

One Hundred Fourth Legislature - Second Session - 2016

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB779

Chairperson: Senator John Murante

Committee: Government, Military and Veterans Affairs

Date of Hearing: March 02, 2016

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

Since the early 1900s through the greater part of the 20th century political parties were county-based local groups. County level organizations worked to develop competing programs. People got together, elected officers, developed local platforms, and elected delegates to the state convention every two years. People shared ideas and channeled their ideas up through the organizations.

People elected at county conventions took representative views to the state convention, adopted a state platform and elected state leaders and presidential electors. State leaders managed the party and become influential in elections and policy making, which represented grass root views of county convention participants.

Today, however, we live in a different political world and very few are truly partisan. County conventions are virtually unattended by anyone other than small cliques and as a result are no longer a fair reflection of what people think at a grass roots level. When county conventions are poorly attended, instead of contributing to public discourse, political parties become obstructive and divisive in nature.

The nonpartisan system serves Nebraska well in the Unicameral and in those local governments that have elected to use it. In addition to reducing party divisiveness the nonpartisan mechanism allows the entire electorate to choose between the top two candidates

Under the existing system registered voters in either party are easily disenfranchised. For example, during a primary election in one of the State's larger counties, no Republican ran for a major office and the election was decided by only registered Democrats. Registered Republicans were deprived of their right to vote in the general election.

The bill simply states that if neither political party can turn out just two percent of its membership for a county convention then as a practical matter there is not a political party in that county and the election should be nonpartisan. In those counties that still have a possibility of a viable party system, the bill will give incentive to work toward making county conventions once again representative of the county population.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator Paul Schumacher