

Chair Crabtree and other members of the Senate State Affairs Committee-

I write to you in opposition to HB 1200. One of South Dakota's proudest achievements is serving as the birthplace of the initiative and referendum process on a statewide basis. Our state has a great tradition of citizen initiatives through direct ballot action. It is the essence of democracy.

I have been active in South Dakota government for many years. From my time as Chief of Staff to Governor Janklow in the 1990's to my own time in the South Dakota Senate (2003 to 2010), a hallmark of South Dakota State government has been a commitment to importance of our citizens and their wishes. We should be enhancing the opportunities for direct democracy by our voters not restricting them.

HB 1200 would seek to burden the initiative process by imposing a geographic diversity requirement. It is not clear what state interest is achieved by the geographic diversity requirement not is it clear why geographic diversity is special and privileged compared to other type of possible diversity mandates such as racial, gender or occupational ( for example a prorated share of agricultural producers).

The absence of a clear and compelling state interest in this type of diversity mandate strongly suggests that it raises serious constitutional issues and is likely to be challenged and overturned as has recently occurred with regard to initiative filing deadlines.

Dave Knudson, Self, Sioux Falls