

**FISCAL NOTE**  
**Requested by Legislative Council**  
**03/24/2015**

Amendment to: SB 2054

- 1 A. **State fiscal effect:** *Identify the state fiscal effect and the fiscal effect on agency appropriations compared to funding levels and appropriations anticipated under current law.*

	2013-2015 Biennium		2015-2017 Biennium		2017-2019 Biennium	
	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds
Revenues						
Expenditures						
Appropriations						

- 1 B. **County, city, school district and township fiscal effect:** *Identify the fiscal effect on the appropriate political subdivision.*

	2013-2015 Biennium	2015-2017 Biennium	2017-2019 Biennium
Counties			
Cities			
School Districts			
Townships			

- 2 A. **Bill and fiscal impact summary:** *Provide a brief summary of the measure, including description of the provisions having fiscal impact (limited to 300 characters).*

Engrossed SB 2054 with House Amendments deals with the certificate of assessors and assessment technicians.

- B. **Fiscal impact sections:** *Identify and provide a brief description of the sections of the measure which have fiscal impact. Include any assumptions and comments relevant to the analysis.*

The cost to local governments for assessors to obtain certification with 180 hours of education as required by this bill is estimated to be \$5,500 per assessor. The overall fiscal impact cannot be determined because it is unknown what number of current assessor certificate holders will choose to meet the requirements.

3. **State fiscal effect detail:** *For information shown under state fiscal effect in 1A, please:*

- A. **Revenues:** *Explain the revenue amounts. Provide detail, when appropriate, for each revenue type and fund affected and any amounts included in the executive budget.*
- B. **Expenditures:** *Explain the expenditure amounts. Provide detail, when appropriate, for each agency, line item, and fund affected and the number of FTE positions affected.*
- C. **Appropriations:** *Explain the appropriation amounts. Provide detail, when appropriate, for each agency and fund affected. Explain the relationship between the amounts shown for expenditures and appropriations. Indicate whether the appropriation or a part of the appropriation is included in the executive budget or relates to a continuing appropriation.*

**Name:** Kathryn L. Strombeck

**Agency:** Office of Tax Commissioner

**Telephone:** 328-3402

**Date Prepared:** 03/25/2015

**FISCAL NOTE**  
**Requested by Legislative Council**  
**12/22/2014**

Amendment to: SB 2054

- 1 A. **State fiscal effect:** *Identify the state fiscal effect and the fiscal effect on agency appropriations compared to funding levels and appropriations anticipated under current law.*

	2013-2015 Biennium		2015-2017 Biennium		2017-2019 Biennium	
	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds
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SB 2054 creates one education and certificate level for all assessors and requires all assessors to be certified within two years of appointment or election. This bill proposes 180 hours of education be required to obtain an assessor certificate.

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The cost to local governments for assessors to obtain certification with 180 hours of education as required by this bill is estimated to be \$5,500 per assessor. The overall fiscal impact cannot be determined because it is unknown what number of current Class II Assessor Certificate holders will choose to remain an assessor with the increased education requirements.

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**Name:** Kathryn L. Strombeck

**Agency:** Office of Tax Commissioner

**Telephone:** 328-3402

**Date Prepared:** 01/08/2015

**FISCAL NOTE**  
**Requested by Legislative Council**  
**12/22/2014**

Bill/Resolution No.: SB 2054

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	2013-2015 Biennium		2015-2017 Biennium		2017-2019 Biennium	
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**Name:** Kathryn L. Strombeck

**Agency:** Office of Tax Commissioner

**Telephone:** 328-3402

**Date Prepared:** 01/08/2015

**2015 SENATE FINANCE AND TAXATION**

**SB 2054**

# 2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Finance and Taxation Committee**  
Lewis and Clark Room, State Capitol

SB2054  
1/13/2015  
Job Number 21875

- Subcommittee  
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

*Alicia Grove*

## Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Relating to training and certification of assessors; relating to the county director of tax equalization, state supervisor of assessments, and appointment of certified assessors; and to provide for transition.

## Minutes:

Attachments #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6

**Chairman Cook** opened the hearing on SB2054.

**Sen. Cook**, State Senator Dist. 34, Mandan introduces SB2054 and urges favorable approval. (**Attachment #1**)

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- We have lost a lot of township personnel in the last few years, just because of the sophistication of the systems that we use now. The use of private enterprise in the commercial valuation side, for instance Vanguard, is that going to continue to play a role, or with the training we're seeing here, are those types of activities going to be taken on by the counties and cities and not have to be privatized?

**Sen. Cook** -- I would hope that if we had well-trained assessors and the job was getting done throughout the state there would be less need for Vanguard type companies.

**Sen. Dotzenrod** -- With the benefit of having this system that should be more accurate, this cost will be put back on the counties. Is the proper response to say, if you want to do this right you're going to have to pay? Or, should the state say, we will provide some resources to help absorb the cost?

**Sen. Cook** -- I think we could have that conversation after we hear the counties testimony.

**John Walstad, Legislative Council** -- Reviews SB2054 for the committee.  
(**Attachment #2 - background information**)

**Sen. Oehlke** -- It was mentioned about private entities that provide assessor services to political subs, like Vanguard was the name mentioned. What are the requirements for

being a Vanguard assessor, or another group? How do we know if they have the 180 hours of training?

**John Walstad** -- The bill provides that anybody performing the assessment service has to meet these training requirements.

**Sen. Oehlke** -- Senator Bekkedahl does that coincide with your experience with Vanguard or whoever the city of Williston uses?

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- It does answer the question. The role that Vanguard has played in our county and city was to inspect and bring up to standards of assessment of all of our commercial properties. They did not do residential in our county or city. They probably have very high standards of training to do what they do. I don't know if it's 180 hours.

**Chairman Cook** -- Sen. Oehlke, Linda Leadbetter is the right person to answer that question.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- John, on page 3, line 17, any city or township that does not employ its own certified assessor shall reimburse the county for the expenses incurred in assessing the property of that city or township. In Williams County, city and county have a joint assessor. In the past, the city has contributed to the cost of that office. The townships and small cities have not contributed any costs. This language, shall, does that mean the counties no longer have that flexibility to dismiss charges for township assessing services or small city assessing services?

**John Walstad** -- I don't know if this is a change from what current law requires: that if the county provides assessment services to a township, the county can charge for that. This could be altered. Through a joint powers agreement, I would think that arrangements could be made. If you have an unorganized township, the county will be responsible for the costs anyway.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- I'd like to have us discuss some language there that either says, if determined by the county commissioners, shall be assessed; or may be assessed. On page 6, the certification of assessors, is there a fee for training? Is that provided by the state now, at no cost, and it's only a cost of transportation and salaries to the counties?

**John Walstad** -- Yes.

**Chairman Cook** -- Linda, I see the fiscal note makes a statement that, to obtain certification with 180 hours of education is required by this bill, is estimated at \$5,500/per assessment?

**Linda Leadbetter, State Supervisor of Assessments** -- I did not prepare written testimony.

Mr. Walstad said that currently tax directors are at that same 180 hours to be certified. Actually, tax directors are certified at 190 currently. City assessors are at 150.

**Chairman Cook** -- When a company like Vanguard is hired, what training requirements must they have before they can be employed?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- I would have to receive the bid proposals when they are presented to a county or city, because like receiving engineering proposals they will provide all the qualifications that they are generally appraisers. We have had a member of the Vanguard team being certified as a tax director. They are certified through the appraisal programs and they have those trainings.

**Chairman Cook** -- If a county is going to hire Vanguard, you are involved in the process? Do you have to approve it?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- No, we are not. Vanguard, and I believe there are others that meet those requirements. At the State Board of Equalization, we receive the assessments and make certain that they are, as a county, as a jurisdiction, within the tolerance levels, but we do not look at every individual parcel unless we have that brought to us for appeal.

**Sen. Triplett** -- With how this is drafted. It implies that each person has to have training in all of the different topics. If a county does have a particular issue regarding a particular kind of commercial property and wants that kind of professional outside help, you may find a company who has people with excellent training in a particular kind of commercial, industrial area but has never worked in the agricultural area. As drafted, a county would not be able to hire them because they hadn't had classes in agricultural property valuation even though they may be world-case experts on commercial or industrial. Would you recommend that we parse this out to make sure that the counties can get that kind of private help when they need it on a case-by-case basis?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- That had not been considered when we were looking at the contracts and I do believe that would be something that we should look into, as far as language.

**Sen. Triplett** -- When I served as a county commissioner in Grand Forks, we had one situation where we did that. We had a dispute with a large property owner and we ended up agreeing with the property owner on a particular firm out of Minneapolis that had speciality in the type of business that they were. It allowed us to resolve a problem where we were so far apart.

**Sen. Lappen** -- I sat on this interim committee, but I don't remember any discussion of how you get this training. Do we have training in all cities across the state, or is it just here in Bismarck? Can you get a certificate in another state? Does it transfer?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- I will answer that and ask property tax specialist Kim Vietmeier to join me to share some of the details we have worked out with that. Currently, the majority of those that are trained tax directors do come to Bismarck for that training. We currently offer 3 classes a year. They will come to Bismarck and be here for the full week for the training. There are other opportunities online through other specified appraisals: the International Association of Assessing Officers have online training. They also offer courses in different states across the United States that allow them to have the same education requirements that are available through the State Tax Department. We find that

we are losing assessors or tax directors because they step into a position it's 6 months before they would be able to receive those basics of training on measuring houses, on valuing homes, commercial property. We have mapped out something that would provide North Dakota specific training. We are developing a webinar that will be used to train them on North Dakota specific forms that are not necessarily related to assessing but are related to completing the functions of their job. We do have online courses, the training here in Bismarck, and then webinar opportunities that we are creating to meet these requirements.

**Sen. Laffen** -- That's roughly 5 weeks then of training. Do people come to Bismarck for 5 weeks in a row?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- What we are proposing is that the initial first 50 hours would be online training. Currently, with the 190, they do come to Bismarck for a week at a time. But it has been spread out over a time period. The other courses will be offered in Bismarck and then there are other opportunities for them to do them online. In order to be certified they would have to be in Bismarck or travel somewhere for those 3 courses.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** --- When you talk about certified appraisers, are the certified appraisers, do they meet and/or exceed the standards set for the training right now that you have for assessors?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- Yes, I believe, but I would have to be sure that I could provide that to you with numbers. But, to become a certified appraiser there are different levels of that.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- With this type of legislation, is there standards set forth or will there be standards set forth somewhere that counties have to have in their proposals from private industry assistance that make sure that they at least meet or exceed the standards that we have for the public officials in assessing or appraising?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- I will say that, from our discussions on this from the beginning and meeting with assessment officials, they felt very strongly about earning the respect and being at that level of appraisers and that they would want to have their positions seen as having worked as hard and had as many hours to be certified to earn it.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- My concern is that the county doesn't get into the position where they hire somebody with lower standards than we expect from our own trained personnel within the system. You say you have no oversight of that process once it's turned over to the counties and I want to make sure that they need to employ or hire somebody with the standard capabilities that we expect from them.

**Linda Leadbetter** -- I do believe that in the research when we were doing this that we found that any individual that was a certified appraiser was at a higher education standard than what we have & what we are proposing. We could include that in this to make sure that we know that those standards are always being met.

**Terry Traynor, Assistant Director, North Ddakota Association of Counties** -- I'd like to speak on behalf of our county officials regarding SB2054. **(Attachment #3)**

**Chairman Cook** -- Terry, what did you indicate that it might cost a county for one Assessor?

**Terry Traynor** -- Based on a few comments we received from counties that have recently hired, \$50,000 - \$70,000, with benefits.

**Chairman Cook** -- It appears to me that there's a pretty good opportunity here for someone to spend \$5,500 to \$6,000 in education costs to get a job that pays \$50,000 to \$70,000. We have a lot of kids going to college, paying a lot more than that, that pays a lot less.

**Terry Traynor** -- That's everything: your health insurance, your retirement, your office supplies. That's the budget.

**Sen. Dotzenrod** -- I want to understand how this system works right now and what's wrong with it; why there needs to be some work done. The Director of Tax Equalization in that county, and as long as everything has to flow through that one person, essentially all the assessments are being approved. It seems you've got a system out there now where everything that goes on in that county goes through a process where it is approved by that one person who is highly trained. It seems to me we're building in a lot of costs into something that's just legwork. Is there really needed for a lot of the work that is currently being done?

**Terry Traynor** -- I don't work in the system either but there are people behind me that do and I'm hoping that they will answer your question with greater clarity. The feeling among our county officials is that it isn't working that well. The relationship of the county director of tax equalization to local assessors when they are appointed, is a little bit different than is commonly understood. That assessor is working for their township board. They establish the assessment, if they are the assessor. The role of the director of tax equalization is not to reassess that property. It is to determine if it's equalized across the county when it gets there.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- On page 3, would this help your situation from the county's perspective, if we changed the language that said: any city or township that does employ its own certified assessor, if determined by the county commission, shall reimburse the county. It puts the burden of that determination on the county commission and the townships are not allowed to say "no we're not going to pay".

**Terry Traynor** -- I would have no objection to that change.

**Shawn Goettle, Assistant City Attorney, City of Minot** -- Kevin Ternes couldn't be here today and he asked me to provide his written testimony. ( **Attachment #4**) He is support of SB2054.

**Allan Vietmeier, Burleigh County Tax Director (Attachment #5)**  
Recommends a do pass.

**Sen Dotzenrod** -- Those situations where you get work that isn't complete or they just refuse to do the work, under those conditions can you tell these people that I can't accept

that work and I'm going to have to hire somebody to do it or you're going to have to go back and do it. Or do you have to accept this? You have no choice?

**Allan Vietmeier** -- That is the case when we did the reassessment in Apple Creek Township. That's what we found was the issue. It cost that township \$150,000. We ordered a reassessment. The township chose to hire Vanguard on their own. But we do have that authority.

**Sen. Triplett** -- From your perspective, would it be a better system if we provided in law that the assessing function was a county function and not a township function?

**Allan Vietmeier** -- Absolutely. I think it should be a county function.

**Sen. Dotzenrod** -- You mentioned that you've got a lot of parcels. If we pass this bill and the local assessors are gone, do you envision then that you will be hiring some people?

**Allan Vietmeier** -- Currently, I have 2 full-time appraisers that work in our office. Myself and 2 others. Yes, we would have to add at least 1 more staff member. We do all of the ag land assessments in our county now. When we give them to the townships, we say this is what your ag land assessments should be. Look them over, but call us before you make any changes.

