

History of the SD Legislature



While the One Hundredth Session of the South Dakota Legislature in 2025 is a major milestone for the legislative body, there have been many notable benchmarks in the Legislature's history. Several of them are recognized below and also appear in a Historical Series on the LRC Facebook page. New historical facts will be added leading up to the start of the 2025 legislative session on January 14, 2025.

For the latest postings, follow the South Dakota Legislature on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaLegislature/> and be sure to visit the One Hundredth Session historical displays on the 1st floor of the State Capitol beginning in January 2025.

Gladys Pyle made history not only in South Dakota but outside of the state as well. After being elected to the South Dakota Legislature, she went on to become the first woman elected to the United States Senate. She also served as South Dakota's Secretary of State from 1927 to 1931.

Gladys Pyle was named the oldest living U.S. Senate member in 1988. She passed away on March 14, 1989, at the age of 98.

**First Woman
Elected to the
SD Legislature**

Gladys Pyle
*24th District,
Beadle County*

Born in Huron, SD, on October 4, 1890, she was a 1911 graduate of Huron College and was a teacher before being elected to the House of Representatives in 1922, serving from 1923 to 1927.



Once they have finished their terms in the South Dakota Legislature, some lawmakers go on to serve the state in other offices, including Governor. Nineteen state legislators have served in the state's highest office, including current Governor Kristi Noem.

Among the nineteen who became Governor are a father and son – George T. Mickelson and George S. Mickelson, the 18th and 28th Governors, respectively, of the State of South Dakota.

While the majority of South Dakota legislators serve their terms and do not return due to term limits, or not seeking or winning re-election, others choose to resign their office due to personal or professional reasons. The largest number of legislator resignations in a single year occurred in 1969, when six lawmakers resigned during their terms.

Of the 73 legislators who've resigned since 1889, six did so for presidential appointments to other positions. Three of the six were appointed by President George H.W. Bush, with the remaining three taking positions with the administrations of Presidents Jimmy Carter, George W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.





Legislative Issues: Then and Now

| Number of Bills Passed by Category | 1889 | 2024 |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|
| Appropriations | 5 | 23 |
| Education | 4 | 16 |
| Elections | 1 | 5 |
| Taxation | 7 | 8 |



Lawmakers at South Dakota's first state Legislative Session in 1889 passed 133 bills or resolutions, many concerning issues that are still discussed and acted on by today's legislators. Appropriations and education are two such issues that have grown steadily in terms of the number of bills introduced about them throughout the years.

Among the bills passed by the 1889 South Dakota Legislature was one that allowed for the levy and collection of a tax on dogs. Under the bill, county assessors were tasked with keeping a list, updated annually, of everyone within the county who owned or kept a dog or dogs, and collecting a tax of one dollar per each dog owned or kept. Based on the average rate of inflation and increases in purchasing power over the last 135 years, such a tax today equates to \$34.29 per dog.

The 3,525 South Dakotans who have served in the South Dakota Legislature since 1889 have responded to their names for countless roll calls.

For male legislators, the most common first name being responded to is John, followed by William, James, and Thomas.

The most common first name for female legislators is Mary, followed by Carol, Debra, Jean, and Linda.

The most common last names for South Dakota lawmakers are Johnson and Anderson.

What's in a name?

The most common first name for male legislators is John while the most common first name for female legislators is Mary.

Historical Listing
South Dakota Legislators
1889 - 2022

100 SESSION
SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE

SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE
LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COUNCIL