

JOURNAL OF THE SENATE

ONE HUNDREDTH SESSION

SECOND DAY

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
Senate Chamber, Pierre
Wednesday, January 15, 2025

The Senate convened at 9:30 a.m., pursuant to adjournment, the President presiding.

The prayer was offered by the Chaplain, Rev. Donell Chambers, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Senate page Aimslee Bunker.

Roll Call: All members present except Sens. Carley, Crabtree, Foster, Howard, Karr, Lapka, Miskimins, Otten, Sauder, Vilhauer, and Voita who were excused.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

MR. PRESIDENT:

The Committee on Legislative Procedure respectfully reports that the Secretary of the Senate has had under consideration the Senate Journal of the 1st day.

All errors, typographical or otherwise, are duly marked in the temporary journal for correction.

And we hereby move the adoption of the report.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Karr, Chair

Which motion prevailed.

1 The oath of office was administered by President Larry Rhoden to Senators Sydney Davis and
2 Larry Zikmund.

3 Which was subscribed to and placed on file in the office of the Secretary of State.

4 The oath of office was administered by President Larry Rhoden to the following Legislative
5 Interns:

6 Robert Arnold, Willow Borgers, Ceci Burroughs, Maddie Cross, Elizabeth Duffy, Peyton Forney,
7 Samantha Hegge, Savannah Shrake, Levi Taglioli

8 Which was subscribed to and placed on file in the office of the Secretary of State.

9 **REPORTS OF JOINT-SELECT COMMITTEES**

10 MR. PRESIDENT:

11 Your Joint-Select Committee appointed to make arrangements for a Memorial Service for
12 deceased former members of the South Dakota House of Representatives and Senate respectfully
13 reports that they recommend that the House of Representatives and Senate recess and convene in
14 the House Chamber at 3:00 p.m. on January 23, 2025, and that a Joint Memorial Resolution be
15 introduced in their memory by their colleagues in the House of Representatives and Senate.

16 A short program will follow the introduction of the Memorial Resolution. At the conclusion of
17 the Memorial Service, the Joint Session will be dissolved.

18 The Memorial Resolution shall be printed in the House and Senate Journals.

19	Respectfully submitted,	Respectfully submitted,
20	Brandei Schaeftbauer (Chair)	Carl Perry (Chair)
21	Erin Healy	Chris Karr
22	Scott Odenbach	Jim Mehlhaff
23	Tony Randolph	Jamie Smith
24	Mike Stevens	Larry P. Zikmund
25	House Committee	Senate Committee

26 **MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE**

27 MR. PRESIDENT:

28 I have the honor to inform your honorable body that the House has approved the adoption
29 of the permanent joint rules of the Ninety-ninth Legislative Session as the temporary joint rules for
30 the One-hundredth Legislative Session.

1 Also, MR. PRESIDENT:

2 I have the honor to inform your honorable body that the House has appointed
3 Reps. Schaeffbauer (Chair), Healy, Odenbach, Randolph, and Stevens as a committee of five on the
4 part of the House to meet with a committee of five on the part of the Senate for the purpose of
5 arranging for a memorial recognition of deceased former members of the House and Senate.

6 Respectfully,
7 Patricia Miller, Chief Clerk

8 **MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS**

9 Sen. Mehlhaff moved that **SB 55** be referred from the Senate Committee on Appropriations to
10 the Joint Committee on Appropriations.

11 Which motion prevailed.

12 **FIRST READING OF SENATE BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS**

13 **SB 70:** FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to modify the maximum sparsity benefit a sparse school
14 district is eligible to receive.

15 Introduced by: **Senator** Marty

16 **SB 71:** FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise provisions pertaining to the compulsory age
17 for school attendance.

18 Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

19 **SB 72:** FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the payor of autopsy costs in certain
20 circumstances.

21 Introduced by: **Senator** Hulse

22 **SB 73:** FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to amend the definition of principal residence with
23 regard to driver licenses to conform to voter registration requirements.