**Gary Emter, Mercer County Director of Tax Equalization** --I am in favor of SB2054. I have more comments than direct testimony. We don't have any township assessors in Mercer County. The county has been taking care of those ever since the soil survey went into effect. We do have 6 cities, all under population of 5,000. So, if this bill does pass I am sure that those who are paying \$500/year now to have their assessments done aren't going to look at spending the kind of money it would take for an individual be trained up to that 150 or 190 hours. It's just not in their budget. If the money comes from the state, that would certainly be helpful. I don't expect the state to pick up the entire tab on this but I think we're going in the right direction when we're looking at a bill such as this. We will have to hire more people because, out of those 6 cities, 7,000 parcels are what we're going to be looking at. I am the only assessment official in the county right now. The State Tax Department, especially the Property Tax Department, has a lot of individuals working in the assessment area, also. Are those individuals going to be held to the same standard that the tax directors are then?

**Sen. Triplett** -- Give us a brief history of how it came to pass that the townships doing their own assessing in Mercer County.

**Gary Emter** -- Yes. I've been there for 37 years and we've had no organized townships at that time. It has been a very long time since any of those have been organized.

**Chairman Cook** -- Has Ken Folley retired now?

**Larry Syverson, North Dakota Township Officers Association (Attachment #6)**  
Asks for a do not pass recommendation.

**Sen. Triplett** -- Can you respond to Mr. Vietmeier's concerns that for a county tax director to deal with an obstinate township where the assessments just are not getting done, without having to go the route of calling someone in and making a really big production, how could we go about improving the relationships between counties and those recalcitrant townships without doing something this extreme?

**Larry Syverson** -- I am also an assessor. In a lot of cases the assessors out in the field are the result of the training they have gotten and that is the responsibility of the director. Years ago they may not have gotten very good training. I don't believe that, in most of the cases, you have people that are that obstinate and hard-nosed to deal with. There is an oath that you sign when you turn in your assessment book and they should be reminded that it is an oath. I can't defend somebody that is doing illegal work.

**Kristy Reinke**, Ransom County Tax Director -- My comments are about the assessing that is going in our area. We have had quite a time in our county. We started with not such a great relationship between assessors and the tax director. I felt that the tax director is a leader, in effect, of the assessors. When they are not doing something right, I feel that it is my responsibility to say something and to make adjustments. There's been many times when we have just gone ahead and gone out and made corrections which has not been so well received by the supervisors or the assessor of that township. But it does correct the problem in the long-run. Right now, we have everybody on board. There is still work to be done. I try to keep the line of communication open with our assessors. There are times when we've had to push the envelope and had to finish the work and charge the local jurisdiction. I would like to see local assessors still in their role. We have 24 townships. Our office does half of them right now. Local assessors can get out and do some of the legwork that our office can't get out and do. When they gather this information they bring in into our office and we input it into a CAMAS system, which is the computer assisted mass appraisal. Which then, in turn, helps equalize the valuations within the county. The cost that is going to be incurred for these local townships to send an assessor is something they won't be able to afford it. I and the county commissioners also like to see the relationship and it gives the local residents a voice in the process.

**Chairman Cook** -- Kristy Reinke, you've got 190 hours of training. How long have you been the assessor?

**Kristy Reinke** -- I started in the tax director's office in 2006 and I became tax director in 2009.

**Chairman Cook** -- Did you have your 190 hours when you became the tax director, or did you get it afterwards?

**Kristy Reinke** -- Yes, I did. The previous tax director was retiring so I was groomed into the spot.

**Sen. Dotzenrod** -- If we pass this bill and those township assessors that are out there, they drop out and they don't get the training, then will you have any additional problems, or how will it affect the work that you need to do without those local assessors out there? Is it

going to result in extra cost for you, or can you manage with the people you have and the help from those local assessors?

**Kristy Reinke** -- We are a one & a half staff person office. We anticipate that if we lose our assessors that we are going to have to hire an additional person. So we will be a 3 man office to try to keep up with everything.

**Chairman Cook** -- Do you have property cards for all property right now?

Kristy Reinke -- We do, I am happy to say.

**Chairman Cook** -- Congratulatio.

**Sen Triplett** -- Instead of demanding that all of the local folks have the same level of training that you do, not require that their training be increased as substantially as we are proposing here but instead alter the lines of authority so that the information that they provide for you is information that you could use in making the assessment. They still do the legwork, but you as the county tax director, have the final authority on assessments as opposed to the individual township board of supervisors, would that be preferable to you or would that be a whole different can of worms that you would want us to avoid?

**Kristy Reinke** -- We would prefer to see that. We do not have the funds to hire the staff that would be needed to take care of the whole county. I would prefer to work with local assessors to some extent. I believe that as tax director, it's my responsibility to monitor those assessors. I don't believe that they turn in a value to me and that I have to take this 100%. That's why we have our CAMAS system. That's why we watch this.

**Chairman Cook** -- I think the relationship that you have with your county commission and the willingness of them to stand behind you, I don't think it exists in a lot of other counties. You should be commended.

**Randy Kapp, Assessor for Williams Township in Kidder County.** We are a small rural area. I've been an assessor for 30+ years in our township. I can relate to some of the problems that some of these people are saying around the larger city areas, but in the small rural areas, they are primarily ag land and I have maybe 2 houses that I have determine the value on. Our ag land values, since they've gone to the soil surveys type based evaluations, that's all taken care of. To require all the rural assessors to take on this extra training is going to deter a lot of them from wanting to do it. And you are going to eliminate a lot of those people. Originally, I was elected an assessor and that was it and I didn't have to do any training. In the last number of years the requirements have gone up for the training of your local assessors. Now it's 24 hours, plus every year you have to do an additional 4 hours. I feel for the rural areas that is adequate. I've seen a lot of change in our county and as long as you have your director who has had this 190 hours of training, who knows what's going on, he looks at all these values and people come and talk to him too, if they have a problem.. Perhaps this could be split some way. You have your class 1 and class 2 districts. Maybe there should be a split in there somehow. I don't feel that smaller rural areas have these issue that some of these people have talked about.

**Loren Dewitz** -- It's not apples to apples. I'm sure there are way more parcels in Gibbs Township than in the entire 50 townships in Kidder County. I served on the tax advisory board when we went from what it was into productivity for the ag land and we did dump a lot of work on some of these assessors. In Westford Township we have one hunting shack. The rest is all ag property and some of the assessors are saying this is a little bit of overkill here. Why do I need training in commercial and residential when all I'm going to do is ag? One of the questions that came up: is there is a testing process? Just because you take 100 hours of training, do you know what you're doing? If I and Senator Dotzenrod both take 100 hours he's probably gonna know what's going on and I'm gonna be sitting there saying, what happened? Should there be a testing process and, if so, can some of these older assessors take that test and if they pass it, are they qualified? That is just a couple of comments that the assessors had.

**Chairman Cook** -- That is a hundred dollar question on a lot of things. I agree for the concept of test for knowledge rather than measure by hours of school.

No further testimony opposed to SB2054.

**Chairman Cook** -- One thing that didn't get mentioned a lot in this hearing is the word uniformity and I think it is one of the biggest challenges we have, especially in ag property. Taxes are to be uniform and assessments are supposed to uniform too.

Chairman Cook closed the hearing on SB2054.

# 2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Finance and Taxation Committee**  
Lewis and Clark Room, State Capitol

SB2054  
1/13/2015  
Job #21920

- Subcommittee  
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

*Emmery Brothers*

## Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Committee Work to discuss SB 2054.

## Minutes:

Attachments: n/a

**Chairman Cook** -- Is there anyone who thinks there needs to be some amendments to the bill before they would consider supporting it?

**Sen. Oehlke** -- The Ramsey County assessor was here and indicated after the meeting that the idea of having the assessor do the assessing is one thing but he didn't know if it was necessary for the people gathering the information for the assessor to make the call on what the property should be assessed for. If they are making the call, they should necessarily have the same amount of training as the assessor. I don't know any business that has the same level of certification from the bottom up. Can we have some discussion on this?

**Chairman Cook** -- Every piece of property in North Dakota is supposed to have a property card which is kept either in the city or in the county tax equalization office. I've had an instance where someone, who I doubt was a certified assessor, came into my home and took data and took it back and update my property card. Maybe we need to have a better understanding of how they do work because I think they utilize those people (uncertified assessors) right now. I agree that they shouldn't have to.

**Sen. Oehlke:** I wouldn't doubt that a likely resource to gather that type of information would be students. I think they are capable and they probably don't need the 180 hours of training to be a certified assessor. There needs to be a way to ensure that these people can work if there's a need for them and from the way the bill sits right now, I'm afraid that this might not be allowed.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- That was my concern. Is there any place in here that does not allow our assessor to hire technicians to go out and just gather information without the training?

**Sen. Lappen** -- What's the problem that we are trying to solve? I heard a lot of testimony that there are county assessors or city assessors but the issue seems to be in the smaller, rural areas where townships are trying to do the assessing. Have we considered saying, "you need a central county assessor" or does that go too far? Is this really going to solve the issue?

**Chairman Cook** -- It was not our intent to eliminate township assessors but it will certainly be a consequence that a lot of assessors will go away. But there is also the opportunity for somebody to get certified through the 180 hours of training and be the assessor for hire in multiple townships.

**Sen. Lappen** -- So this is a kinder gentler step in saying, "let's put some more requirements to it," and the people who are serious will go get the training and this will weed out the weaker ones?

**Chairman Cook** -- Over the years, I've heard more conversations from township assessors regarding problems that exist. And the township assessors have stood at the podium that want to do it right but answer to a township board that won't let them do it right.

**Sen. Triplett** -- When I was a county commissioner, we had a 2 year long dispute with one of the townships in our county where the assessor lived on the west side of the township and she took good care of the people she was related to on the west side of the township at the expense of the people on the east side of the township. This caused the people to take legal steps to split the township in two.

**Sen. Lappen** -- For a state that relies on property tax as its primary tax, it seems to me that each county should have a central assessor that is responsible for that county and all the employees that assess in that county.

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- If you want a pilot project to consider, Williams County has all 57 of its organized townships under the central county system along with the city of Williston which partners with the county for central assessment. It has worked remarkably well for the county. They didn't centralize to get rid of the township assessors but they did it to stabilize and equalize the system so everyone was treated fairly.

**Sen. Triplett** -- I have a question for Sen. Bekkedahl, was that done by joint powers agreements with the townships or was it done unilaterally by the county commission?

**Sen. Bekkedahl** -- I don't know the process the county went through to do it, I know they dealt with the city with a joint powers agreement.

**Chairman Cook** -- The one thing I have seen was a township assessors' assessment package that went to the county. He made reference in the written report to the "good neighbor clause," which basically was, if you're a good neighbor, we're going to assess your property a little less.

**Sen. Dotzenrod** -- It seems like we are trying to get the county assessment that would work in these larger metropolitan areas to fit the rural counties with one set of rules. I can

see some problems in requiring all these people to get that training in many subdivisions of state where it wouldn't be needed.

**Chairman Cook** -- This bill came out of an interim committee and it was written by the county tax equalization officers. I think if you are going to have a township assessor out there in these rural areas doing his assessing, he needs to take his work to the county tax equalization officer.

**Sen. Triplett** -- There needs to be a clear line of authority so that the responsibility lies with the county director of tax equalization. Certainly, if that person wants to hire some of the people who have long term experience to do some of the leg work, it could be done. They would have to be county employees and they would ultimately answer to the director of tax equalization and they would no longer answer to the township board. That is the only way it would work.

**Sen. Lappen** is going to have a conversation with Linda Leadbetter, State Supervisor of Assessments, to draft amendments.

**Chairman Cook** -- Closed the hearing.

# 2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Finance and Taxation Committee  
Lewis and Clark Room, State Capitol

SB2054  
2/11/2015  
Job #23623

- Subcommittee  
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature



## Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Committee work.

## Minutes:

Attachment #1

**Chairman Cook** opened the committee work on SB2054. We heard this a month ago. January 13<sup>th</sup>. It deals with local tax assessors. Increases their training requirements. Does everybody remember what the bill does? Anybody have any amendments?

**Senator Bekkedahl** -- I don't have any amendments but I want to bring to the committee's attention the part of the discussion that I noted and (1) was the issue of allowing technicians to still do field work. Senator Oehlke, I believe you talked about that. (2) Was on page 3, line 17, paragraph 3, any city or township that does not employ its own certified assessor, shall reimburse the county for the expenses. My discussion was could we insert language that says, if determined by the county commission, because I know some county commissions don't require that reimbursement. I wanted to leave some local decision there, if we could.

**Senator Oehlke** -- In reviewing the bill in total, I don't see where an assessor couldn't use data gatherers or technicians. I don't believe it would take an amendment to allow them to do that. It's just that the assessor has to do the work.

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- I did have some amendments prepared that create this technician assessor position and put them back in the bill and their work is subject to the approval of the county director of tax equalization. **(Attachment #1)**

**Chairman Cook** -- I'd like to do one thing, I'd like to ask Linda Leadbetter to come down, after she has had time to review these amendments, and speak to them, as to whether they are needed or not. Is that all right?

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- Yes, that's fine. I did visit with her about this and told her what I would like to see happen. Her only concern at that time was she wanted to make sure that the people who are out in the field, these assessors, understand that this is not just

something that you do for 2 months out of the year. Assessing is a process that really requires some attention to stay with it.

**Chairman Cook** -- We will make sure that she has a chance to review the amendments. We will have her come down here and speak to them and then we will take action on it.

**Chairman Cook** closed the committee work on SB2054.

# 2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Finance and Taxation Committee  
Lewis and Clark Room, State Capitol

SB2054  
2/16/2015  
Job #23924

- Subcommittee  
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

*Alice Groves*

## Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Committee work

## Minutes:

Attachment #1, #2

**Chairman Cook** opened the committee work on SB2054.

**Chairman Cook** -- Somebody raised the question that we wanted to have Linda Leadbetter answer. Was that you, Senator Oehlke?

**Senator Oehlke** -- I think the main question I had was, under the bill the way it is currently written, can a county assessor have someone collecting data for them that is not a full blown assessor?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- Can I ask you to specify if you are asking as the law stands now, or are you are saying with the amendments proposed?

**Senator Oehlke** -- We haven't amended anything yet. I guess I'd say as the original 3000 version. There is a 03001 Christmas version. I don't know if that would change it, as such. What I was wondering about is, could you have me go out and measure a building for you and I give you that information and you put it into the formula, because you're the assessor. You are the one doing the work. Can you have someone out there just gathering information for you?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- Yes, even currently, that would be acceptable. The tax director or the certified assessor, whichever qualification that individual has maintained, they would be able to have individuals support that function by being data gatherers. They would have basic training on how to measure the buildings, what types of pictures they are looking for. Those sorts of things.

