Last week the North Dakota House of Representatives voted to expel former Representative Luke Simons. The decision to vote in favor of expulsion was not taken lightly. However, make no mistake, the removal of Luke Simons was the direct result of his repeated acts of misconduct.

Since the hearing, there has been much discussion about the process that was followed leading to the expulsion. At the outset, the objective was to provide an even-handed and fair opportunity for all involved. We must remember this was not a legal proceeding or a trial; it was a resolution brought before the chamber. The North Dakota House of Representatives is a sovereign and independent body. The North Dakota Constitution states, “each house shall determine its rules of procedure…with the concurrence of two-thirds of its elected members, either house may expel a member.” The rules which govern the House also make clear that as elected officials, we are held to a higher standard of accountability than the average citizen. We not only have a duty as legislators to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our office, but we must also hold each other to the standards we strive for.

This week Luke Simons released a statement announcing he will not be pursuing any legal action against the Legislative Assembly. In the statement, he continued to take no responsibility for his actions. Although he refuses any accountability, we have an obligation to uphold standards of professionalism in our chamber. Often our jobs as elected officials require us to make tough votes on political issues, but this was not one of those times. This vote was not about politics; it was about decency and respect.