24 Introduced by: **Senator** Hulse

25 **SCR 601:** A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Supporting the designation of a portion of U.S.
26 Highway 12 as the Helen Miller Memorial Highway.

27 Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

28 Were read the first time.

29 Sen. Wheeler moved that the Senate do now adjourn, which motion prevailed and at 9:46 a.m.
30 the Senate adjourned.

31 Peggy Laurenz, Secretary

JOINT SESSION

1
2 The Senate convened with the House of Representatives in the House Chamber for the purpose
3 of receiving a message from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Steven R. Jensen. The President
4 of the Senate, Larry Rhoden, presided.

5 The following prayer was delivered by Rev. Craig Wexler, Pierre/Ft. Pierre Ministerial
6 Association, Pierre, South Dakota:

7 *Micah 6:8—"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you*
8 *but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (NRSV)*

9 Merciful God, help us to come before you this day with humble hearts, seeking mercy. Each
10 day should begin with a tone of humility—each morning is a gift, in which breath has entered our
11 lungs and our eyes have been opened once again. This gift is mercy in and of itself. Your justice
12 upon us has been turned on its head due to your accomplished promises through our Lord and
13 Savior, Jesus Christ. Because of our rebellious hearts, we deserve your justice—rather; we deserve
14 your judgment. However, through your love—your desire for a new creation and redemption, your
15 justice has come though, and you have declared us, "**Not guilty...**" thanks to Christ's death and
16 resurrection.

17 As we face moments in life—as our justice system, from the highest courts to the officers on
18 patrol in the streets, face these moments in life in which they come face-to-face with people at the
19 worst moments of their lives, help these servants of the law face the vulnerable with love, kindness,
20 humility, and faithfulness. We pray for their protection on the roads and in the alleyways—we pray
21 for the strength and courage of justice to prevail. We pray for truth, wisdom, and discernment in
22 the court rooms—may our judges judge with fairness and divine prudence. We pray for care,
23 repentance, and renewal behind bars, within our institutions of correction. We pray for the chaplains
24 to give the Gospel, when some have only ever known the law. We pray for love and forgiveness,
25 even when our hearts may be hardened and the devil whispers words of vitriol and spite.

26 You, Almighty God, are a righteous God—filled with everlasting truth, mercy, and grace. Help
27 us to live our lives into the light of grace you have called us to stand within. Shine your light into
28 our darkness, and never let the darkness overcome it. In your Holiest name we pray. Amen.

29 The Secretary of the Senate, Peggy Laurenz, called the roll of the Senate and the following
30 members were present:

31 Beal, Blanc, Carley, Davis, Deibert, Duhamel, Foster, Grove, Hohn, Howard, Hulse,
32 Jensen (Kevin), Kolbeck, Lapka, Larson, Marty, Mehlhaff, Miskimins, Nelson, Otten (Ernie), Perry,
33 Peterson (Sue), Pischke, Reed, Rohl, Sauder, Schoenfish, Smith, Vilhauer, Voight, Voita, Wheeler,
34 and Zikmund

35 The Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives, Patricia Miller, called the roll of the House and
36 the following members were present:

37 Andera, Arlint, Auch, Aylward, Bahmuller, Bathke, Baxter, DeGroot, Derby, Duffy, Emery,
38 Fitzgerald, Garcia, Goodwin, Greenfield, Halverson, Healy, Heermann, Heinemann, Hughes, Hunt,
39 Ismay, Jamison, Jensen (Phil), Jordan, Jorgenson, Kassin, Kayser, Kull, Ladner, Lems, Manhart,
40 Massie, May, Moore, Mortenson, Muckey, Mulally, Mulder, Nolz, Novstrup, Odenbach, Overweg,
41 Peterson (Drew), Pourier, Randolph, Reder, Rehfeldt, Reimer, Reich, Rice, Roby, Roe, Schaeftbauer,
42 Schwans, Shorma, Sjaarda, Soye, Stevens, Uhre-Balk, Van Diepen, Venhuizen, Walburg, Weisgram,
43 Wittman, and Speaker Hansen

1 Sen. Mehlhaff moved that a committee of seven on the part of the Senate and a committee of
2 seven on the part of the House be appointed to escort Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen to the rostrum.

