



HENNEPIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
A-2400 GOVERNMENT CENTER  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55487-0240

May 10, 2019

Senator Mary Kiffmeyer  
Room 3103 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Mike Nelson  
Room 585 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Omnibus State Government Finance Bill Conference Committee Chairs:

On behalf of the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, I am writing to express our support for several provisions in the omnibus state government finance and elections bills (S.F. 2227/H.F. 1935). Specifically, we encourage you to: 1) include provisions streamlining Hennepin County's campaign finance reporting requirements; 2) extend the County's ability to use job order contracting procurement procedures; 3) authorize the use of electronic voting systems to assist voters with disabilities; and, 4) restore funding for the state's contribution to the Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund (MERF).

**Conform Hennepin County Campaign Finance Reporting with State Law**

Hennepin County has unique—and in some cases outdated—campaign finance disclosure laws. Minn. Stat. § 383B.041-052 govern elections for Hennepin County offices, cities in Hennepin County with a population of more than 75,000, and the Minneapolis School District. Article 5 of the House file repeals outdated and confusing statutes as well as streamlines campaign finance reporting requirements for local campaign committees. Standardizing the County's campaign disclosure procedures to match state law will make it easier for candidates to file and for citizens to view this data and will increase transparency in campaign contribution reporting.

**Renew Hennepin County Job Order Contracting Authorization**

In 2016, the Legislature gave Hennepin County the authority to use what is known as “job order contracting” for its own procurement and project delivery for smaller construction, maintenance and repair projects. The intent of this legislation was to improve efficiency, streamline processes, and engage more small and locally owned businesses (including veteran owned, women owned and minority owned businesses) in work on Hennepin County facilities. To date, the program has been successful and is working as designed.

One of the compromises that was included in the original 2016 legislation was to put a three-year sunset on the County's ability to use job order contracting in order to analyze and review the program's effectiveness. That authorization expires at the end of 2019. The provision included at section 77 of the House file simply extends the County's ability to use job order contracting for another five years. Separate legislation to this effect (H.F. 1997) was passed by the House on a 120-10 vote earlier this year.

### **Expand Assisted Voting Technologies**

Various sections in the House file expand the types of electronic voting systems that may be used in Minnesota. These touch screen machines are designed to make it easier for people with vision impairments or other disabilities to cast their votes. Although the machines use a touch screen, they still produce a paper ballot that can be reviewed in the event of a recount or election challenge. We support making this type of technology available to voters in the state.

### **Restore State Contribution to the Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund (MERF)**

Prior to 2017, the state appropriated \$16 million per year as its contribution to the Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund. Six local governmental units that have employees that were formerly employed by the City of Minneapolis share in this funding – the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minneapolis School Board, and the Metropolitan Airports Commission. Hennepin County receives approximately 3% of these funds. Last biennium, the legislature cut the state contribution to \$6 million, leaving a \$10 million shortfall for these entities to absorb. The House file restores funding for the former MERF employers to \$16 million, while the Senate provides no funding for this item. If no funding is provided for MERF, the County will lose approximately \$200,000 per year. However, if funding is restored to the \$16 million level, the County will receive an additional \$300,000 over current levels, thereby reducing the need to increase property tax levies to help cover this obligation. We encourage the conference committee to provide full funding for this item.

We appreciate your consideration of these matters. If you have any questions or would like any further information about any of the issues listed above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Marion Greene  
Chair, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

cc: Omnibus State Government Finance Bill Conference Committee Members