**Chairman Cook** -- With no requirement for 160 hours of training?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- That would be correct.

**Chairman Cook** -- So when Mandan had to reevaluate every piece of property, they could have had the data collectors go out and take the measurements of the homes, etc.

**Linda Leadbetter** -- They did have those that were not certified assessors gathering information for them and then the values were placed by the certified assessors.

**Senator Oehlke** -- So that is the way it is now, and these two versions whether amended and/or the 3000 version would treat that similar?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- From what I see, I do not see that it would change any of that. The Christmas tree version is basically allowing for that but I do have some concerns with timelines that are created with that new version.

**Chairman Cook** -- Senator Dotzenrod, you introduced the amendments 03001. What I am hearing Linda say is those amendments are not needed to accomplish what you are trying to accomplish. **(Attachment #1)**

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- I think what she is saying is that under the law that we used for the last 20 years, you could hire extra people. Under the law that came out of the interim committee, you could hire extra people. Under the provision of the amended version that I have prepared, you could hire extra people. What the amendments do is to give the authority of law to a person who is a local assessor who has some training for that position and has the requirements for retraining to hold on to that position that would be in the century code.

**Linda Leadbetter** -- Yes, they would be. They would be an appointee. I believe the majority of them are appointed assessors

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- I think they represent the interest of the township. They represent what they feel is fair and reasonable for their township and they take a certain amount of ownership and pride in what they think is appropriate and then they bring that to the assessment process and are prepared to defend the work that they have done.

**Chairman Cook** -- What are your concerns with these amendments? You had some concerns with dates?

**Linda Leadbetter** -- When I read the amendments that are proposed when we are looking at this I completely support the fact that a good local assessor is very important. What I find in here, I believe that the law that we currently have, where we maintain those individual assessors, allows for that timeline to work the way that it is intended because within this process here, we have the assessment technicians gathering all of the information. So to understand the timeline, by the second Wednesday in February, the assessment is provided to all the local assessors, 15 days prior to those local boards of equalization, the individual that had a notice of increase, they have to have received it by then. If we are talking February 12, February 15, when those assessors have that information, and in order to have a notice of increase out 15 days prior to the local boards of equalization which is either the second Monday or second Tuesday of April and then

requiring that the tax director then reviews and approves all those assessments prior to being able to being able to achieve that, that's where I find the problem. (meter7:00-7:49).

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- What's changed in these amendments, from current practice, sounds like those assessors can do their work and they can have their work stand through that April meeting and it wouldn't be reviewed or challenged or anything until later on. Under current system, there is no challenge. These are final, after they get past that April meeting.

**Linda Leadbetter** -- Yes, they are finalized by that local board. They then go to the county board of equalization. As long as they meet those requirements of being within those tolerance levels they generally would not make adjustments to those values. Those values would have been set by that local assessor. If that local assessor was not certified yet, the tax director then is required to review them before they go to that local board. It's that step in the middle, right now, as current law stands, they are the acting assessor for that jurisdiction. (meter8:50-9:20)

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- Under the current system, they can go through the April meeting with the values they have set and the county director wouldn't be in a position to change them or modify them until sometime in June.

**Linda Leadbetter** -- That would be true. (meter9:33-10:13)

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- In June when they are subject to having that work reviewed, you are saying that very little is changed. There isn't much challenging of the work currently of the assessors if they work was prepared in time for the April meeting and then it doesn't get reviewed by the county until sometime in June. (meter10:38-11:00)

**Linda Leadbetter** -- That is true to an extent, except when those values come in, there often times, are the failure to provide notice. (meter11:11-12:50)

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- Under the provisions of the bill, without the amendments, we have certified assessors, are you able to make sure that that work will get done then and be accurate? (meter13:12-13:40)

**Linda Leadbetter** -- I don't think that is what I'm saying. I do hope that what I am saying is that my concern on the amendments was the idea of when those assessments would be finalized and when that tax director would have the opportunity to make that. (meter14:00-14:41)

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- It does appear to me, if I follow your explanation, under the current system if there is something wrong with the way those assessments are, you really won't be able to make those corrections prior to the April meeting. You will have to wait until you get into June. Could we have this system with these technicians in there, operating in a similar way? (meter15:10-15:25)

**Linda Leadbetter** -- Allow me to walk through from beginning to end the way it is now. (meter15:33-18:39)

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- I think I understand how it works and why it is a problem to try to squeeze that in too tight up in the front part of it. I just don't understand how, if we can make the system function well enough to have worked for many years under this system where we had township assessors, why if you bring back a person with the same training requirements and call them a technician why that system can't also work having their work approved.

**Chairman Cook** -- They don't have the same training requirements.

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- The current requirement is 24 hours. The requirement in the bill is 24 hours. Same training requirements.

**Chairman Cook** -- For us today, but it's the same training requirements as we have in the bill.

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- If the system worked before, where these people did that work and then we try to bring them back and give them a different name, but it won't work now. The reason it won't work now is because we put that time limit up in front that they had to have the work approved before the April meeting.

**Chairman Cook** -- Senator Dotzenrod, you are making one assumption: that the system worked now. That's why the bill is here because it is not working now all over the state.

**Linda Leadbetter** -- That was going to be my comment. I'm only trying to address these changes and whether it did or did not work beforehand comes to someone to speak to the bill that was presented in the first place. Yes, I believe the difference in this side as being the assessment technician, is that they do not have the authority to place that value in that short time frame that the assessor would. (meter20:23-21:25)

**Senator Dotzenrod** -- The problems that you are describing with the amendments being that we are under these amendments going to require them to have their work turned in and be approved prior to the April meeting. Where the current system just says that they have to have things turned in by the April meeting. The process of going through and challenging their work and trying to see if it is correct doesn't really get done under current law until June. These amendments have essentially taken about 3 months worth of time and pushed it ahead, the way it appears.

**Linda Leadbetter** -- That would be my biggest concern: pushing it all into a very small timeline. And it does not, for the assessment technicians, it is just 24 hours of training, which would be similar to the current township and city assessors.

**Chairman Cook** -- It defeats the purpose of the bill.

We have before us, SB2054.

**Senator Bekkedahl** -- I had Cole, our interim, present some amendments to this bill that I don't think the committee has seen. (Proposed Amendment to Senate Bill No.2054 is passed out.) **(Attachment #2)** He reviews the bill. (meter22:49-23:30)

**I move the amendments.**

**Seconded by Senator Unruh.**

Signify by saying aye. **Motion carried.**

We have before us SB2054, as amended.

**Senator Unruh moves a do pass on SB2054, as amended.**

**Senator Bekkedahl seconds.**

**Senator Dotzenrod** --For clarification, these amendments that I had prepared to put the township assessors back in and call them technicians, I'm not going to offer those amendments because I can see that if you try to make them work, it just isn't going to work.

**Roll call vote on do pass, as amended: 4-1-2.**

**Carrier: Senator Cook**

# 2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Finance and Taxation Committee  
Lewis and Clark Room, State Capitol

SB2054  
2/17/2015  
Job #23953

- Subcommittee  
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

*Alice Grove*

## Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

Committee work

## Minutes:

Attachment #1

**Chairman Cook** opened the committee work on SB2054.

We passed this out yesterday. It is amended and after we did that we found out that the amendment needed to be changed slightly so the first thing that we should do is reconsider our action by which we passed out SB2054.

**Senator Bekkedahl** -- If I could make that motion to reconsider the amendment action and approval of the bill yesterday?

Chairman Cook -- You are moving that we reconsider both, the amendment and the final passage?

**Senator Bekkedahl** -- That's correct.

**Senator Unruh seconded.**

Voice vote unanimous in favor.

**Senator Bekkedahl** -- I would move the amendment #2 to SB2054 (**Attachment #1**), on page 3, line 17 overstrike the words "employee its own" and insert immediately thereafter the words "retain a"; on page 3, line 17 after shall, insert the language "utilize the certified assessor of the county in which the city or township is located"; and on page 3, line 18, before reimburse insert "the county commission may require the city or township to".

**Seconded by Senator Unruh.**

**Senator Bekkedahl** -- If I can just explain to the committee what came up was our friends from the county that are here in the meetings, brought up an issue where the words employee its own used on line 17, would have been prohibitive for a neighboring township to the city of Bismarck, which now uses the city of Bismarck assessing department, it would

have prohibited them from continuing that contract agreement. The county assessor will still approve everything but it was their preference to not restrict that ability to continue to happen. The words retain a take care of that, and they have approved that.

**Voice vote on amendment carried.**

We have before us SB2054, as amended.

**Senator Bekkedahl -- Move a do pass on SB2054, as amended.**

**Seconded by Senator Unruh.**

Roll call vote on do pass for SB2054, as amended. 7-0-0.

**Carrier: Senator Cook**

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL NO. 2054

#1

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Page 3, line 17, after "shall" insert "utilize the certified assessor of the county in which the city or township is located."

Page 3, line 18, before "reimburse" insert "The county commission may require the city or township to"

February 17, 2015

TD  
2/17/15

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2054

Page 3, line 17, overstrike "employ its own" and insert immediately thereafter "retain a"

Page 3, line 17, after "shall" insert "utilize the certified assessor of the county in which the city or township is located. The county commission may require the city or township to"

Renumber accordingly

Date: 2-16-15

Roll Call Vote #: 1

2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ROLL CALL VOTES  
BILL/RESOLUTION NO 2054

Senate Finance and Taxation Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: Sen. Bekkedahl requested Interim Cole to prepare Amendment #1

Recommendation:  Adopt Amendment  
 Do Pass     Do Not Pass     Without Committee Recommendation  
 As Amended     Rerefer to Appropriations  
 Place on Consent Calendar

Other Actions:  Reconsider     \_\_\_\_\_

Motion Made By Sen. Bekkedahl Seconded By Sen. Unruh  
Unanimous voice vote

Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No
Chairman Dwight Cook			Senator Jim Dotzenrod		
Vice Chairman Lonnie Laffen			Senator Connie Triplett		
Senator Brad Bekkedahl					
Senator Dave Oehlke					
Senator Jessica Unruh					

Total (Yes) \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Absent \_\_\_\_\_

Floor Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

Date: 2-16-15

Roll Call Vote #: 2

2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ROLL CALL VOTES  
BILL/RESOLUTION NO 2054

Senate Finance and Taxation Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: 15.0039.03001 and proposed

Amendment to SB2054 #1 prepared by Intern Cole Werke

Recommendation:

- Adopt Amendment
- Do Pass     Do Not Pass     Without Committee Recommendation
- As Amended     Rerefer to Appropriations
- Place on Consent Calendar

Other Actions:

- Reconsider
- \_\_\_\_\_

Motion Made By Sen. Unruh Seconded By Sen. Bekkedahl

Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No
Chairman Dwight Cook	✓		Senator Jim Dotzenrod		✓
Vice Chairman Lonnie Laffen	AB		Senator Connie Triplett	AB	
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	✓				
Senator Dave Oehlke	✓				
Senator Jessica Unruh	✓				

Total (Yes) 4 No 1

Absent 2

Floor Assignment Sen Cook

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

Date: 2-17-15

Roll Call Vote #: 1.

2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ROLL CALL VOTES  
BILL/RESOLUTION NO 2054

Senate Finance and Taxation Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation:  Adopt Amendment  
 Do Pass  Do Not Pass  Without Committee Recommendation  
 As Amended  Rerefer to Appropriations  
 Place on Consent Calendar

Other Actions:  Reconsider  \_\_\_\_\_

*Motion of 2/16/15  
to adopt amendment + do pass*

Motion Made By Sen Bekkedahl Seconded By Sen. Unruh

*voice vote unanimous*

Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No
Chairman Dwight Cook			Senator Jim Dotzenrod		
Vice Chairman Lonnie Laffen			Senator Connie Triplett		
Senator Brad Bekkedahl					
Senator Dave Oehlke					
Senator Jessica Unruh					

*Motion passed*

Total (Yes) \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Absent \_\_\_\_\_

Floor Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

Date: 2-17-15

Roll Call Vote #: 2

2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ROLL CALL VOTES  
BILL/RESOLUTION NO 2054

Senate Finance and Taxation Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: 15.0039.03003

Recommendation:  Adopt Amendment  
 Do Pass     Do Not Pass     Without Committee Recommendation  
 As Amended     Rerefer to Appropriations  
 Place on Consent Calendar  
Other Actions:  Reconsider     \_\_\_\_\_

Motion Made By Sen Bekkedahl Seconded By Sen Unruh

*voice vote unanimous*

Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No
Chairman Dwight Cook			Senator Jim Dotzenrod		
Vice Chairman Lonnie Laffen			Senator Connie Triplett		
Senator Brad Bekkedahl					
Senator Dave Oehlke					
Senator Jessica Unruh					

*Motion passed*

Total (Yes) \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Absent \_\_\_\_\_

Floor Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

Date: 2-17-15

Roll Call Vote #: 3

2015 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ROLL CALL VOTES  
BILL/RESOLUTION NO 2054

Senate Finance and Taxation Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: 15.0039.03003 Title .04000

Recommendation:  Adopt Amendment  
 Do Pass     Do Not Pass     Without Committee Recommendation  
 As Amended     Rerefer to Appropriations  
 Place on Consent Calendar  
Other Actions:  Reconsider     \_\_\_\_\_

Motion Made By Sen. Bekkedahl Seconded By Sen. Unruh

Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No
Chairman Dwight Cook	✓		Senator Jim Dotzenrod	✓	
Vice Chairman Lonnie Laffen	✓		Senator Connie Triplett	✓	
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	✓				
Senator Dave Oehlke	✓				
Senator Jessica Unruh	✓				

Total (Yes) 7 No 0

Absent 0

Floor Assignment Sen. Cook

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**

**SB 2054: Finance and Taxation Committee (Sen. Cook, Chairman)** recommends **AMENDMENTS AS FOLLOWS** and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (7 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2054 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

Page 3, line 17, overstrike "employ its own" and insert immediately thereafter "retain a"

Page 3, line 17, after "shall" insert "utilize the certified assessor of the county in which the city or township is located. The county commission may require the city or township to"

Renumber accordingly

**2015 HOUSE FINANCE AND TAXATION**

**SB 2054**

# 2015 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Finance and Taxation Committee Fort Totten Room, State Capitol

SB 2054  
3/9/2015  
24499

- Subcommittee  
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

*Mary Brucker*

### Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

A bill relating to training and certification of assessors; relating to the county director of tax equalization, state supervisor of assessments, and appointment of certified assessors.