3 Which motion prevailed and the President announced as such committee Sens. Karr, Mehlhaff,
4 Perry, Larson, Smith, Wheeler, and Hulse on the part of the Senate and Reps. Lems, Odenbach,
5 Overweg, Healy, Emery, Stevens, and Soye on the part of the House.

6 The Lieutenant Governor, Larry Rhoden, introduced the Honorable Steven R. Jensen, to deliver
7 the State of the Judiciary Address.

8 The Sergeant at Arms announced the arrival of Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen who was escorted
9 to the rostrum.

10

STATE OF THE JUDICIARY ADDRESS

11 Introduction

12 Governor Noem, Lieutenant Governor Rhoden, members of the Legislature, Constitutional
13 Officers, my fellow Justices, Judges, Unified Judicial System (UJS) employees, and all South
14 Dakotans: I am honored to deliver my 2025 State of the Judiciary message to you.

15 I count it a privilege to have this opportunity each year to discuss the work of the courts in
16 South Dakota. The importance of the courts in maintaining peace and tranquility in our communities
17 can often be taken for granted until we step back and take a brief look at history.

18 A few months back, I was provided an excerpt of a book written in 1947 by former Aberdeen
19 School Superintendent Charles Dalthorp, one of the founders of the South Dakota Boy's State
20 program. In a section on the South Dakota judicial branch, Dalthorp describes how communities
21 handled disputes and punished crime before the courts were in existence in South Dakota. He states:

22 *"In the days of early settlement in South Dakota no courts were available. If a person was*
23 *accused of committing a crime, he was taken before a citizens' group, and both sides of the questions*
24 *were heard before one of the group who was elected 'judge.' After the evidence was completed, a*
25 *decision was made on the case without reference to law or logic. At times when the crime was a*
26 *serious one like murder, rape, or horse stealing, the citizens did not go through the formality of a*
27 *hearing. They merely shot the accused or hanged him from the nearest tree. Clear-thinking and*
28 *law-abiding early citizens realized that if the state was to grow and prosper and attract high types*
29 *of citizens, a good system of the court must be established."*

30 The citizens of the territory that would later become South Dakota may have been well meaning
31 in their zeal to maintain order and seek justice, but a society based on mob rule will have a short
32 and turbulent existence. We can be grateful that the founding fathers of both the United States and
33 South Dakota recognized the necessity of due process of law and the importance of an independent
34 judiciary designed to resolve disputes fairly, peacefully, and sensibly.

35 For more than 135 years, the courts in this state have peacefully resolved factual and legal
36 disputes that litigants have been unable to work out on their own. In county courthouses across
37 South Dakota, the courts provide a fair and impartial forum for these disputes, where the rule of
38 law is applied equally and consistently to all persons. This only happens through an independent
39 judiciary that is not swayed by politics, power, or public opinion, but rests each decision on
40 established principles of law governing our decisions.

41 When I was a circuit judge, many mornings I would walk into the courthouse and think about
42 the awesome responsibility and trust placed in me as a judge to decide the cases that would come
43 before me that day. I still feel that way as Chief Justice. Some of the cases can be resolved quickly,
44 while others require a great deal of time, effort, and study. Regardless of the complexity of the case,

1 every decision is weighty because it's always important to that person appearing before the court,
2 and the result often has a significant impact on their life.

3 **The Important of Public Trust**

4 The courts are not merely institutions of law; they are the bedrock of justice. They fairly resolve
5 disputes between parties, determine guilt or innocence and mete out the appropriate sentence,
6 safeguard our rights, uphold our freedoms, and protect citizens from governmental overreach. For
7 these essential functions to be effective, however, they must be trusted. Trust is the foundation
8 upon which the legitimacy of our judiciary rests.

9 A person seeking redress in the courts needs to have confidence that the system will work for
10 them. When a case is finished, a litigant should believe that they received "a fair shake," regardless
11 of the outcome. The public must also have confidence in the decisions and work of the court. When
12 the public trusts the court system, they respect its legitimacy and authority, cooperate with the
13 legal process, and participate in civic duties like jury service.

