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03/24/2025

Chair Rep Schomacker  
MN House Representative  
Human Services Finance and Policy  
Capitol 123

Dear Chair Schomacker and Members of the Human Services and Finance Policy,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to advocate for the importance of allowing civilly committed individuals to vote from their home county, where they have deep-rooted ties and connections. This request stems from the core principles of democracy, individual rights, and the need for inclusive civic engagement.

Civil commitment refers to the legal process by which individuals are placed in a treatment, mental health, chemical dependency, or similar facility due to a court ruling. While civilly committed individuals may be living in such facilities for various reasons, they remain citizens with full rights, including the fundamental right to vote. Allowing these individuals to vote from their home county, rather than their current location, offers several key benefits:

1. **Maintaining Personal Connection and Civic Responsibility:** Voting is a personal and civic responsibility. For civilly committed individuals, casting their ballots in their home county provides them with a sense of connection to their community. Many of these individuals have previously lived in the county where they were committed, have family ties, and are deeply familiar with local issues, candidates, and priorities. Voting from their home county allows them to maintain their connection to that community and ensures that their voices are heard in matters that directly affect it.
2. **Promoting Equal Treatment:** All citizens, regardless of their mental health status, should have equal access to their voting rights. Denying civilly committed individuals the opportunity to vote from their home county disproportionately affects their ability to participate in democratic processes and may contribute to the disenfranchisement of an already vulnerable group. Ensuring they can vote from their home county ensures consistency in voting rights for all citizens.

3. **Protecting the Integrity of the Electoral Process:** Civily committed individuals, like all other citizens, should have a say in local elections that influence policies and legislation affecting their communities. Civily committed individuals who reside in legislative districts that contain numerous civil commitment facilities could easily sway or control a local election. Voting from their home county aligns with the principle that elections should reflect the preferences of the community's actual residents. By voting from their home county, civily committed individuals can help shape outcomes that directly impact their lives and those of their loved ones.
4. **Upholding Constitutional Rights:** The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to vote for all eligible citizens. While civil commitment may restrict some freedoms, the right to participate in the electoral process should not be one of them. Allowing civily committed individuals to vote from their home county is an important step in ensuring their rights are preserved and respected.

In conclusion, providing civily committed individuals with the opportunity to vote from their last known residential address prior to issuance of the committal order, is essential for maintaining their connection to their community, promoting equal access to voting, and protecting their constitutional rights. I respectfully request that you consider these factors and work toward a system that ensures civily committed individuals are able to fully participate in the democratic process from what many consider their home.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
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Security Counselor – MSOP ML

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