### Minutes:

Attachment #1, 2, 3, 4, 5

**Chairman Headland:** Opened hearing.

**Senator Cook:** Introduced bill. The interim committee and the senate passed this out and it deals with training that assessors are required to take. I hope you can now give favorable consideration of it in the house. Taxes we pay in North Dakota are a function of two things; the assessed value times the mill levy. If the assessed value isn't done right you're going to have bad taxes. I would ask for your favorable support.

**Emily Thomson, Legislative Council:** Neutral testimony. Emily walked the committee through the provisions of the bill. This bill relates to assessor certification requirements. It serves to replace the existing assessor certification requirements with a single status of certified assessor. It requires all assessors to be certified and imposes the same uniform of 180 hours of training requirements. The training requirements in this bill represent an increase in the amount of training required for a township assessor and city assessors under a 5,000 person population. Assessors in these two areas are presenting required to complete only 24 hours of training. The deadline for assessors to receive certification under the new training requirements is 2017. Emily then proceeded to go through the bill section by section.

**Chairman Headland:** Do we know what the cost of 180 hours of instruction would be?

**Emily Thomson:** Kathy Strombeck provided a fiscal note and it indicates the cost would be \$5,500 per assessor. The overall fiscal impact couldn't be determined because they aren't sure how many of the current class two assessors would chose to remain an assessor and get that additional education or drop out and let the county assessor assume that responsibility.

**Representative Strinden:** Do we have a problem with assessors not being qualified?

**Emily Thomson:** There has been a lot of discussion with property taxes and many people feel that their property taxes aren't assessed in a fair manner or complaints about the property tax system. One aspect the committee looked at to help address people's confidence in the system was to insure that all the assessors were qualified and meet these requirements. They thought that putting on the education requirements would benefit the taxpayers.

**Representative Haak:** How many hours are required now to be an assessor?

**Emily Thomson:** For the township assessors and the cities that are under a population of 5,000 they have 24 hours of training requirements.

**Representative Haak:** Do we have the numbers of how many have the 24 hours of training compared to the 180 hours of training needed?

**Emily Thomson:** I don't have that data.

**Representative Kading:** Do you think it would make it easier or more difficult for assessors to become certified?

**Emily Thomson:** My opinion really doesn't matter; we're just here in a neutral capacity. There was some testimony received during interim committee that some felt it would cause local assessors to decide to opt out with the additional training requirements.

**Chairman Headland:** We will take support for SB 2054.

**Allan Vietmeier, Burleigh County Tax Director:** Distributed testimony. See attachment #1.

**Chairman Headland:** How many assessors would you have to deal with if we passed this bill?

**Allan Vietmeier:** I would probably have less than a handful that would carry out with the training. If that was the case then I would probably have to add one more staff member to my office to cover the work. These are part-time positions so they aren't working every day.

**Chairman Headland:** What kind of a charge would you pass on to the township if you were to do their assessing for them?

**Allan Vietmeier:** For the first \$1million of taxable value a township has its \$1,000 a year. On that \$1,000 we don't charge any extras that cover mail, mileage, and all your assessing services for a calendar year. It then goes up from there if your jurisdiction has more than \$1 million of taxable value.

**Representative Schneider:** It's not just the number of hours of education it's the quality of the education as well. Could you give us more information about the content of the

education? Is there an ethics component? I was bothered by the statement that assessors give favors to friends and relatives.

**Allan Vietmeier:** It's not just 180 hours of education it has to be 180 hours of quality assessment education. The tax department gave us a layout for good quality education. A lot of the education is through the International Association of Assessing Officers. It's a standard that most other states are currently using. I've had more than one township in Burleigh County where favoritism was the case and still is to this day.

**Chairman Headland:** Were you able to correct the problems in the assessment when there was favoritism?

**Allan Vietmeier:** Yes I was but sometimes those issues weren't found until down the road.

**Casey Bradley, Stutsman County Auditor, and Chief Operating Officer of Stutsman County:** Distributed testimony. See attachment #2.

**Chairman Headland:** I assume the cost of the corrections you need to do is already there and that's why you're going to offer it for each of the townships?

**Casey Bradley:** We are looking at 64 of the current townships the county is going to ultimately be responsible if they decide they can't afford it anymore. If the cost goes up and they can't afford it the county has to provide the services anyways. Charging them a fee for the ones that are unable to do it generally they are your smaller townships so we thought it would be more beneficial if we just pass it on as a shared cost to the tax base then we wouldn't over burden townships that don't have the ability to pay.

**Representative Hatlestad:** How difficult is it to get the 180 hours? Are there classes within the state where you can pick up the training?

**Casey Bradley:** I'm not an assessor so I can't really tell you. I know the tax department has put some classes together. We've sent staff through online training and through training in South Dakota. It is available but it needs to be more available to meet the 2017 deadline. I believe the tax department is working on getting that addressed.

**Representative Strinden:** Who would pay the \$5,500? What are assessors paid for their services? I'm worried that this is an unfunded mandate to a political subdivision.

**Casey Bradley:** In our approach this would be a county cost; the county will pay to get our staff appraiser qualified and then maintaining that. Our concern is where the independent appraiser comes in. With 64 townships the independent appraisers will be able to charge whatever they want back to the township. They may charge substantially more than many of our townships can afford so we're trying to head that off before it happens.

**Representative Froseth:** Presently you have 18 assessors for the 64 townships. If you provide the services how many assessors would your county need?

**Casey Bradley:** Right now we have 18 independent assessors, a county tax director and one staff appraiser. We're looking at adding one staff appraiser. We think we could probably get everyone in on a five year rotation for reassessments so we think we could handle what those 18 part time assessors are doing with one addition full time employee. That is consistent with what Burleigh County is looking at as well.

**Representative Froseth:** If this bill passes do you see that there might be a professional assessor's organization that would go out and contract assessing with various counties, especially the smaller ones?

**Casey Bradley:** I believe the private industry would try to capitalize on that opportunity. Regardless, we have to have a tax director but the level of appraising would be up to each individual county as to what is cost effective for them.

**Donnell Preskey, North Dakota Association of Counties:** Distributed testimony. See attachment #3.

**Chairman Headland:** Do you think this will add cost to the county? You're here asking for it but you want the state to pay for it?

**Donnell Preskey:** The fiscal impact is really unknown at this time. We have to see what happens and how this shakes out with the townships, how many assessors will take on this training, and how much of the burden will be felt in our counties. We feel that for the good of the state, for our counties, and for the fairness of our tax system this is a step in that direction. Everyone should have that same training to make that basis of property tax value.

**Chairman Headland:** Would it be safe to say that the mistakes made by the unqualified assessors generally benefit the taxpayer who is the parcel owner?

**Donnell Preskey:** Exactly the point. We've heard stories of unfair assessing going on. It shifts the burden to others in that county or township.

**Representative Haak:** When you talked about supporting this as an organization it seems to negatively impact some of the rural areas. Did they raise those concerns and did they have that discussion when you decided to support this?

**Donnell Preskey:** I'm unable to recall that at this time but I can email you an answer.

**Representative Trottier:** If it stayed the way it is right now other than the county tax assessor could be trained with the 180 hours but the townships could stay the way they are with their 24 hours of training then report to the county assessor?

**Donnell Preskey:** If the township assessors are willing to do the legwork and collect the data they can still do that but it's the county assessor who has to make that final determination. If there needs to be more data collected to make that then it will have to go through the system.

**Representative Trottier:** Isn't that what we're doing now? The townships report to the county assessor and if they see a problem they can make changes.

**Donnell Preskey:** Perhaps someone else would be better to answer that question.

**Representative Trottier:** I appreciate your suggestion that they could do computer based and regionally offered training so they wouldn't have to drive to Bismarck or major cities to get their training.

**Donnell Preskey:** That is a number one point we have heard; there needs to be more online training. Also regional training would be appreciated rather than having everyone be away for a number of days to get all that training in.

**Representative Haak:** Does the county pay for the county assessor?

**Donnell Preskey:** I would imagine so.

**Chairman Headland:** Is there any further support? Is there any opposition?

**Larry Severson, North Dakota Township Officers Association and Township Assessor for Roseville Township of Traill County:** Distributed testimony in opposition. See attachment #4. (Ended testimony at 40:20)

**Chairman Headland:** Your testimony gives me the idea that there may be an ulterior motive for this legislation other than adequate training?

**Larry Severson:** Yes I believe there is an ulterior motive. There is an underlying current pushing towards state assessment and possibly a drive to eliminate the farm plant exemptions.

**Chairman Headland:** Can you offer any of the state senator's comments on their local assessment and where that is taking place?

**Larry Severson:** It is my understanding that is what happens in Burleigh County.

**Chairman Headland:** Do you believe that is consistent across all farmsteads and farms?

**Larry Severson:** I have no idea. This came from a conversation the senator had with that individual.

**Chairman Headland:** Is there any further opposition?

**Loren DeWitz, Assessor of Central Dakota Irrigation District:** Distributed testimony in opposition. See attachment #5.

**Representative Steiner:** How do you deal with an assessor who has to do an assessment on a neighbor he's known for 50 years?

**Loren DeWitz:** Years back property in some townships were assessed by address. If you lived within a township you were assessed less than the guy that lived out of the township. With the system now the counties should be using they have to look at soil classifications, soil types, and productivity level. The state says your county ag land is valued at so many million then the county tax director has to look at all the different soil classifications, consider soil productivity level, and assign a value to that productivity level. There isn't the flexibility for that township board or that assessor to change those values once it's set up by the county anymore. If the counties are not using that productivity level they are in violation of the law.

**Representative Klein:** Have you and the township organization discussed any amendments that would make this more palatable?

**Loren DeWitz:** No we haven't.

**Chairman Headland:** Is there any further opposition?

**Representative Froseth:** On 180 hours would it be a standardized certification test?

**Linda Leadbetter, State Supervisor of Assessments:** The 180 hours would be accomplished by several different courses and each of them would be a standardized test for each of those.

**Representative Froseth:** Would the present assessors that have the 24 hours of training be a credit towards the 180 hours?

**Linda Leadbetter:** We haven't considered that an option. We had been asked to find a way of offering 180 hours and what courses we thought would be best used for that. The 24 hour course is a three day course where an assessor attends a class taught by a certified tax director. For those that didn't find a course in their region it was a home study manual then the state provided a test to that county and it was proctored by the tax director.

**Representative Froseth:** Would it be possible if a present assessor who had 24 hours and had the home study material and felt he was ready to complete the test, couldn't he be offered the standardized test and get the certification without going through the entire 180 hours of training?

**Linda Leadbetter:** Our concern would be the consistency. We are trying to improve education that is currently being offered whether they are the local assessors or those that are certified as tax directors or city one assessors. Just by passing that test would be difficult to determine if they really got enough information that this bill has determined to be necessary for their education.

**Chairman Headland:** Has the State Board of Equalization seen problems from a poor assessment from the township level?

**Linda Leadbetter:** We've reviewed them from different levels and have seen information from the townships where the member of the township board was the one who was having an issue with an assessment that had it lowered at the township level and increased at the county level because accurate information was provided for their property card as was deemed by the tax director and the State Board of Equalization. We've seen minutes indicating assessments were done by the good neighbor policy so we know it is happening.

**Chairman Headland:** It was indicated to us that there are assessors requiring measurements of exempt farm buildings. Is that something that is occurring?

**Linda Leadbetter:** All parcels should have a property card with all the structures on that property and then it will be notes as to which is exempt or not.

**Chairman Headland:** What would be the purpose of having a property card on my steel bin grain storage I have on my farm?

**Linda Leadbetter:** Exempt property is exempt now but statute can change and deadlines would have to be met so we have to be prepared in getting all those measurements.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** Currently under the Farm Homestead Act can you tell me what the value of that exemption is?

**Linda Leadbetter:** No I would not have a value for it.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** And what that exemption would cost the state.

**Linda Leadbetter:** I cannot because we don't have everyone in the state having records of their exempted property and providing the taxable value of that property to us so we would be able to attach a mill levy and calculate a dollar. Exempted property is maintained at the local level unless they are the specific local discretionary exemptions.

**Representative Schneider:** Do you know what is required in the nature and amount of education in other states? Is there a curriculum for the 180 hours and was that standardized from one source?

**Linda Leadbetter:** We have looked at other states and we have confirmed that this level of education is required. There are several states that surround us that only have it at the state or county level. Currently the 190 hours are required for anyone to be educated as a director of tax equalization at the county level. From that we haven't taken the most important courses and developed a curriculum for 180 hours. A portion of that will be on line offered through the International Assessing Officers Association. We will also offer courses in Bismarck and regional courses as well.

**Representative Trottier:** I don't hear a lot of complaints from our county tax assessors but they have individual problems in the townships with favoritism and things. Are there many counties or citizen taxpayers that get complaints about county assessors or their township assessors?

**Linda Leadbetter:** As a tax department we are the complaint department so we hear a lot of them. We were brought into this process to determine the hours and the education would be best.

**Representative Strinden:** I just received an email from Grand Forks and they say this really doesn't affect them because they already recertify their assessors at a high level. What are the different rights the counties and cities have to train their assessors?

**Linda Leadbetter:** Currently we have the different levels of assessors; the township and the class two city assessor who are educated with 24 hours. The city one assessor is for cities that are a population of 5,000 or better will go the level of 150 hours. The tax director will go the level of 190 hours.

**Representative Froseth:** It doesn't say in this bill it has to be 180 hours of new training. If an assessor has 24 hours of training can it be used towards the 180 hours? It doesn't say anything about that in the bill so it would be up to the discretion of the county or you to allow that 24 hours to be a credit.

**Linda Leadbetter:** That is something we could consider.

**Chairman Headland:** Are there any further questions? Seeing none we will close the hearing on SB 2054.

# 2015 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Finance and Taxation Committee Fort Totten Room, State Capitol

SB 2054  
3/23/2015  
25255

- Subcommittee  
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature

*Mary Brucker*

### Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

A bill relating to training and certification of assessors; relating to the county director of tax equalization, state supervisor of assessments, and appointment of certified assessors.

### Minutes:

Attachment #1, 2

**Chairman Headland:** Distributed proposed amendment 15.0039.04001. See attachment #1. This amendment is to allow the county to make the decision upon a vote of the commissioners on whether they will accept a township assessed property. They are going to decide if they are going to approve what a township assessor has assessed. This is moving the decision of assessment to the county.

**Representative Haak:** If a township assessor assesses something and there's a dispute would they vote on the assessment?

**Chairman Headland:** It would be the intention that the counties make a decision whether they are going to accept township assessments. They do it on a township by township basis. If they've had a township that's been doing it properly in the past they can continue with that and if they've had a township that's been doing it wrong they can make that decision.