14 Having worked in the legal system for my entire career, I have a deep and abiding belief in the
15 integrity of our court system in this state. The judges and court staff are not perfect—no human is—
16 but they work hard to provide fairness, efficiency, and competence in resolving the tens of thousands
17 of cases that come before them each year. They are unsung heroes who understand their role in
18 serving the public and providing access for everyone seeking redress in the courts. Nonetheless, we
19 cannot take public trust and confidence in the courts for granted. Each of us working in the courts
20 must daily recognize the need to earn and safeguard the public trust in the work that we do.

21 This can be difficult in our current age where trust in most institutions is near historic lows.
22 The rapid spread of misinformation, the divisive nature of public discourse, and the perception of
23 bias and partisanship in our society all have the potential to erode confidence in the judicial system.
24 The good news, however, is that according to a recent national survey conducted by the National
25 Center for State Courts, nearly two-thirds of Americans express trust and confidence in the state
26 courts. Perhaps even more encouraging is that the percentage of respondents expressing trust in
27 the state courts has increased slightly in each of the past two years.

28 I believe part of the reason for this encouraging trend is the close connection that exists
29 between citizens and their local state courts. People actually see the work of the state courts and
30 understand firsthand how the work of the courts positively impacts families, communities, and public
31 safety.

32 To ensure that we continue to do this work well in the South Dakota courts, the UJS this past
33 year began a strategic plan initiative designed to develop priorities for carrying out the core function
34 of the courts—that is deciding cases fairly, efficiently, and competently under the law. The strategic
35 plan is focused on access to justice issues, effective court operations and systems, our workforce,
36 technology, security, and public trust and confidence in the courts. I want to speak to a few of these
37 priorities this morning.

38 **Access to the Courts**

39 Access to the courts has been a major focus for us the past few years and will continue to be
40 a main goal moving forward. We must, as a court system, do our best to ensure that every person
41 in every case has an opportunity to be heard; this is the essence of due process of law. The early
42 American statesman, Daniel Webster, defined due process as "a law which hears before it condemns,
43 which proceeds on inquiry, and renders judgment only after trial." The constitutional right to due
44 process exists whether an individual has been charged with a crime or is seeking resolution of a civil
45 dispute in the courts. Access issues may look different in criminal and civil cases, but our obligation
46 remains the same—to provide due process and fairness to every person involved in the court system.

1 Indigent Criminal Defense

2 One effort to ensure due process of law in criminal cases has been centered on our indigent
3 defense system in South Dakota. Indigent defense is the constitutional right of every person charged
4 with a crime, who is unable to afford an attorney, to be appointed counsel at the expense of the
5 state.

6 The Sixth Amendment right to counsel for those unable to afford an attorney in criminal cases
7 is important to all South Dakotans and furthers public trust and confidence in the courts. Maintaining
8 a strong system of indigent defense is what makes us different from other countries where the rule
9 of law is not respected or upheld. The commitment to an effective indigent defense system not only
10 ensures adequate representation for the accused, but it also makes certain that our standards for
11 due process are truly maintained.

12 We are grateful that the Legislature, this past session, enacted legislation offered by the UJS
13 to create a Commission on Indigent Legal Services to oversee the delivery of legal services for those
14 unable to afford counsel in criminal cases. The Commission is an independent body responsible for
15 coordinating and managing the indigent defense system across the state, developing standards for
16 assigning and handling court-appointed criminal cases, and providing training and assistance to
17 lawyers handling criminal appointments. It's a volunteer board of experienced legal and
18 governmental professionals appointed by the Governor, Chief Justice, Legislature, and the counties.
19 The Legislature also provided \$1.4 million in ongoing funding to create the Office of Indigent Legal
20 Services.

