of 5 elected county board commissioners).
- 5) Lastly, current language *already* provides the public with a petition process to override their elected County Board votes via petition.

These extensive and thoughtful guardrails have worked well in balancing the goals of modernizing 21st century government, recruiting top professional talent, as well as preserving the public trust and having a clear, transparent, and effective way for the public to weigh into these decisions. Allowing public referendums for management of highly technical, financially and legally-liable positions creates an uncertainty and instability that is neither helpful in finding and retaining the best qualified persons to fill these roles nor assists in the creating the best outcome of work for the public.

We hope the legislature also recognizes this and ask members to keep the framework of this agreement intact.

Respectfully,

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