**Representative Steiner:** Are you taking away the 180 hours?

**Chairman Headland:** It would be taken away.

**Representative Steiner:** What is the reason for that?

**Chairman Headland:** The counties are going to have their properly trained assessors. The townships would not be required to have anything beyond the 24 hours of training which is what they currently have. But the county will have the ability to decide whether they want to allow the assessment.

**Representative Steiner:** I think the original bill was a good bill because we are trying to get the fact that some of the assessments are not being done correctly.

**Chairman Headland:** The law says that all property has to be assessed equally. The counties in most cases where they have to redo the assessment are not going to water that down and allow them to keep doing it. With the educational requirement the intent is to remove the township assessors then this amendment will do it. It will still allow for township assessors but if the county is not going to accept an assessment from the township would the township continue to employ the assessor?

**Representative Froseth:** I like this idea; I think this puts the responsibility on the county commissioners and the county. We have such a variety of townships in the state. There's more housing in a couple square miles just northeast of Bismarck than we have in most of our townships. It puts the responsibility back on the counties where it belongs.

**Chairman Headland:** I think there is a little bit of a danger in centralizing all the assessing. There's an expense associated with the 180 hours of training. I think that money would be better spent on roads. I thought this was the way to make it more palatable and still achieve the same thing.

**Representative Klein:** Made a motion to adopt the amendment.

**Representative Kading:** Seconded.

**Representative Schneider:** Is assessment technician a new term?

**Chairman Headland:** Legislative Council told me that it's the direction of a new term. It's technical in nature. It would be nice to have someone from legislative council here to explain it to the committee.

**Representative Schneider:** Do you know if they defined it anywhere?

**Chairman Headland:** I don't. She tried to explain it to me but I can't recall what she said.

**Representative Hatlestad:** County and city assessors have to have the 180 training?

**Chairman Headland:** I think they will have to have the training that is required today. I don't know it's specific to 180 hours but I think it is.

**Donnita Wald, Legislative Council:** Look at page 2 of the amendment. (Inaudible as Donnita was not at the microphone)

**Representative Schneider:** That's what I wanted to know.

**Chairman Headland:** Can you explain why we're using the language assessment technicians now?

**Emily Thompson, Legislative Council:** Using the term assessment technician is to avoid the confusion when we're saying assessor. In the new provisions with the enhanced educational requirements it is the term designated for an assessor. The currently defined

assessors that are township or city assessors would now be re-termed assessment technicians so there isn't any confusion that there is one educational level for one party versus the other party. The assessor is being defined as those meeting those new advanced educational requirements.

**Chairman Headland:** The educational requirement will still be in law for assessors?

**Emily Thompson:** Correct. This amendment leaves the educational requirement as they stand for the township assessors and the cities of 5,000 or under population so that would not change. Since those educational requirements aren't being increased and to avoid just calling them an assessor and being misleading that those educational requirements are being completed they've just been re-termed as an assessment technician. The assessors with the increased educational requirements are the only one that will be termed as an assessor now.

**Representative Froseth:** Are there any levels of education between the 24 hours and the 180 hours?

**Emily Thompson:** Are you speaking of current law or within the bill?

**Representative Froseth:** Current law. Most of the assessors have 24 hours but you're certified assessors have to have 180 hours. Isn't there any other level of training?

**Emily Thompson:** There are multiple levels as far as the hour requirements. There are township and class ii city assessors and they must complete the minimum of 24 hours instruction and state-wide standardized tests within 12 months. There are a few other levels as well. County directors of tax equalization and class I city assessors have to have a high school diploma or the equivalent and completed required assessment appraisal instruction within three years of appointment. The county director of tax equalization must successfully complete 190 hours of assessment and appraisal instruction. Class I city assessors have 150 hours of approved assessment and appraisal instruction.

**Representative Hatlestad:** If the amendments are added to the bill would there be two classifications; certified with 180 hours of training and a technician with 24 hours of training?

**Emily Thompson:** Yes, that is correct.

**Representative Trottier:** Under the bill and the amendment, would it be left up to the county tax director as to how they want to handle it?

**Emily Thompson:** The amendment language would affect that section. In section 2 of the current bill it changes the language so that a city or township with a population under 5,000 the governing body can vote to employ their own assessor and that will continue enforced until rescinded by the governing body. The amendment adds that it will be rescinded or upon a majority vote of the members of the board of county commissioners approving county assumption of the assessment responsibilities of a city or township. That just adds another qualifier to when that assessment responsibility may cease and that may be upon

election of the county. It would be a township by township and small city by small city, not a county wide as it was written.

**Voice vote: Motion carries to adopt the amendment.**

**Vice Chairman Owens:** I have another amendment that works in concert with this one. Distributed proposed amendment .04002; see attachment #2. We were giving the option for the townships and cities less than 5,000 of requiring only 100 hours; 60 of basic, then getting to pick two of three modules at 20 hours a piece between residential, commercial, or agriculture. We know there needs to be more training.

**Emily Thompson:** As far as merging those two amendments, Chairman Headland's amendments leave the requirements for the township and the small city assessors with no changes in training. The amendments from Vice Chairman Owens would increase the training slightly for that group. It would still re-term them as an assessment technician. The training requirements are not the same as the broader requirements for what we are now calling just an assessor.

**Chairman Headland:** I think he's asking if his amendment fits on to my amendment.

**Emily Thompson:** There would be some redrafting involved. A decision would need to be made if you wanted to increase the requirement for those township assessors or not.

**Representative Haak:** What do you want to increase it to?

**Vice Chairman Owens:** I know we would change the hour requirements based on Chairman Headland's amendment. I was just asking if there would be any conflict with the changes in population under 5,000, any cities, and option by resolution. This amendment recognizes additional need for training at the lower level. Instead of 180 hours it says 100 hours; 60 hours of the basics in which 34 hours is basic assessment training and centrally assessed. We have three modules; residential, commercial, and agriculture for 20 hours a piece. They can pick the two that was most important to them. This would leave the requirement for cities 5,000 or more.

**Chairman Headland:** Wouldn't your amendment have the same end result as the 180 hours of training? It's going to eliminate the townships ability to afford the educational requirements.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** I don't know that. I didn't know where they would come up with the 180 hours. I was just trying to give them the option of constructing it but giving them a little more training.

**Representative Froseth:** Under section b page 7 on line 1 it says to complete 60 hours of assessment. I would think that 60 hours would include the 24 hours they already have.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** It's 60 plus 20 plus 20. Their 24 hours now is assessor 101 training. The new class if this bill passes is 34.5 hours.

**Representative Trottier:** The problems we heard about assessments and townships, it's not the training it's the skullduggery that goes on in the townships. There should be some kind of penalty when you get caught doing things that aren't right when assessing family members or friends.

**Chairman Headland:** That's the design of my amendment; it leaves the decision up to the county.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** I have no problem with your amendment to leave it on the counties. I was just trying to get some more training in there.

**Representative Haak:** If a township wants to hire an assessor with 60 hours of training can that township set that control themselves?

**Emily Thompson:** Yes, as far as the current law but as far as the amendments from Vice Chairman Owens it would be below the 100 hour threshold so they wouldn't have that election.

**Representative Haak:** If a township knows the requirements but wants to have local control and require further education for their assessors?

**Emily Thompson:** They would be able to hire any class of assessor under current law. There is currently no authority for modifying below the minimum.

**Representative Haak:** But if they wanted to hire somebody with the same qualifications as a county tax director the county would be forced to accept their assessment if they so choose?

**Emily Thompson:** It doesn't really specify that a county may only take over the township or city assessment if they have a certified technician. My assumption would be that if they had a full qualified assessor there wouldn't really be the need for the county to go in. As the amendment is written it is allowing for that optional county control if the township is just electing to have a lower classification individual doing the assessments; the technician classification.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** It's my understanding that right now in current law if the township wanted to require a greater number of hours they could do it, is that correct?

**Emily Thompson:** That's correct.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** On top of that whether they have a certified assessor or not with just the chairman's amendment in this bill the county, through a vote of the board, could decide not to accept that assessor's work and take over the assessing of the township, is that correct?

**Emily Thompson:** As the language is stated now it does specifically refer to cities with populations fewer than 5,000 by option of resolution is employing an assessment technician. The resolution of that city of governing body to employ a technician continues

until rescinded by that governing body or upon a majority vote of the members of the board of county commissioners. To clarify you may want to add language if you want to have that option for a county taking over an area assessed by an assessment technician or a fully qualified under the 180 hours assessor. You may want to add both terms within that section to make it clear that it is the intent.

**Chairman Headland:** It was clear to me. The county commission still has the ability to take over the assessments no matter whether the township or city of 5,000 hires a certified assessor.

**Emily Thompson:** To make that crystal clear we might want to add the term that if by resolution of the governing body the small population city or township employs an assessment technician or an assessor. Right now it just says assessment technician.

**Chairman Headland:** I suppose we could do that and make it crystal clear but if we're going to do that then we're not really changing the educational requirement. Maybe a city of 5,000 or less would want an assessor. You would clarify to give them the ability to do that if they wanted.

**Emily Thompson:** It would clarify that the county may take over assessment duties for that area regardless of what level of training assessor they have.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** With the amendment the way it is written right now a city less than 5,000 can hire a certified technician in which the board of governors could then take over if they disagree. If they hired an assessor it's not clear that the board of governors could take over.

**Emily Thompson:** Correct.

**Representative Trottier:** My biggest concern is with a super overaggressive tax director that can control a county board and may decide not to have any technicians.

**Chairman Headland:** Currently I think you're right. But a lot of those county commissioners live out in the townships. Do we want to clarify one way or the other? We probably should but I'm not so sure I want the county to have the ability to take over. I'm not thinking so much of townships here I'm thinking of smaller cities under 5,000 that may want to hire and educate their own assessor and allow the county to make that decision.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** I have no problem tabling my amendment and saving it in case it wants to be considered in conference committee. With the amendment the way it is right now the county can vote to take over if they don't like the certified assessor technician doing it. If the small county wanted to hire an assessor who had all the hours of training the county can't override them. It limits the power of the county but still gives them some authority.

**Chairman Headland:** If that's the way it reads I like that. I'm not so sure that's clear.

**Emily Thompson:** To make the intent very clear that the county would have authority either way we would probably want to add in the term assessor along with assessment technician for those cities and counties. If the intent was only to let the county take over if the township had elected to have an assessment technician do that area then it would stay as is.

**Vice Chairman Owens:** I'll just table my amendment for now.

**Representative Klein:** Made a motion for a do pass as amended.

**Representative Dockter:** Seconded.

**Roll call vote:** 11 yes 2 no 1 absent

**Motion carried for a do pass as amended.**

**Chairman Headland will carry this bill.**

8/2  
3/23/15  
1/2

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ENGROSSED SENATE BILL NO. 2054

- Page 1, line 5, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"
- Page 2, line 14, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"
- Page 2, line 25, remove the overstrike over "~~that any city with a population of under five thousand or township may, at its~~"
- Page 2, line 26, remove the overstrike over "~~option by resolution of its governing body, employ an~~"
- Page 2, line 26, after "assessor" insert "assessment technician"
- Page 2, line 26, remove the overstrike over "~~who shall retain the~~"
- Page 2, line 27, remove the overstrike over "~~powers, duties, and responsibilities of the office. The resolution~~"
- Page 2, line 27, remove "within the jurisdiction"
- Page 2, line 28, remove "in which the"
- Page 2, line 28, remove the overstrike over "~~to employ an~~"
- Page 2, line 28, remove "employs a certified"
- Page 2, line 29, overstrike "assessor" and insert immediately thereafter "assessment technician"
- Page 2, line 29, remove the overstrike over "~~continues in force until rescinded by the governing body~~"
- Page 2, line 29, after "body" insert "or upon a majority vote of the members of the board of county commissioners approving county assumption of the assessment responsibilities of a city or township"
- Page 2, line 29, after the period insert:  
    "3."
- Page 2, line 29, remove the overstrike over "~~Notwithstanding~~"
- Page 2, remove the overstrike over lines 30 and 31
- Page 3, remove the overstrike over line 1
- Page 3, line 2, remove the overstrike over "~~establish minimum requirements for all city and township~~"
- Page 3, line 2, after "assessors" insert "assessment technicians"
- Page 3, line 2, remove the overstrike over "~~The standards~~"
- Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 3 and 4
- Page 3, line 5, remove the overstrike over "~~included in those minimum requirements for~~"

2/2

Page 3, line 5, after "of" insert "assessment technicians for"

Page 3, line 5, remove the overstrike over "~~townships or cities with a~~"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 6 through 9

Page 3, line 10, remove the overstrike over "~~may serve as an~~"

Page 3, line 10, after "of" insert "assessment technician for"

Page 3, line 10, remove the overstrike over "~~a township or a city with a population under five~~"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 11 through 14

Page 3, line 15, remove the overstrike over "~~minimum requirements. The expenses and salaries of city and township~~"

Page 3, line 15, after "assessors" insert "assessment technicians"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over line 16

Page 3, line 17, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 3, line 21, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 3, line 24, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 4, line 9, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 13, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 18, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 22, after "assessors" insert ", assessment technicians."

Page 5, line 12, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 5, line 13, after the second "of" insert "assessment technicians."

Page 5, line 13, after "assessors" insert an underscored comma

Page 9, after line 3, insert:

- "4. The state supervisor of assessments shall reclassify all current holders of a township assessor or class II city assessor certification as certified assessment technicians upon application and submission of evidence by the holders of current certification as a township or class II city assessor."