21 The Commission and the Office of Indigent Legal Services will be instrumental in taking an ad
22 hoc system that has been county funded and managed and turning it into one that provides
23 management of the indigent defense system statewide. The creation of the Commission and the
24 Office of Indigent Legal Services is a monumental first step to create a more effective and efficient
25 system of indigent defense in South Dakota.

26 I am pleased to report that the Commission's work is already underway. The members have
27 selected USD Knudson School of Law Dean Neil Fulton to serve as chair. They have been meeting
28 regularly since May to tackle the process and standards for statewide indigent defense.

29 Chris Miles, an experienced public defender and appellate lawyer, was hired by the Commission
30 as the chief defender to run the Office of Indigent Legal Services. This office will initially be
31 responsible for providing court-appointed legal services in appeals of cases involving crimes, habeas
32 corpus, and abuse and neglect of children. The Office of Indigent Legal Services is designed to
33 function much like the Attorney General's appellate division, which handles criminal appeals for the
34 state.

35 We project that the efficiencies and expertise developed within the Office of Indigent Legal
36 Services will save \$600,000 annually, as compared to our prior system. With these savings and the
37 state-funded office, we expect counties will cumulatively realize more than \$2.1 million in savings
38 annually. The Legislature also authorized a one-time \$3 million appropriation last year to help
39 counties defray the cost of indigent defense. The Commission on Indigent Legal Services distributed
40 these funds this past fall, on a pro rata basis, to every county in the state.

41 The next and final step of moving from an ad hoc county funded and managed indigent defense
42 system to a statewide system will involve implementation at the trial court level. Judges and counties
43 continue to struggle, especially in rural areas, with finding attorneys to defend criminal cases. This
44 is especially true in the most serious felony cases. These cases require experienced trial counsel to
45 effectively represent the accused. Currently, many of these serious felony cases are handled by
46 private counsel who may spend months defending these cases, with limited resources and support.
47 Additionally, in rural counties where there are few attorneys, it may be necessary for a private
48 attorney to drive several hours to the courthouse or jail, and attorneys do not receive compensation
49 for their travel time. The creation of regional, full-time public defenders through the Office of
50 Indigent Legal Services could alleviate many of these concerns both in high stakes cases and many
51 other cases.

1 The expansion of the Office of Indigent Legal Services to the trial court level will require
2 statutory authorization. Funding of the regional public defender positions will also need to be worked
3 out between the state and counties as we move forward. But we now have the framework in place
4 to expand these criminal legal services to the trial courts throughout South Dakota.

5 It is important for everyone to note that these changes will not involve any new governmental
6 services; indigent defense is already being funded by South Dakota taxpayers. Rather, the changes
7 are designed to replace an antiquated and inefficient indigent defense system managed and paid
8 exclusively by counties with a robust and effective statewide system. Moreover, the changes will
9 ensure that South Dakota continues to meet its constitutional obligation to provide effective
10 representation to the accused.

11 This past year, the UJS asked the Sixth Amendment Center to assist in implementing a
12 statewide indigent defense system by conducting an extensive review of trial-level indigent defense
13 provided in seven counties across South Dakota. Following the study, the Sixth Amendment Center
14 released its report, making several recommendations and emphasizing the need for uniform
15 standards for indigent legal services across the state. Significantly, the Sixth Amendment Center's
16 report referenced a South Dakota study conducted by another group in 1977, which made nearly
17 the exact same recommendations to ensure the constitutional right to counsel in South Dakota. I
18 am grateful to the Legislature and Governor Noem for working with the judicial branch to accomplish
19 the first step in a task that is truly 50 years in the making.

20 **Civil Access to the Courts**

21 Access to the courts in civil cases is another priority for the UJS. Recent studies have suggested
22 that 80% of civil cases filed in state courts in this country involve at least one self-represented
23 party. We are seeing similar trends in South Dakota. The uptick in the number of unrepresented
24 litigants in civil cases is a product of both the cost of legal services and the absence of lawyers
25 available to handle civil cases, a trend both in South Dakota and nationwide.

