

Written Testimony To
THE HOUSE FINANCE AND TAXATION COMMITTEE
January 19, 2021
By Michael Montplaisir, Cass County Finance Director
Cass County Government

REGARDING HOUSE BILL 1200

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee, I am Michael Montplaisir, Cass County Finance Director. House Bill 1200 puts artificial restriction of 2% on the dollar amount of growth in property taxes levied and attempts to overrule local needs and local citizen approved home rule charters.

Cass County has been a model of efficient use of tax dollars and in collaborating with other local units of government to provide services to hold down not only Cass County's tax levy but other units of government as well. Some of our cooperative efforts to hold down the property tax dollars of Cass County and other local units of government are:

Red River Regional Dispatch Center that covers not only Cass County but Clay County, Minnesota as well. Cass County pays all of the North Dakota costs for the dispatch center, most of it with 911 fees, but the county has to supplement that with general property tax dollars, \$708,000 for 2019, and it looks like about \$600,000 for 2020. Those are dollars that the City of Fargo and West Fargo do not have to levy since the county has taken on the funding for entire Cass County share of costs.

The Cass County Public Safety Communications System to bring our Sheriff, Police, Fire, Emergency Responders, and Public Works communications system up modern technology. Again, using property taxes - we believe it is cheaper for one entity to fund and coordinate the entire project. Our rural responders, fire, ambulance, and EMS units would probably not be able to afford to upgrade their systems without the county paying the cost.

The Career Workforce Academy, something that is a need to provide trained workers in a market that is desperate for them. Again, this a cooperative venture with other local units of government, the private sector, and hopefully the State of North Dakota.

The citizens of Cass County passed a Home Rule Charter in 1994 limiting Cass County levies to 75 Mills, the county has always been appreciative of that limit, which is much lower than other counties. The highest mill rate the county has approved since that time is 69 mills, since 2015 the mills levied has been less than 60 mills and since 2017 less than 50 mills. The county is being prudent with the authority granted by the citizens of Cass County.

An artificial percentage limit of growth of dollars levied does not work for a community with growing needs and costs. Please allow local governments to manage the one source of revenue they have. Our local governments have the best interests of their citizens at heart and provide the needed services that are vital to their communities.

I urge you to give a do not pass to HB 1200.