



Robert W. Wilson
County Administrator

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MEMO

TO: County Commission
FROM: Robert W. Wilson
Date: March 13, 2025
Subject: Commission Meeting Legislative Update

An agenda item is scheduled for the March 17th Board meeting for Department Heads to briefly review with the Commission the various legislative activities related to their departments they've been tracking this session.

Most Commissioners and Department Heads have participated in weekly internal legislative calls as well as calls with the North Dakota Association of Counties and the various statewide associations. As always, Cass County has been active in contributing to the policy-making process.

From a County Administration perspective the property tax cap-related legislation has been an area of particular focus. At the March 5th Board meeting the Commission approved the attached resolution. Chair Grindberg has made legislative reach-outs advocating for this position, the resolution has been distributed to local media and I offered written testimony (also attached) for in support of HB1168, HB1575 and HB 1176 - with inclusion of the resolution language.

Other department heads have provided a brief written outline of the bills they are tracking. Several department heads will also be prepared to discuss their legislative activities – and the status of the bills they've been working on.

Cass County, North Dakota
North Dakota Legislature on Property Tax Reform with Local Control Resolution
Resolution #2025-02

Whereas, the Cass County Commission has historically maintained a fiscally conservative approach to property taxation;

Whereas, over the past ten years, Cass County taxpayers have benefited from a reduction of 20 mills, which has effectively reduced property taxes on residents. This reduction has been made possible through a strong partnership with the state legislature and the executive branch;

Whereas, over the past five years, the Cass County taxpayers have experienced the following changes:

- The average value of a residential property in Cass County increased from \$244,000 in 2019 to \$317,000 in 2023. However, the average county residential property tax only increased from \$527 in 2019 to \$670 in 2023, an average increase of only \$20 per year.
- A parcel of 160 acres of the state's most productive farmland, located south of Casselton, ND, had a taxable valuation of \$219,000 in 2019, with an annual property tax payment of \$526. In 2023, the same land parcel had a taxable valuation of \$229,800, with a property tax payment of \$540—an increase of \$14.00.

Whereas, Cass County government has demonstrated strong fiscal management with a 2023 audited General Fund Balance of \$26.9 Million;

Whereas, the Cass County Commission respects and appreciates the North Dakota legislature and Governor's continued interest in partnering on property tax relief and reform, and recognizes the importance of finding equitable solutions for both taxpayers and local governments;

Whereas, the Cass County Commission, as elected officials, requires flexibility in managing its budget to meet the needs of a growing county population and the increasing demand for services and the impact of inflation;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Cass County Commission respectfully requests that the North Dakota Legislature consider **property tax reform** that provides local governments, such as Cass County, with the flexibility and authority to manage property tax rates and services in a way that reflects local needs and ensures financial sustainability;

Be It Further Resolved, that the Cass County Commission urges the legislature to continue its support of **property tax relief** efforts while providing local control and flexibility for county

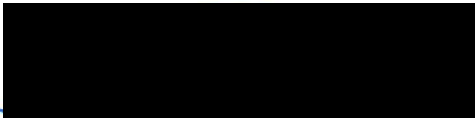
governments to respond to population growth, service demands, inflationary pressures and fiscal management responsibilities.

Be it further resolved and recommended to allow growth to occur at the consumer price index, plus 2% not to exceed 6% or no less than 2%, and allowing political subdivisions to also capture half of their percentage of annual growth in population from the previous year – and maintain new growth from the previous year. Further, the Cass County elected commission can exercise its full Home Rule Charter Authority.

Be It Finally Resolved, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Cass County legislators, the Governor's office, the Majority and Minority Leaders of both chambers and the Finance and Tax Committees of both chambers with a request for thoughtful consideration of these needs in future legislative action.

ADOPTED THIS DAY OF March 5, 2025

APPROVED:



Tony S. Grindberg
Cass County Commission, Chair

ATTEST:

Brandy Madrigga
Cass County Finance Director

Board of County

Commissioners

Tony Grindberg

Duane Breitling

Tim Flakoll

Jim Kapitan

Joel Vettel



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March 11, 2025

Chairman Mark Weber
Members of Senate Finance & Tax Committee
North Dakota State Capitol
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505-0360

RE: HB 1575 & Legislation Generally Relating to Local Government Property Tax Caps

Chairman Weber and Members of the Senate Finance & Tax Committee:

Mr. Chairman, my name is Robert Wilson. I am the County Administrator in Cass County and I wish to address the committee related to this bill, and the overall concept of legislation related to property tax caps on local governments. My comments follow a resolution passed unanimously by the Cass County Commission on Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

Before addressing caps-related legislation let me be clear that Cass County supports legislative efforts to expand primary residence property tax relief to taxpayers in North Dakota.

Those of you who work with the Cass County Board know them to be a pragmatic, fiscally conservative Commission with a history of making wise spending decisions and a commitment to being good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

The average residential property in Cass County increased in value from \$244,000 in 2019 to \$317,000 in 2023, yet the corresponding average county residential tax only increased by \$20 a year over those five years.

