



March 11, 2024

Dear Chair Dziedzic and members of the Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the League of Minnesota Cities to provide comments on SF 4039, which would require that cities administering absentee balloting transition to a “.gov” domain. Recognizing the costs and associated challenges of this requirement, we are appreciative of Senator Westlin’s amendment in the Senate Elections Committee to extend the deadline for this transition to June 1, 2028 if a city has applied for the domain by June 1, 2026.

In recent years the League has been encouraging cities to make the switch to “.gov” domains and, when possible, assisting them through the process. This can be daunting for smaller cities that likely do not have dedicated web management staff and need to contract their web provider to make the transition. This can be fairly costly, particularly if the given city is migrating a large amount of content to the new domain and/or transitioning their email systems to the new domain, which many cities will opt to do for consistency. While a website migration may seem straightforward, the migration of both website and email is often more complicated and costly.

Of the cities that administer absentee balloting, there are 51 that currently do not have a “.gov” domain, though some are currently in the process of transitioning. For these 51 cities, the majority are under 5,000 in population and would need to account for staffing costs, paying their website provider, and updating other city materials and communications potentially including email systems. We would also note that the “.gov” domain has not been consistently available—up until January of this year, a temporary pause was in place on issuing any new “.gov” domains.

Because of these potential challenges and costs with this requirement, we appreciate the extended deadline for cities to budget for and accomplish this transition and thank Senator Westlin for her time in discussing how this proposal would impact cities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Hassel".

Alex Hassel
League of Minnesota Cities

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Lightfoot".

Daniel Lightfoot
League of Minnesota Cities