



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Minnesota Secretary of State
Steve Simon

March 22, 2022

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

Dear Members:

I am writing today to share concerns with portions of SF3469.

While I have real concerns about the burden this bill will place on local election officials, I understand that Senator Kiffmeyer has been in touch with local election administrators on the feasibility of many portions of the bill and would point members to their feedback first.

Our chief concern with this bill is the privacy ramifications resulting from livestreaming absentee ballot drop boxes and absentee ballot board procedures. Additionally, standing up and maintaining this level of livestreaming would be logistically challenging for local administrators. This bill presumes a level of technological infrastructure that many municipalities may not have. Finally, we have seen in other parts of the country how the livestreaming of proceedings can be manipulated and spliced to tell a false and misleading story. I understand the motivation is transparency; however, we should look for other ways to let the public further into our voting process and take advantage of the many ways that the public can already observe the rigorous checks and balances built into our system.

Another component of the bill that gives me pause is the requirement in Section 3 that counties report the number of absentee ballots collected at absentee ballot drop boxes to the Secretary of State ahead of the State Canvassing Board. While this office is happy to report this statistical data, it would be more appropriate to include this statistical data in our overall absentee voting annual report that the Office submits to the legislature by January 15th of each odd year.

Finally, Section 4 of the bill would undo a Minnesota Supreme Court decision from last week that confirmed jurisdictions could continue to use deputy auditors, alongside election judges to conduct their absentee ballot boards. It is important for the integrity of our process that deputy auditors can continue to serve on ballot boards in a non-partisan manner rather than have to declare political party affiliation as an election judge.

I respectfully urge members to vote no on Senate File SF3469 at this time.

Sincerely,

Steve Simon
Minnesota Secretary of State