Renumber accordingly

Date: 3-23-15  
Roll Call Vote #: 1

2015 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ROLL CALL VOTES  
BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 2054

House Finance and Taxation Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: 15.0039.04001

Recommendation:  Adopt Amendment  
 Do Pass     Do Not Pass     Without Committee Recommendation  
 As Amended     Rerefer to Appropriations  
 Place on Consent Calendar  
Other Actions:  Reconsider     \_\_\_\_\_

Motion Made By Rep. Klein    Seconded By Rep. Kading

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
CHAIRMAN HEADLAND			REP HAAK		
VICE CHAIRMAN OWENS			REP STRINDEN		
REP DOCKTER			REP MITSKOG		
REP TOMAN			REP SCHNEIDER		
REP FROSETH					
REP STEINER					
REP HATLESTAD					
REP KLEIN					
REP KADING					
REP TROTTIER					

Total (Yes) \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Absent \_\_\_\_\_

Floor Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

*Voice vote = Motion carries.*

Date: 3-23-15  
Roll Call Vote #: 2

2015 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ROLL CALL VOTES  
BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 2054

House Finance and Taxation Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: 15.0039.04001

Recommendation:  Adopt Amendment  
 Do Pass  Do Not Pass  Without Committee Recommendation  
 As Amended  Rerefer to Appropriations  
 Place on Consent Calendar  
Other Actions:  Reconsider

Motion Made By Rep. Klein Seconded By Rep. Dockter

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
CHAIRMAN HEADLAND	✓		REP HAAK	✓	
VICE CHAIRMAN OWENS	✓		REP STRINDEN	AB	
REP DOCKTER	✓		REP MITSKOG	✓	
REP TOMAN	✓		REP SCHNEIDER	✓	
REP FROSETH	✓				
REP STEINER		✓			
REP HATLESTAD	✓				
REP KLEIN	✓				
REP KADING	✓				
REP TROTTIER		✓			

Total (Yes) 11 No 2

Absent 1

Floor Assignment Rep. Headland

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2054, as engrossed: Finance and Taxation Committee (Rep. Headland, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS AS FOLLOWS** and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (11 YEAS, 2 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). Engrossed SB 2054 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

Page 1, line 5, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 2, line 14, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 2, line 25, remove the overstrike over "~~that any city with a population of under five thousand or township may, at its~~"

Page 2, line 26, remove the overstrike over "~~option by resolution of its governing body, employ an~~"

Page 2, line 26, after "assessor" insert "assessment technician"

Page 2, line 26, remove the overstrike over "~~who shall retain the~~"

Page 2, line 27, remove the overstrike over "~~powers, duties, and responsibilities of the office. The resolution~~"

Page 2, line 27, remove "within the jurisdiction"

Page 2, line 28, remove "in which the"

Page 2, line 28, remove the overstrike over "~~to employ an~~"

Page 2, line 28, remove "employs a certified"

Page 2, line 29, overstrike "assessor" and insert immediately thereafter "assessment technician"

Page 2, line 29, remove the overstrike over "~~continues in force until rescinded by the governing body~~"

Page 2, line 29, after "body" insert "or upon a majority vote of the members of the board of county commissioners approving county assumption of the assessment responsibilities of a city or township"

Page 2, line 29, after the period insert:

"3."

Page 2, line 29, remove the overstrike over "~~Notwithstanding~~"

Page 2, remove the overstrike over lines 30 and 31

Page 3, remove the overstrike over line 1

Page 3, line 2, remove the overstrike over "~~establish minimum requirements for all city and township~~"

Page 3, line 2, after "assessors" insert "assessment technicians"

Page 3, line 2, remove the overstrike over "~~The standards~~"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 3 and 4

Page 3, line 5, remove the overstrike over "~~included in those minimum requirements for~~"

Page 3, line 5, after "of" insert "assessment technicians for"

Page 3, line 5, remove the overstrike over "~~townships or cities with a~~"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 6 through 9

Page 3, line 10, remove the overstrike over "~~may serve as an~~"

Page 3, line 10, after "of" insert "assessment technician for"

Page 3, line 10, remove the overstrike over "~~a township or a city with a population under five~~"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 11 through 14

Page 3, line 15, remove the overstrike over "~~minimum requirements. The expenses and salaries of city and township~~"

Page 3, line 15, after "assessors" insert "assessment technicians"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over line 16

Page 3, line 17, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 3, line 21, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 3, line 24, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 4, line 9, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 13, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 18, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 22, after "assessors" insert ", assessment technicians,"

Page 5, line 12, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 5, line 13, after the second "of" insert "assessment technicians,"

Page 5, line 13, after "assessors" insert an underscored comma

Page 9, after line 3, insert:

- "4. The state supervisor of assessments shall reclassify all current holders of a township assessor or class II city assessor certification as certified assessment technicians upon application and submission of evidence by the holders of current certification as a township or class II city assessor."

Renumber accordingly

**2015 TESTIMONY**

**SB 2054**

SR 2054  
#1  
1-13-15

I

PROVIDING FOR A COUNTY ASSESSOR SYSTEM

**WEAKNESSES OF THE PRESENT ASSESSOR SYSTEM.**

The reason that the property tax is so difficult to administer is because the "tax base" itself is not easily identified. In contrast to the sales and income taxes, for example (where the "tax base" is a dollar of income or a dollar of sale), the tax base for the property tax is subject to the judgment of tax assessors and is, therefore, more difficult.

The vital role of the assessor in property tax administration and the need to strengthen that role has long been recognized. The fourth biennial report of the Tax Commissioner in 1918 recommended the abolishment of township and district assessors in favor of a county assessor system. The same or similar recommendations have been made throughout the years by governors, tax officials, study groups, and others, yet no North Dakota Legislature has been able to enact legislation that would accomplish this objective. So we continue in North Dakota to try to administer a tax, the major element of which relies on judgment, with a part-time assessor force of nearly 1,800 assessors. Most of the assessors have not been properly trained in value estimating techniques and they have not been given adequate measurement tools. The result is a weak assessing system and inequitable assessments for many of our citizens.

Our objective in the property tax program should be to have the most equitable tax assessments possible. The 1977 Legislature passed legislation which requires that assessors meet minimum qualifications by 1981. That was a positive step, but it only partially addressed the problem.

**REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ASSESSORS AND PROVIDE FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT.**

The Legislature should reduce the number of statutory assessors from the present level of 1,800 to 53 – one County Assessor's office for each county, with the exception that cities and townships within a county could continue to employ their own assessor, provided the assessor has the same qualifications as that of the County Assessor, and provided that the local city or township absorb the cost. The recommendation that the State Tax Commissioner made in 1918 is even more compelling today. Today's assessor must be well trained, compensated on a full-time basis, given value measurement tools and techniques, and some independence from local pressures to give fair and impartial treatment to all property owners. Under the recommended program, the County Assessor with a qualified staff would be responsible for the assessment of all property within the county.

In order to reduce the financial burden on local government of maintaining a County Assessor's office, the salary of the County Assessor should be funded by the state. To attract and maintain a quality assessor force, the position of County Assessor should be compensated under guidelines of the State Personnel Classification System. The County Assessor would be hired by the County Commissioners for a fixed term of four years and could be dismissed before the term ends by the County Commissioners only for cause and with the concurrence of the State Supervisor of Assessments.

SB 2054  
#1.2  
1-13-15

II

THE MEASUREMENT OF LEVELS OF ASSESSMENTS

Any system of assessment and taxation that relies on the value of the property as the basis for taxing must provide the best possible information on the representative sales of property to those persons charged with the responsibility of making the estimates of value. In addition, there is also a need for measuring the quality of the assessment work that is being done by the assessors across the state. The accurate measurement of the levels of assessments in the various counties becomes extremely important when grants-in-aid to schools are based upon a formula that requires some evidence of local effort. The present sales ratio study which is used to accomplish this is unreliable and should be replaced with a different approach.

We are, therefore, recommending that the Legislature provide for a separate committee known as the Equalization Aid Review Committee. This committee would be responsible for setting the policies under which the State Supervisor of Assessments would conduct a study of assessment levels. The members of this committee should include:

1. Tax Commissioner;
2. Superintendent of Public Instruction;
3. Commissioner of Agriculture.

This proposed legislation would include a requirement that either the buyer or seller involved in the sale of property disclose the full purchase price of the property that was sold. County Assessors would still be responsible for gathering the initial property sales information. This information would be sent to the Equalization Aid Review Committee to be processed in a way that will measure levels of assessments in the various cities and counties. Provision should be made to provide for appraisers, working under the control of the State Supervisor of Assessments, who would make appraisals of property in those counties and cities where there is an insufficient number of sales to provide the committee with reliable data. If any program of property tax reform is going to work, it must include some basis for establishing current market information as well as a basis for measuring assessment performance.

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# 2

Coal conversion facility taxes and oil and gas gross production taxes are paid in lieu of property taxes. Revenues from these taxes are allocated by state law to affected taxing districts. Property owned by certain state agencies, nonprofit entities, and agencies and instrumentalities of the federal government are subject to payments in lieu of property taxes as are mobile homes, certain pipelines, certain transmission lines, and certain forest lands. New and expanding business may be granted the right to make payments in lieu of property taxes under Section 40-57.1-03.

## Testimony and Committee Deliberations

### Assessor Rules and Certification

Following a broad review of the property tax system, the committee addressed a topic that has received considerable discussion among taxpayers--that of a perceived unfairness in property tax assessments. The committee acknowledged that one of the foundational elements needed to achieve fairness in assessments is the requirement that assessments be conducted in an accurate manner.

The committee reviewed the powers afforded to the State Supervisor of Assessments, including the power to suspend or revoke a certificate of an assessment official. The committee received a status report from a representative of the Tax Department, pursuant to Section 7 of Senate Bill No. 2036 (2013), on the development of rules for detailed and efficient administration of Section 57-01-05 regarding supervision of assessment officials. The report indicated a working group had been formed within the Tax Department to identify the core responsibilities of assessment officials and identify instances in which suspension or revocation of assessment credentials would be appropriate. The report also indicated that initial efforts were being focused on providing additional education and training for assessment officials and tax directors.

The committee reviewed information on assessor training requirements in surrounding states and considered a bill draft to replace existing assessor classifications with a single status of certified assessor. The bill draft would require assessment officials to complete 180 hours of instruction to obtain certification. This would increase the current amount of training required for township assessors and assessors of cities under a 5,000 person population who are presently required to complete only 24 hours of training. Transitional provisions in the bill draft provided that certificate holders whose certification expires on or after August 31, 2015, would be subject to the new requirements.

The committee suggested that enhanced training for assessors would result in better assessments and more fairness, but considered whether additional training requirements would cause some assessors to leave the profession and the potential costs associated with increased training. The committee received testimony from a representative of the North Dakota Association of Assessing Officers who expressed support of the association for increased training for assessors. The committee also received testimony from a representative of the North Dakota Association of Counties who summarized responses gleaned from an informal polling of county officials. The summary indicated general support for the bill draft but with some concern for the potential fiscal impact increased training requirements may create. County representatives expressed the opinion that state funding assistance for increased training would bolster county support for the bill draft. The committee received testimony in support of increased training requirements from a representative of the Tax Department.

Based on testimony from interested parties, the committee modified the date by which all assessors shall meet the requirements in the bill draft from July 31, 2015, to July 31, 2017, to allow additional time for assessors to obtain the necessary certification. The committee received testimony from a representative of the North Dakota Association of Assessing Officers indicating an additional two years to obtain the required training would be workable. The committee concluded the bill draft may require additional input and revision during the 2015 legislative session but was an adequate starting point to offering taxpayers additional assurance that their properties are being assessed in a fair and accurate manner relative to other property.

### Use of Modifiers in Agricultural Property Assessments

Following the discussion on assessor training requirements, the committee received information regarding inconsistencies in how assessment officials are applying modifiers to agricultural property assessments. In reviewing the role of modifiers in agricultural property assessments, the committee received testimony from a representative of the Tax Department on the process by which assessment officials determine agricultural land values and the resources available to assessment officials in making those determinations.

The Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics at North Dakota State University (NDSU) computes the average agricultural value per acre of cropland, noncropland, and inundated agricultural land for each county. The Tax Commissioner then provides those values to each county before January 1 of each year. The average value per acre for each township or assessment district is determined by the county director of tax equalization and provided to local assessors. In estimating the average values for each assessment district relative to the county average value, the county director uses soil type and soil classification. In determining the valuation of a parcel, the assessor first uses the soil values determined by the county director of tax equalization. Next, the assessor considers the use of modifiers

SB 2054  
#3  
1-13-15

Testimony to the  
**Senate Finance and Taxation Committee**

January 13, 2015

By the North Dakota Association of Counties

Terry Traynor, Assistant Executive Director

**RE: Senate Bill No. 2054 – Assessor Training**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Terry Traynor, assistant executive director of the North Dakota Association of Counties, and I would like to speak on behalf of our county official members regarding Senate Bill 2054.

As this committee knows better than most, the accurate valuation of real property is the foundation of our financing system for local public services. Every property tax dollar for K-12 education, local jails, fire protection, parks and recreation, social services – the list goes on – is collected proportionate to the relative value of property established by our local assessors. Local elected boards provide the validity for WHAT the property tax is spent on, but the assessor provides the validity for HOW that burden is shared.

County officials join the legislature in wanting the highest quality assessment possible, and for this reason, cautiously support SB2054, as stated in the resolution below adopted by both the North Dakota County Commissioners Association and the North Dakota Association of Counties.

**2014-06. Property Tax Reform.** This Association supports the periodic review of our state's property tax system, and recognizes the need to implement improvements and efficiencies whenever possible. We support reforms that increase the systems equity and understandability; however we oppose changes that would needlessly increase the property tax costs of administration or require modifications that would add complexity for the taxpayer. In general we support the approach recommended by the Governor's Property Tax Reform Tax Force and further urge the Legislature to provide state funding for all added property tax administrative mandates. We specifically urge state funding for all costs associated with enhanced assessor training requirements, and further request that future assessor training be delivered electronically whenever possible and that necessary face-to-face training be provided on a regional basis.

I said "cautiously" because, as the resolution indicates, counties are concerned with the potential financial impacts.

SB 2054  
3.2

Attached to this testimony is research NDACo conducted during the interim about the number of county, city and township assessors. As it shows, county tax equalization offices already provide assessment services for 508 organized townships and 147 cities. However, that leaves 832 organized townships and approximately 159 cities with populations less than 1000 that very likely will be looking for county assistance.

We recognize that the townships and cities are obligated to reimburse the county if they request that assistance, but for those paying their local assessor \$200, \$300 or even \$500 per year, the ability to reimburse the county adequately is quite questionable.

This, county officials, wish the Legislature to keep in mind. If those 991 jurisdictions come knocking, it could very well result in at least one (maybe two) added staff in many counties. The only place county commissioners can go for supporting those added staff is the property tax – so if this law proves costly, we hope the Legislature will consider state support to write-down those added costs.

New staff, of course, means training for them as well. We have polled our tax directors and a reasonable estimate for tuition and travel costs (no salary) to obtain the 180 hours of training (for a new, untrained individual) is \$5,100 to \$6,100. Possibly at the outset, state training support could be considered. As the resolution indicates, counties are strongly urging the development and implementation of computer-based, and regionally offered training courses to minimize these costs.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony in your deliberations on this important bill.

