Sixty-fourth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 6, 2015

HOUSE BILL NO. 1056
(Legislative Management)
(Taxation Committee)

AN ACT to amend and reenact section 18-10-07 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to rural fire protection district increased levy approval; to repeal section 57-15-26.3 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the levy limit for rural fire protection districts; to provide for a legislative management study of the consolidation of elections and a legislative management study of statutory references to political subdivisions; and to provide an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. Section 18-10-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

18-10-07. Fire protection policy to be determined - Tax levy.

The board of directors shall determine a general fire protection policy for the district and shall annually estimate the probable expense for carrying out the contemplated program. The annual estimate of probable expense may include an amount determined by the board of directors to be necessary to be carried over to a future year for purchase of firefighting equipment, ambulances, or other emergency vehicles. The estimate must be certified by the president and secretary to the proper county auditor or county auditors, on or before June thirtieth of each year, who shall levy a tax upon the taxable property within the district for the maintenance of the fire protection district for the fiscal year as provided by law.

The tax may not exceed ~~the limitation in section 57-15-26.3~~a tax rate of five mills per dollar of the taxable valuation of property in the district, except upon resolution adopted by the board of directors and approval by a majority of the qualified electors voting on the question at an annual or special meeting of electors called by the board of directors, the levy may be made in an amount not exceeding thirteen mills. If an election to approve or reauthorize an excess levy will be held at an annual or special meeting of electors of the district called by the board of directors, notice of the meeting and the proposed excess levy election must be provided by at least one publication in the official newspaper of each county in which the district is located at least seven days, but not more than fourteen days, before the date of the public meeting. The published notice must include the amount of the proposed tax rate increase in mills and the duration for which elector approval of the increase is sought and must include the location where, and hours during which, ballots may be cast.

Votes to approve or disapprove the levy increase must be cast on the date of the meeting. The polling place must remain open for at least six hours on the date of the meeting. The secretary-treasurer of the district shall prepare and distribute to qualified electors at the polling place paper ballots to conduct the election on the question of increased levy authority. Three election judges to receive and count the ballots, who are qualified electors of the district but not members of the board, must be selected at least seven days before the meeting by approval of a majority of the members of the board. A marked ballot must be delivered to one of the judges, folded to conceal its contents, the judge shall deposit it in the ballot box, and another judge shall enter the name of the elector who cast the ballot in the poll book. When the election is closed, the judges shall count the ballots and announce the result. Results of the election must be certified by the secretary-treasurer of the district and each of the election judges to the tax commissioner and to the county auditor of each county in which the district is located within ten days after the election. The certificate must include a statement of the question as it appeared on the ballot, together with the total number of votes cast in favor, and the number of votes cast against, authorizing the excess levy.

After July 31, 2015, approval or reauthorization by electors of increased levy authority under this section may not be effective for more than ten taxable years. ~~No signature on the petition may be considered valid if made more than ninety days prior to receipt of the petition.~~ Additional levy authority authorized by the board of directors after petition of electors before August 1, 2015, remains in effect under the provisions of law at the time the levy was authorized for the time period authorized by the electors but not exceeding five taxable years. The tax must be:

1. Collected as other taxes are collected in the county.
2. Turned over to the secretary-treasurer of the rural fire protection district, who shall have a surety bond in the amount of at least five thousand dollars.
3. Placed to the credit of the rural fire protection district so authorizing the same by its secretary-treasurer in a state or national bank, except amounts to be carried over to a future year for purchase of firefighting equipment, ambulances, or other emergency vehicles may be invested to earn the maximum return available.
4. Paid out upon warrants drawn upon the fund by authority of the board of directors of the district, bearing the signature of the secretary-treasurer and the countersignature of the president of the rural fire protection district.

The amount of tax levy may not exceed the amount of funds required to defray the expenses of the district for a period of one year as embraced in the annual estimate of expense, including the amount of principal and interest upon the indebtedness of the district for the ensuing year and including any amount determined by the board of directors to be necessary to be carried over to a future year for purchase of firefighting equipment, ambulances, or other emergency vehicles.

SECTION 2. REPEAL. Section 57-15-26.3 of the North Dakota Century Code is repealed.

SECTION 3. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY- CONSOLIDATION OF ELECTIONS. During the 2015-16 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying the feasibility and desirability of consolidating all political subdivision and school district elections with the statewide primary election and the holding of all special elections on other specified dates during any year. If the legislative management conducts the study, the legislative management shall seek input and participation from the secretary of state; representatives of cities, counties, school districts, and other political subdivisions; and representatives of political parties. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-fifth legislative assembly.

SECTION 4. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - STATUTORY REFERENCES TO POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS. During the 2015-16 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying statutory usage of various references to political subdivisions and the feasibility of differentiating references to political subdivisions based on whether the governing body is elected or appointed. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-fifth legislative assembly.

SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act is effective for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2014.

Speaker of the House

President of the Senate

Chief Clerk of the House

Secretary of the Senate

This certifies that the within bill originated in the House of Representatives of the Sixty-fourth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as House Bill No. 1056.

House Vote:	Yeas 72	Nays 17	Absent 5
Senate Vote:	Yeas 43	Nays 4	Absent 0

Chief Clerk of the House

Received by the Governor at 2:34 P.M. on April 23, 2015.

Approved at 3:35 P.M. on April 27, 2015.

Governor

Filed in this office this 27th day of April, 2015,

at 4:37 o'clock P. M.

Secretary of State