I believe it's important to speak directly to a recent suggestion that Cass County is holding reserves in excess of \$100 million. This is simply not true. Cass County ended 2023 with an audited General Fund Balance of \$26.9 million. If requested, we will provide the 2024 audited General Fund Balance as soon as the audit is complete.

Cass County has the utmost respect for the difficult job you have this session with respect to property tax caps. But the County Board also has a difficult job that doesn't always fit nicely into a 3% - plus

growth box. We are a growing community - and providing adequate public safety demands that we build and fully staff a 192-bed addition onto our county jail. Had it not been for federal ARPA funds, providing for that project with a 3% tax cap and a 4-year opt-out option, would have been next to impossible. Just last month we displaced our County Information Technology office so we – at our expense – could add an additional secure courtroom for the East Central Judicial District.

Cass County respectfully requests you consider the following resolution as you consider property tax caps, ***‘allow growth to occur at the consumer price index plus 2% - not to exceed 6% or no less than 2%, and allow political subdivisions to also capture half of their percentage of annual growth in population from the previous year.’***

Sincerely,

Robert Wilson
Cass County Administrator



MEMO

TO: Cass County Commission
 FROM: Bob Henderson, IT Director
 DATE: 3/17/25
 SUBJECT: Legislative Update

Commissioners:

The legislative session has been robust. While not many bills directly impact IT, due to our support of numerous departments, there is a lot of spillover. The list below represents our main tracking points this session.

Bill #	Description	Status
HB1038	Replace Chinese Drones with American	Passed, amended, approp. Removed.
HB 1096	Increase 911 service fee to locals	Passed 3/12
HB1138	Election related staffing updates	Crossed over, unscheduled
HB1150	Bring back blue laws	Failed in house
HB1184	Pol subs investing in Bitcoin	Failed In house
HB1204	Include social media in publication limitations	Crossed over, scheduled 3/13
HB1239	Blockchain and digital assets laws	Failed in house
HB1259	Remove Daylight Savings Time	Crossed over, referred to committee, unscheduled.
HB1306	40 free hours on Open Records	Failed in House
HB1312	School/Park elections must fall with General elections	Failed in house
HB1320	DeepFake/AI Prohibition	Failed in House
HB1429	Using a robot to harass animals	Crossed over, referred to committee, unscheduled.
HB1441	Allow Bank of ND to invest in Digital Currencies	Crossed Over, Failed in senate
HB1448	Create Advanced Technology grant program	Crossed over, referred to committee, unscheduled.
HB1587	Electronic voting limitations	Failed in House
HB1572	PropTax statement changes and email statements	Crossed over, referred to committee, unscheduled.
HCR3022	Study to look at PolSubs investing in 'stablecoins'	Failed in house.
SB2021	NDIT budget for 25-27	Crossed over, In Approps 3/13
SB2166	Statewide Prop Tax Portal	Failed in Senate

Cass County Highway Department Legislative Bills

- SB2012
 - This bill is regarding the NDDOT proposed budget
 - Grant fund appropriations are the big thing we are watching
 - Flex Fund – State Grant
 - Last Biennium there was \$42 M for non-oil producing Counties/Twps. Roads and Bridges
 - We were awarded approx.. \$1.7 M
 - Bill is proposing \$56 M for non-oil producing Counties/Twp. Roads and Bridges
 - Bill is also proposing two additional buckets
 - \$56 M for County and Twp Bridges
 - This will be big for our C31 bridge reconstruction
 - \$28 M for County and City Formula Distributions
 - Would ultimately provide an additional \$98 M in grant opportunities
 - TA/HSIP/SRF Grants – State Grant
 - Extra dollars will be added to these grants
 - Grant application requirement will be opened more to accept more types of projects
 - We have received all these grants in the past
 - 2/24 – passed Senate – 47 Yea / 0 Nay
 - 3/10 – House Appropriation Hearings
 - All positive feedback/In Favor
- HB1382
 - This is the Gas Tax Bill
 - This bill will increase Hwy Dist Fund by Approx. \$2.8 M
 - 2/19 – Passed House – 58 Yea / 35 Nay
 - Nothing Furter after crossover
- Others with no financial impact
 - SB2317 – Zoning Management Control – process for twp to regain zoning control
 - SB2027 – Floodplain Management Control – process for twp to regain floodplain management
 - HB1444- Counties ability to take over Twp roads



**Cass County Recorder
Deborah A. Moeller**

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MEMO

TO: Cass County Commission
 FROM: Deb Moeller, Cass County Recorder
 DATE: March 14, 2025
 SUBJECT: Recorder 2025 Legislation Tracking

As the Cass County Recorder and a member of the Legislation Committee of the North Dakota County Recorders Association (NDCRA), I have been tracking the following bills:

BILL NO.	BILL NAME	ACTION	STATUS
Active Bills			
SB2259	Repeal NDCC 44-04-16 related to providing blanks and records	Senator Lee (and others) agreed to sponsor this bill on behalf of the NDCRA so recorders aren't compelled to provide blank legal documents to the general public for recording in our offices. I submitted written testimony in support.	2/4 passed Senate 2/18 referred to House Political Subdivision
SB2127	Uniform Electronic Estate Planning Documents Act	Emailed UND Professor Bradley Myers regarding potential recording issue with current language regarding persons who may certify papered-out copies. Oral testimony submitted by NDCRA who worked with Professor Myers on amended language.	1/16 Passed Senate 3/13 House Judiciary amended and recommended do pass
HB1259	Enact new section to NDCC chapter 1-08 relating to requirement to observe standard time year round	NDCRA monitoring as this would affect recording software.	1/28 passed House 2/13 referred to Senate State & Local Gov.
HB1555	Enact new section to NDCC chapter 54-09 relating to statements of ownership filed with the secretary of state	NDCRA monitoring this foreign ownership bill to make sure recorders aren't brought in to report in some way.	2/18 passed House 2/20 referred to State & Local Gov. 3/20 hearing at 10:45

Bills Passed by Senate & House			
SB2356	Amend and reenact NDCC 47-19-03.1 relating to contents of a legal description for a deed and a contract for deed	NDCRA met with reps from The Title Team to work on acceptable amending language so this did not impact previously conveyed legal descriptions.	2/13 passed Senate w/ amendment 3/13 passed House
SB2152	Amend and reenact NDCC 11-18-02.2 relating to statements of full consideration	NDCRA is monitoring as recorders would need to educate deed submitters of removal of exemption j. related to less than 80 acres of ag land.	1/28 passed Senate 3/11 passed House
SB2175	Amend and reenact NDCC 16.1-06-15 relating to conducting and reporting post-election audits	NDCRA monitored as recorders would need to release secured ballots for the audit.	1/28 passed Senate 3/13 passed House
SB2150	Amend NDCC relating to corporate or LLC farming & ranching	NDCRA monitored to make sure recorders weren't brought in to report in some way.	1/30 passed Senate 3/11 passed House
Failed or Withdrawn Bills			
HB1306	Amend and reenact NDCC 44-04-18 relating to fees assessed for open records requests	I submitted oral testimony opposing due to increased resources required to provide 40 free hours per ND citizen per year for open records requests.	2/17 failed on House floor
SB2026	Enact new section to NDCC chapters 11-18 & 54-09 relating to foreign grantee's right to own property and filing of foreign ownership info statement	I submitted oral testimony opposing due to staff hours needed to reject non-compliant deeds, lack of clarity in bill language, recording step as being too late to prevent a sale; issues related to unwinding a completed sale.	1/20 failed on Senate floor
HB1271	Amend and reenact NDCC 11-18-02.2 relating to statements of full consideration	NDCRA monitored as recorders would need to educate deed submitters of removal of exemption h. related to quit claim deeds.	1/31 failed on House floor
HB1208 SB2314 SB2337	All foreign ownership bills.	NDCRA monitored to make sure recorders weren't brought in to report in some way.	HB withdrawn and SB failed on floor



North Dakota Legislative Session Update – Gail Bollinger, Director

From the perspective of Cass Human Service Zone, the following bills are of particular interest:

- **HB 1012** – A bill appropriating funds for various divisions of the Department of Health and Human Services, including the 19 Human Service Zone budgets. Currently in Senate Appropriation – Human Resource Division.
- **HB 1072** – A bill amending sections of the North Dakota Century Code related to foster care homes for children and adults. Testimony was provided in support. Passed House and Senate. Sent to the Governor.
- **HB 1095** – A bill creating a new section in the North Dakota Century Code related to child protective services liaisons in school districts. Schools would have an active role in the CPS assessment process, yet Zones are legally responsible for this duty. Require Zones to train schools and new personnel with no fiscal note to do, would be a significant impact on our Team. Testimony provided in opposition. Passed the House. Senate Human Services Committee Hearing 3/10.
- **HB 1268** – A bill requiring mandatory drug testing of parents prior to unsupervised visits by Human Service Zones. Testimony was provided in opposition. Current practice allows for drug testing on a case-by-case basis as needed. The Department has drafted a preliminary policy. Fiscal impact and legal concerns. Passed House 62/23. Hearing Senate Human Services 3/5.
- **HB 1556** – A bill related to the relinquishment of parental rights of adoptive parents. Amended to allow all parents to terminate under sever circumstances. Testimony was provided in opposition. Seeks to expand the definition of a Child in Need of Protective Services (CHIPS). Potential significant impact on Child Welfare. Passed House. Currently Senate Human Services.
- **SB 2112** – A bill amending multiple sections of the North Dakota Century Code concerning the Life Skills and Transition Center. This bill stems from a position letter submitted by NDHSZDA to the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, emphasizing concerns regarding youth with complex needs and the urgent need for solutions. Testimony was provided in support. Passed the Senate 29/17. House Human Services Hearing 3/18.

As a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director's Association (NDHSZDA) I actively engage in the legislative session, tracking bills and resolutions, providing testimony, and ensuring potential impacts on Zone services and constituents are addressed.

This session, the Association has refined its tracking process for greater efficiency. A rotating team of directors is present at the Capitol each week to deliver testimony and be available for questions. Additionally, a weekly Friday call is held to review progress and prepare for the upcoming week. A Bill Tracker, updated nightly, has been an effective tool for coordinating efforts, consolidating information, and ensuring alignment in testimony.