# Survey of Township/City Assessing - September 2013

SR 2007  
#33

	Township Assessing				City Assessing			
	# Organized Townships	County Assesses	Township Assesses	# of Twp Assessors	# Incorporated Cities	County Assesses	City Assesses	# of City Assessors <sup>(1)</sup>
Statewide	1,340	508	832	511	357	147	210	137
Adams County	16	16	-	-	3	3	-	-
Barnes County	42	9	33	17	14	6	8	4
Benson County	37	24	13	11	9	9	-	-
Billings County	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Bottineau County	42	12	30	23	12	3	9	9
Bowman County	24	24	-	-	4	4	-	-
Burke County	29	23	6	5	6	6	-	-
Burleigh County	41	1	40	25	5	1	4	4
Cass County	50	6	44	27	26	8	18	11
Cavalier County	40	-	40	35	12	-	12	4
Dickey County	32	-	32	14	6	-	6	3
Divide County	32	17	15	8	4	3	1	1
Dunn County	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eddy County	18	16	2	2	2	2	-	-
Emmons County	1	1	-	-	5	4	1	1
Foster County	18	14	4	3	4	4	-	-
Golden Valley County	11	11	-	1	3	3	-	1
Grand Forks County	41	8	33	26	10	7	3	3
Grant County	10	10	-	-	4	1	3	3
Griggs County	20	-	20	9	3	-	3	2
Hettinger County	30	12	18	13	3	2	1	1
Kidder County	36	4	32	11	6	2	4	-
LaMoure County	32	-	32	14	8	-	8	5
Logan County	7	-	7	6	4	2	2	2
McHenry County	45	-	45	14	13	-	13	6
McIntosh County	1	1	-	-	5	1	4	4
McKenzie County	15	11	4	4	3	2	1	1
McLean County	29	11	18	10	12	9	3	3
Mercer County	-	-	-	-	6	-	6	2
Morton County	1	1	-	-	6	-	6	4
Mountrail County	49	2	47	34	7	-	7	6
Nelson County	27	6	21	19	7	3	4	4
Oliver County	24	24	-	-	1	1	-	-
Pembina County	24	-	24	20	11	-	11	6
Pierce County	15	15	-	-	3	2	1	1
Ramsey County	36	13	23	23	8	5	3	3
Ransom County	24	9	15	12	5	-	5	5
Renville County	24	23	1	1	6	4	2	2
Richland County	36	18	18	10	14	2	12	12
Rolette County	3	-	3	1	4	-	4	-
Sargent County	24	23	1	1	7	7	-	-
Sheridan County	14	-	14	3	3	-	3	2
Sioux County	1	1	-	-	3	3	-	-
Slope County	20	8	12	9	2	1	1	1
Stark County	-	-	-	-	5	4	1	1
Steele County	20	6	14	11	4	1	3	3
Stutsman County	62	17	45	21	11	8	3	3
Towner County	28	14	14	4	7	1	6	4
Traill County	25	-	25	19	9	-	9	2
Walsh County	36	4	32	4	13	3	10	2
Ward County	55	36	19	16	12	10	2	2
Wells County	36	-	36	25	7	-	7	4
Williams County	57	57	-	-	9	9	-	-

1. For larger cities, each assessing 'office' is counted as one assessor

SB2054  
#4

NORTH DAKOTA SENATE FINANCE AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

01/13/2015

Senate Bill 2054

TO: Senate Finance & Taxation Committee, Chairman, Senator Dwight Cook

FROM: Kevin Ternes, Minot City Assessor

Thank you for accepting my written testimony on SB 2054 related to training and certification of assessors.

As somebody who has been a full time assessor for over 23 years, I can tell you I never stop learning about the process of appraisal and valuation of real property. Currently, someone with 24 hours or basically 3 days of assessor training is legally allowed to assess property in a smaller jurisdiction without regard to the level of valuation of properties in that jurisdiction. For instance, a part time assessor would be allowed to assess a half million dollar home in a township. I do not feel that the level of education currently required by state statute represents the actual training that is needed to do the proper assessments expected by our citizens. Therefore I support this bill and the concept of requiring additional training for part time and full time assessors whether at the township, city or county level.

Thank you for your consideration.

#5

**TESTIMONY TO THE  
SENATE FINANCE AND TAXATION**

**Prepared by Allan Vietmeier, Burleigh County Tax Director  
01/13/2015**

**Senate Bill 2054**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee I offer the following testimony regarding Assessor Education and recommend a do pass:

- As Tax Equalization Director for Burleigh County and chairman of the NDAAO Education Committee I feel very strongly about the need for better education. 24 hours of tested training and 4 hours of untested annual refresher are not sufficient for these assessors who are valuing properties up to \$500,000.
- I have first-hand experience of local assessments not being done in a proper manner. Ranging from favoritism for friends or family members, assessors being intimidated by their boards, or assessments being missed completely. A lot of this is due to a lack of good education.
- Currently I have 20 plus assessors in 47 organized jurisdictions in Burleigh County. This requires a lot of coordination to get everything moving in the same direction. They assess townships with no assessed homes to ones with 1500 plus residential parcels. Yet they all have the same requirements for education.
- The education level that is required to place a value on a property should be consistent. Big city or small, a township, or the county it shouldn't matter. At some point these jurisdictions intersect and the assessor from one should have the ability to discuss values with the assessor of another. Currently there are assessors that are unable to produce a property card, find square foot information about the house, or even answer the basic questions about the property.
- Is it easier to assess in a jurisdiction with a lot of sales or very few? If your answer is a lot then I must ask you why we have the least trained assessors in the toughest jurisdictions to assess.

Thank You,  
Allan Vietmeier  
Burleigh County Tax Director

#6

Oppose SB 2054

Senate Finance and Tax Committee

January 13, 2015

Chairman Cook and Committee members,

I am Larry Syverson from Mayville, I am the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Roseville Township of Traill County and I am now the Executive Secretary of the North Dakota Township Officers Association. NDTOA represents the 6,000 Township Officers that serve in more than 1,100 dues paying member townships.

Township assessors and other officers from across the state say this is too much - too fast. The tax department has not been very active in providing any training and now to suddenly require some seven weeks of schooling is a bit of an extreme switch.

Let the tax department develop a more moderate training regimen and we will try to support it.

As SB 2054 is written NDTOA opposes it; therefore I ask that you give SB 2054 a do not pass recommendation.

Thank you Chairman Cook and Committee members, I will try to answer any questions you may have.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2054

Page 1, line 2, after "assessors" insert "and training requirements for assessment technicians"

Page 1, line 5, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 3, line 18, overstrike "in assessing" and insert immediately thereafter "by the county to provide services of a certified assessor to finalize and approve the assessments of"

Page 3, line 19, after the period insert "A city with a population of fewer than five thousand or a township may employ an assessment technician to gather assessment information and prepare preliminary property assessments within that jurisdiction under the supervision of a certified assessor appointed by the county director of tax equalization."

Page 3, line 21, after "jurisdiction" insert "or a preliminary assessment made by an assessment technician"

Page 3, line 21, after "reviewed" insert ", finalized,"

Page 3, line 24, after "review" insert "and approval"

Page 4, line 7, after "state" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 10, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 15, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 19, after "assessors" insert ", assessment technicians,"

Page 5, line 15, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 19, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 21, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 23, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 24, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 25, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 26, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 29, after the first "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 29, after the second "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 5, line 30, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 6, line 3, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 6, line 4, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 6, line 14, after "**assessors**" insert "**- Assessment technician credentials**"

Page 6, line 15, after "assessors" insert "or issue a credential for assessment technicians"

Page 6, line 30, after the underscored period insert:

"To obtain a credential as an assessment technician, an individual must:

1.2  
2.11-15  
SB2054

- a. Have a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- b. Successfully complete twenty-four hours of assessment and appraisal instruction approved by the state supervisor of assessments, including the number of hours of instruction determined necessary within each topic area designated by the state supervisor of assessments.

4."

Page 7, line 5, replace "4." with "5."

Page 7, line 5, after "certificate" insert "or assessment technician credential"

Page 7, line 7, overstrike "5." and insert immediately thereafter "6."

Page 7, line 8, after the underscored period insert "An assessment technician credential may be renewed if the holder has completed eight hours of approved classroom instruction or seminars during the term of the credential."

Page 7, line 12, after "certificate" insert "or technician credential"

Page 7, line 13, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 7, line 16, after "revoked" insert "or an assessment technician whose credential is not renewed or whose credential is suspended or revoked"

Page 7, line 17, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 8, line 13, after "assessors" insert "or issue credentials for assessment technicians"

Page 8, line 22, after the period insert "The holder of a township assessor or class II city assessor certification may obtain a credential as an assessment technician upon submission of evidence of completion of required educational sessions during the term of the township assessor or class II city assessor."

Renumber accordingly

February 2, 2015

#1  
2.16.15

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2054

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1.2  
8/20/15  
2-16-15

- a. Have a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- b. Successfully complete twenty-four hours of assessment and appraisal instruction approved by the state supervisor of assessments, including the number of hours of instruction determined necessary within each topic area designated by the state supervisor of assessments.

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Page 7, line 13, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 7, line 16, after "revoked" insert "or an assessment technician whose credential is not renewed or whose credential is suspended or revoked"

Page 7, line 17, after "certificate" insert "or credential"

Page 8, line 13, after "assessors" insert "or issue credentials for assessment technicians"

Page 8, line 22, after the period insert "The holder of a township assessor or class II city assessor certification may obtain a credential as an assessment technician upon submission of evidence of completion of required educational sessions during the term of the township assessor or class II city assessor."

Renumber accordingly

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL NO. 2054

#2  
SB2054  
2-16-15

#1

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Page 3, line 17, after "shall" insert "utilize the certified assessor of the county in which the city or township is located."

Page 3, line 18, before "reimburse" insert "The county commission may require the city or township to"

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL NO. 2054

#1  
SB2054  
2-17-15

#2

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Page 3, line 17, overstrike "employ its own" and insert immediately thereafter "retain a"

Page 3, line 17, after "shall" insert "utilize the certified assessor of the county in which the city or township is located."

Page 3, line 18, before "reimburse" insert "The county commission may require the city or township to"

SB 2054  
3-9-15  
# 1

**TESTIMONY TO THE  
HOUSE FINANCE AND TAXATION**

**Prepared by Allan Vietmeier, Burleigh County Tax Director  
03/09/2015**

**Senate Bill 2054**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee I offer the following testimony regarding Assessor Education and recommend a do pass:

- As Tax Equalization Director for Burleigh County and chairman of the NDAAO Education Committee I feel very strongly about the need for better education. 24 hours of tested training and 4 hours of untested annual refresher are not sufficient for these assessors who are valuing properties up to \$500,000.
- I have first-hand experience of local assessments not being done in a proper manner. Ranging from favoritism for friends or family members, assessors being intimidated by their boards, or assessments being missed completely. A lot of this is due to a lack of good education.
- Currently I have 20 plus assessors in 47 organized jurisdictions in Burleigh County. This requires a lot of coordination to get everything moving in the same direction. They assess townships with no assessed homes to ones with 1500 plus residential parcels. Yet they all have the same requirements for education.
- The education level that is required to place a value on a property should be consistent. Big city or small, a township, or the county it shouldn't matter. At some point these jurisdictions intersect and the assessor from one should have the ability to discuss values with the assessor of another. Currently there are assessors that are unable to produce a property card, find square foot information about the house, or even answer the basic questions about the property.
- Is it easier to assess in a jurisdiction with a lot of sales or very few? If your answer is a lot then I must ask you why we have the least trained assessors in the toughest jurisdictions to assess.

Thank You,  
Allan Vietmeier  
Burleigh County Tax Director

SB 2054  
3-9-15  
#2

**TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE FINANCE AND TAX COMMITTEE REGARDING SENATE BILL 2054**

Casey Bradley, Stutsman County Auditor/COO

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Finance and Tax Committee, I am Casey Bradley, Stutsman County Auditor and Chief Operating Officer. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2054 as it is a strong piece of legislation that drastically improves the qualification requirements of our local assessors.

In Stutsman County we currently have 18 independent assessors who, with our two county staff members, assess the 64 townships within the county. 17 of these assessors have indicated to the county that they will not pursue this training and will stop providing their services to the townships.

While this may seem negative, the Stutsman County commission realizes the benefit of increased assessor training and has decided to offer assessing to our townships for free if this legislation is passed. Having 18 independent assessors in our county is not only burdensome to staff but also creates inconsistencies between townships in the quality of their appraisal processes.

We strongly urge you to give a do pass to Senate Bill 2054 as it is a critical piece of the process to improving assessment practices across the State of North Dakota.

SB 2054  
3-9-15  
#3 p.1

Testimony to the  
**House Finance and Taxation Committee**  
3/8/15  
By the North Dakota Association of Counties

**RE: Senate Bill No. 2054 – Assessor Training**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Donnell Preskey with the North Dakota Association of Counties, and I would like to speak on behalf of our auditors and county official members regarding Senate Bill 2054.

As this committee knows better than most, the accurate valuation of real property is the foundation of our financing system for local public services. Every property tax dollar for K-12 education, local jails, fire protection, parks and recreation, social services – the list goes on – is collected proportionate to the relative value of property established by our local assessors. Local elected boards provide the validity for WHAT the property tax is spent on, but the assessor provides the validity for HOW that burden is shared.

County officials join the legislature in wanting the highest quality assessment possible, and for this reason, cautiously support SB2054, as stated in the resolution below adopted by both the North Dakota County Commissioners Association and the North Dakota Association of Counties.

**2014-06. Property Tax Reform.** This Association supports the periodic review of our state's property tax system, and recognizes the need to implement improvements and efficiencies whenever possible. We support reforms that increase the systems equity and understandability; however we oppose changes that would needlessly increase the property tax costs of administration or require modifications that would add complexity for the taxpayer. In general we support the approach recommended by the Governor's Property Tax Reform Tax Force and further urge the Legislature to provide state funding for all added property tax administrative mandates. We specifically urge state funding for all costs associated with enhanced assessor training requirements, and further request that future assessor training be delivered electronically whenever possible and that necessary face-to-face training be provided on a regional basis.

I said "cautiously" because, as the resolution indicates, counties are concerned with the potential financial impacts.

Attached to this testimony is research NDACo conducted during the interim about the number of county, city and township assessors. As it shows, county tax equalization offices already provide assessment services for 508 organized townships and 147 cities. However, that leaves 832 organized townships and approximately 159 cities with populations less than 1000 that very likely will be looking for county assistance.

We recognize that the townships and cities are obligated to reimburse the county if they request that assistance, but for those paying their local assessor \$200, \$300 or even \$500 per year, the ability to reimburse the county adequately is quite questionable.

This, county officials, wish the Legislature to keep in mind. If those 991 jurisdictions come knocking, it could very well result in at least one (maybe two) added staff in many counties. The only place county commissioners can go for supporting those added staff is the property tax – so if this law proves costly, we hope the Legislature will consider state support to write-down those added costs.

