



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Minnesota Secretary of State
Steve Simon

February 15, 2022

State Government Finance and Policy and Elections Committee
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Members:

I am writing today to express my concerns with Senate File 2956.

Senate File 2956 requires that for all elections every ballot, except those returned by UOCAVA voters, must include a watermark. Absentee ballot boards would then be required to inspect each ballot for this watermark during the opening of envelopes. If the ballot does not contain a watermark, it must not be counted and would be marked as spoiled.

This bill would significantly increase costs for local jurisdictions. One of the state's largest printers of ballots has indicated that adding a traditional watermark would increase the cost of each ballot 10 to 15 times what it costs today. There may be other ways to add an identifying mark to the paper that are not a traditional watermark and would have lower costs, such as ultraviolet markings. Such markings would still have additional costs and it is unclear under the current bill if such markings would meet the watermark requirement. In addition, it is unknown how watermarks would interact with currently certified ballot tabulation equipment.

Minnesota currently has systems in place to ensure that only official ballots are tabulated and that the number of ballots tabulated corresponds to the number of eligible voters who participated in the election. Absentee ballot boards ensure this metric is kept from the time they accept an absentee ballot (by matching it to an application), to opening ballots (ensuring the number of signature envelopes match the number of ballots removed), to the tabulation process (which checks that the total accepted ballots match the total ballots removed from envelopes - and finally that those two numbers match the number of ballots tabulated). Those systems, and the thousands of non-partisan local election officials who administer them in counties and cities throughout Minnesota, have served us exceedingly well for decades. Our voter participation is the highest in the nation, reflecting extraordinary voter confidence in the integrity of our elections.

I respectfully urge members to vote no Senate File 2956.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Simon".

Steve Simon
Minnesota Secretary of State