



February 29, 2024

Dear Chair Carlson and members of the Senate Elections Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the League of Minnesota Cities to provide comments on SF 4039, which would require that cities administering absentee balloting transition to a “.gov” domain by June 1, 2026.

In recent years the League has been encouraging cities to make the switch to “.gov” domains and, when possible, assisting them through the process. This can be daunting for smaller cities who likely do not have dedicated web management staff and need to contract their web provider to make the transition. The process can be costly for a small jurisdiction. For transparency and consistency to city residents, email addresses commonly have the same domain as the city website. There may be an unintended consequence with SF 4039 in that it will force cities to consider websites and email communications to avoid naming inconsistencies. While a website migration may seem straightforward, the migration of both website and email is often more complicated and costly.

Of the cities that administer absentee balloting, there are 51 that currently do not have a “.gov” domain, though some are currently in the process of transitioning. For these 51 cities, the majority are under 5,000 in population and would need to account for staffing costs, paying their website provider, and updating other city materials and communications potentially including email systems. We appreciate that the deadline of June 1, 2026, provides time to budget for these impacts and provides time for cities to request the domain, as “.gov” domains have not been consistently available. Up until January of this year, a temporary pause was in place on issuing any new “.gov” domains.

Due to the potential challenges securing a “.gov” domain and to allow for time to budget for the costs associated with migrating web systems, the League would support adding language to the bill specifying that a city would meet the requirements in the bill if they were in the process of transitioning their domains but had not yet completed the transition by June 1, 2026.

We appreciate your consideration of this letter and welcome further discussion with Senator Westlin and members of the committee regarding this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Hassel".

Alex Hassel
League of Minnesota Cities

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Lightfoot".

Daniel Lightfoot
League of Minnesota Cities