New staff, of course, means training for them as well. We have polled our tax directors and a reasonable estimate for tuition and travel costs (no salary) to obtain the 180 hours of training (for a new, untrained individual) is \$5,100 to \$6,100. Possibly at the outset, state training support could be considered. As the resolution indicates, counties are strongly urging the development and implementation of computer-based, and regionally offered training courses to minimize these costs.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony in your deliberations on this important bill.

# Survey of Township/City Assessing - September 2013

#3p.3

	Township Assessing				City Assessing			
	# Organized	County	Township	# of Twp	# Incorporated	County	City	# of City
	Townships	Assesses	Assesses	Assessors	Cities	Assesses	Assesses	Assessors <sup>(1)</sup>
Statewide	1,340	508	832	511	357	147	210	137
Adams County	16	16	-		3	3	-	
Barnes County	42	9	33	17	14	6	8	4
Benson County	37	24	13	11	9	9	-	
Billings County	-		-		1	1	-	
Bottineau County	42	12	30	23	12	3	9	9
Bowman County	24	24	-		4	4	-	
Burke County	29	23	6	5	6	6	-	
Burleigh County	41	1	40	25	5	1	4	4
Cass County	50	6	44	27	26	8	18	11
Cavalier County	40	-	40	35	12	-	12	4
Dickey County	32	-	32	14	6	-	6	3
Divide County	32	17	15	8	4	3	1	1
Dunn County			-				-	
Eddy County	18	16	2	2	2	2	-	-
Emmons County	1	1	-	-	5	4	1	1
Foster County	18	14	4	3	4	4	-	-
Golden Valley County	11	11	-	1	3	3	-	1
Grand Forks County	41	8	33	26	10	7	3	3
Grant County	10	10	-	-	4	1	3	3
Griggs County	20	-	20	9	3	-	3	2
Hettinger County	30	12	18	13	3	2	1	1
Kidder County	36	4	32	11	6	2	4	-
LaMoure County	32	-	32	14	8	-	8	5
Logan County	7	-	7	6	4	2	2	2
McHenry County	45	-	45	14	13	-	13	6
McIntosh County	1	1	-		5	1	4	4
McKenzie County	15	11	4	4	3	2	1	1
McLean County	29	11	18	10	12	9	3	3
Mercer County	-		-		6	-	6	2
Morton County	1	1	-		6	-	6	4
Mountrail County	49	2	47	34	7	-	7	6
Nelson County	27	6	21	19	7	3	4	4
Oliver County	24	24	-	-	1	1	-	-
Pembina County	24	-	24	20	11	-	11	6
Pierce County	15	15	-		3	2	1	1
Ramsey County	36	13	23	23	8	5	3	3
Ransom County	24	9	15	12	5	-	5	5
Renville County	24	23	1	1	6	4	2	2
Richland County	36	18	18	10	14	2	12	12
Rolette County	3	-	3	1	4	-	4	-
Sargent County	24	23	1	1	7	7	-	-
Sheridan County	14	-	14	3	3	-	3	2
Sioux County	1	1	-	-	3	3	-	-
Slope County	20	8	12	9	2	1	1	1
Stark County	-	-	-	-	5	4	1	1
Steele County	20	6	14	11	4	1	3	3
Stutsman County	62	17	45	21	11	8	3	3
Towner County	28	14	14	4	7	1	6	4
Traill County	25	-	25	19	9	-	9	2
Walsh County	36	4	32	4	13	3	10	2
Ward County	55	36	19	16	12	10	2	2
Wells County	36	-	36	25	7	-	7	4
Williams County	57	57	-	-	9	9	-	-

1. For larger cities, each assessing 'office' is counted as one assessor

Oppose SB 2054

House Finance and Tax Committee

March 9, 2015

Good morning Chairman Headland and Committee members.

I am Larry Syverson from Mayville, I am the Township Assessor for Roseville Township of Traill County and I am also the Executive Secretary of the North Dakota Township Officers Association. NDTOA represents the 6,000 Township Officers that serve in more than 1,100 dues paying member townships.

Throughout my years as the Roseville Township Assessor I have worked with three Traill County Tax Directors. I stress "worked with", we started out with nearly every one of the 25 townships having their own assessor and each of the small cities did too. So there was a room full of assessors for the annual assessor's seminar. At no time did any of those directors feel the need to get up in front and chew us out or criticize our work. There are now about half as many assessors in the room, as all the cities retain the same appraisal service, and some of the townships share assessors or also retain that appraisal service. But we still work together with our director. By the way that appraisal service grew out of one of our townships.

When any of us have a peculiar property or difficult situation we have always been able to call on our director for guidance and references. We often hear "I'll call Sara" or "I'll check with some of the other directors to see how they handle those". We always work together to produce the most accurate assessment we can because you never know when a property will be sold and a bad sales ratio is a bit of an embarrassment.

I don't think that Traill County is anything out of the norm in North Dakota. I believe that we are just reasonable people trying to do a job together and that you can find that in pretty much every county in the state.

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#4 p.1

Does this mean there are no bad township assessors, no not at all. I am sure there are those that don't care what kind of a job they do.

I am equally sure there are tax directors that are not the best at getting people to work with them. Perhaps they started off with an adversarial relationship with the assessors and now they wonder why they don't cooperate. A few days ago a state senator told me there is one director that requires that the assessors go out and appraise farm bin sites, barns, machine sheds and shops even though those parts of a farm plant are exempt. How many times will an assessor have endure a growling farmer and his dog following him around while he goes about measuring a building that is not going to be taxed? But the farmer is convinced that it means he will be taxed or they would not be doing it! It seems the reason it is being required here is that it is done that way in another state. Is it any wonder that those assessors begin to balk?

During the floor discussion in the Senate there was a reference to subsection 4 of section 2, which states that "any assessment made by an assessor who is not currently certified must be reviewed and approved by a certified assessor" it was claimed that this could allow a township or small city to continue, after a fashion, with their current assessor. This was an attempt to paint a more gentle SB 2054. However subsection 3 does not seem to allow that.

3. Any city or township that does not retain a certified assessor **shall utilize the certified assessor of the county** in which the city or township is located. The county commission may require the city or township to reimburse the county for the expenses incurred in assessing the property of that city or township.

That doesn't seem to allow any other option for a township or city.

**The training requirement is excessive:**

Section 4 outlines the training requirements for assessor certification, requiring hours of training in (1)Tax administration; (2)Principals and theory of value; (3)Residential property appraisal; (4) Commercial property appraisal; (5)Agricultural property valuation

Number 5, Agricultural property valuation; this is no longer done at the township level, ever since it was required that the counties value farm land based on the detailed soils data.

This is all done by the county computer, or a vendor, using the USDA soil maps, NDSU soil values and GIS data from a 4<sup>th</sup> party. What would a township assessor need to be trained in? Why would a small city assessor need any training in this at all?

Number 4, Commercial property appraisal; a lot of townships have no commercial properties, or they are of a very small scale, this is also true of a lot of the small cities. Large scale commercial operations are going to even be beyond the certified assessors provided for in this bill. In Traill County commercial property experts were brought in to value the sugar beet factory and the many ag commodity warehouses. This has for the most part worked out so well that the county is again bringing in commercial property experts to value all the commercial property in the county. Starting first with the cities which are already assessed by a highly trained appraisal firm, and then spreading out to the townships. If you need to deal with commercial properties, Traill County thinks you need someone with thousands of hours of experience not 180 hours of training. So why is this a requirement for townships? It doesn't do the job anyway.

**Fiscal Note:**

The fiscal note for SB 2054 says it will cost some \$5,500 to get an assessor certified, but it doesn't say what those individuals will charge for their services once they have gone through this ordeal that has taken 7 weeks out of their lives. This could cost the townships and small cities a significant amount, some county provided assessing could be even worse.

NDTOA is not against training, but in this day with all the remote education technology I believe the Tax Department can find a way to deliver pertinent bits of training to every county so that any assessor that has any commitment to his craft can benefit without a major undertaking or expense.

NDTOA definitely opposes SB 2054 and I ask that you give it a do not pass recommendation.

Thank you Chairman Headland and Committee members, I will try to answer any questions you may have.

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#5

**Senate Bill 2054  
House Finance and Taxation Committee  
March 9, 2015**

**Central Dakota Irrigation District  
Testimony of Loren DeWitz, Assessor**

Central Dakota Irrigation District (CDID) is a government entity organized and certified by the Secretary of State, doing business in Kidder, Stutsman, and Logan Counties. Our members are located in rural townships and many are involved with township operations. We feel we need to address SB 2054.

CDID is opposed to SB 2054 because it mandates that all assessors are required to have the same training, regardless of the type of property that they assess – a one size fits all formula.

The Tax Department testified in the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee that the estimated total cost of training would average \$5,000 per trainee for 180 hours or 4½ weeks of training. I have visited with rural county commissioners and several township assessors. Only one assessor said that he might consider becoming certified and then, only if, he is given credit for past training and experience.

In 2013 there were 1311 organized townships that levied taxes. A large majority of these townships assess very little other than agricultural property. The assessors in these townships can make very few adjustments to the agricultural property values. The state sets the total value of agricultural property for each county based on countywide production. The county then assigns a value to each soil type based on the productivity index. The township assessor cannot change these values. The assessor might be able to adjust the value for a few things, such as a change in land use or if the land is inundated by water, but these changes are generally quite small. Assessors in rural townships who have few residential or commercial properties work with the county director of tax equalization to determine the value those properties.

The present system is working in a vast majority of townships. Rural areas are looking at this bill as penalizing everyone because a few are having problems.

It is quite likely that present assessors will continue working until the 2017 deadline and then there will be a shortage of certified assessors, causing problems for many townships and counties.

Central Dakota Irrigation District asks for a Do Not Pass vote on SB2054.

Loren DeWitz  
701-220-1788

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ENGROSSED SENATE BILL NO. 2054

- Page 1, line 5, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"
- Page 2, line 14, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"
- Page 2, line 25, remove the overstrike over "~~that any city with a population of under five thousand or township may, at its~~"
- Page 2, line 26, remove the overstrike over "~~option by resolution of its governing body, employ an~~"
- Page 2, line 26, after "assessor" insert "assessment technician"
- Page 2, line 26, remove the overstrike over "~~who shall retain the~~"
- Page 2, line 27, remove the overstrike over "~~powers, duties, and responsibilities of the office. The resolution~~"
- Page 2, line 27, remove "within the jurisdiction"
- Page 2, line 28, remove "in which the"
- Page 2, line 28, remove the overstrike over "~~to employ an~~"
- Page 2, line 28, remove "employs a certified"
- Page 2, line 29, overstrike "assessor" and insert immediately thereafter "assessment technician"
- Page 2, line 29, remove the overstrike over "~~continues in force until rescinded by the governing body~~" and insert immediately thereafter "or upon a majority vote of the members of the board of county commissioners approving county assumption of the assessment responsibilities of a city or township"
- Page 2, line 29, after the period insert:  
"3."
- Page 2, line 29, remove the overstrike over "~~Notwithstanding~~"
- Page 2, remove the overstrike over lines 30 and 31
- Page 3, remove the overstrike over line 1
- Page 3, line 2, remove the overstrike over "~~establish minimum requirements for all city and township~~"
- Page 3, line 2, after "assessors" insert "assessment technicians"
- Page 3, line 2, remove the overstrike over "~~. The standards~~"
- Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 3 and 4
- Page 3, line 5, remove the overstrike over "~~included in those minimum requirements for~~"
- Page 3, line 5, after "of" insert "assessment technicians for"

Page 3, line 5, remove the overstrike over "~~townships or cities with a~~"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 6 through 9

Page 3, line 10, remove the overstrike over "~~may serve as an~~"

Page 3, line 10, after "of" insert "assessment technician for"

Page 3, line 10, remove the overstrike over "~~a township or a city with a population under five~~"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over lines 11 through 14

Page 3, line 15, remove the overstrike over "~~minimum requirements. The expenses and salaries of city and township~~"

Page 3, line 15, after "assessors" insert "assessment technicians"

Page 3, remove the overstrike over line 16

Page 3, line 17, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 3, line 21, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 3, line 24, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 4, line 9, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 13, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 18, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 22, after "assessors" insert ", assessment technicians,"

Page 5, line 12, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 5, line 13, after the second "of" insert "assessment technicians,"

Page 5, line 13, after "assessors" insert an underscored comma

Page 9, after line 3, insert:

- "4. The state supervisor of assessments shall reclassify all current holders of a township assessor or class II city assessor certification as certified assessment technicians upon application and submission of evidence by the holders of current certification as a township or class II city assessor."

Renumber accordingly

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ENGROSSED SENATE BILL NO. 2054

Page 1, line 2, after "assessors" insert "and training requirements for assessment technicians"

Page 1, line 5, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 2, line 14, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 2, line 28, after "city" insert "with a population of under five thousand"

Page 2, line 29, after "body" insert "or a certified assessment technician"

Page 3, line 17, after "assessor" insert "or a certified assessment technician"

Page 3, line 21, after "assessor" insert "or an assessment technician"

Page 3, line 24, after "assessor" insert "or a certified assessment technician"

Page 4, line 10, after "state" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 13, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 18, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 4, line 22, after "assessors" insert ", assessment technicians,"

Page 6, line 17, after "**assessors**" insert "**and assessment technicians**"

Page 6, line 18, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 7, line 1, after "2." insert "To be certified as an assessment technician, an individual must:

- a. Have a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- b. Successfully complete sixty hours of assessment and appraisal instruction approved by the state supervisor of assessments including instruction in tax administration and principles and theory of value and select two of the three following topics and successfully complete twenty hours of training under each selected topic:
  - (1) Residential property appraisal.
  - (2) Commercial property appraisal.
  - (3) Agricultural property valuation.

3."

Page 7, line 2, replace "subsection" with "subsections"

Page 7, line 2, after "1" insert "and 2"

Page 7, line 4, replace "3." with "4."

Page 7, line 4, after the first "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 4, after the second "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

# 2 p. 2

Page 7, line 6, after the first "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 6, after the second "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 10, replace "4." with "5."

Page 7, line 10, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 12, replace "5." with "6."

Page 7, line 12, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 14, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 17, replace "6." with "7."

Page 7, line 17, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 20, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 7, line 22, replace "7." with "8."

Page 7, line 24, replace "8." with "9."

Page 8, line 18, after "assessors" insert "and assessment technicians"

Page 8, line 24, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Page 8, line 25, after "assessor" insert "or assessment technician"

Renumber accordingly