26 The number of self-represented litigants presents challenges for the unrepresented individuals
27 and for the entire court system. Self-represented litigants face difficulties understanding legal
28 jargon, the rules of procedure, and the substantive law which may impact their case. Court staff
29 cannot provide legal advice but are often asked questions about the documents that need to be filed
30 and the process for making a claim or asserting a defense. The additional time required of court
31 staff to review documents and answer questions places more demands on employees already
32 managing full caseloads.

33 Furthermore, judges hearing cases with self-represented litigants are placed in the difficult
34 position of maintaining their neutrality while ensuring these individuals are heard and able to present
35 their case. Self-represented individuals may inadvertently slow down proceedings, as well, due to
36 their unfamiliarity with court procedures and create more court congestion as judges work through
37 busy dockets.

38 Legal aid organizations in South Dakota such as East River Legal Services, Dakota Plains Legal
39 Services, and Access to Justice offer free or reduced-fee legal help for low-income eligible persons.
40 Unfortunately, the demand for legal services in civil cases far exceeds their resources. These
41 organizations receive, on average, 350 applications for assistance a month. Additionally, many
42 individuals do not meet the income guidelines to qualify, leaving a gap for people who cannot afford
43 counsel but are not eligible for legal aid.

44 To better address these challenges, the South Dakota Supreme Court adopted a rule on
45 February 20, 2024, to create a Commission on Access to the Courts. The Commission is comprised
46 of 11 members, representing the courts, State Bar, USD Knudson School of Law, and legal aid
47 organizations. The Commission's work will include recommending improvements in court processes,
48 developing legal forms and documents, improving resources for legal aid, creating models to assist
49 self-represented litigants, utilizing technology, and recommending rule changes to improve the
50 availability of legal services throughout the state.

1 The work of the Commission is still in its infancy, but I am excited about its prospects. I greatly
2 appreciate the work of Commission Chair Judge Jon Sogn from Sioux Falls, and the entire
3 Commission as they work to improve access to justice in civil cases and enhance public trust and
4 confidence in the courts.

5 **Probation and Pretrial Services**

6 Probation services is another focus of our strategic plan. In South Dakota, a court may impose
7 probation, with conditions, as part of a suspended county jail or prison sentence. Within the UJS,
8 probation services are managed by court services. Court services officers oversee both adult and
9 juvenile probationers, ensuring compliance with court-ordered sentencing conditions and facilitating
10 rehabilitation efforts.

11 It is important to distinguish probation from parole. While probation is a court-ordered
12 sentence involving a period of supervision as part of a suspended incarceration, parole involves
13 conditional release from prison and is administered by the South Dakota Department of Corrections,
14 not the UJS.

15 During FY2024, UJS court services officers supervised 7,469 adults and 1,490 youth on
16 probation. The dedicated efforts of our court services officers to provide supervision and connect
17 individuals with the appropriate community resources and support in their path toward success are
18 both demanding and deeply rewarding. Judges and court services officers alike can share countless
19 stories of individuals who have transformed their lives to become productive members of society.
20 This past fiscal year, a total of 1,780 adults and 1,038 juveniles were successfully discharged from
21 probation.

22 Before I talk about some of our efforts to enhance probation, I want to share with you just a
23 few examples of some of the impactful work being done by court services in our communities. Danica
24 is the first individual I want to highlight whose life was dramatically changed while on probation.

25 Between the ages of 14 and 18, Danica struggled with alcohol addiction and drug abuse. She
26 spent two and a half years on probation under the supervision of CSOs Tim Moon and Jennifer
27 Gropper from Mitchell. During this time, Danica worked to overcome her addictions, as well as
28 challenges relating to her family history, peers, and socio-economic barriers. While on probation,
29 she focused on accountability, sobriety, personal growth, goal setting, addressing the causes of her
30 addictions, and developing coping skills. Now as an adult, Danica is a strong leader, a devoted
31 mother, and a good role model for her community. Danica was named Miss Mount Rushmore last
32 May and is a Miss South Dakota SLICC ambassador, where her advocacy work is centered on
33 sobriety.

34 Danica explained, "I go around to different treatment centers, and I speak, and I tell my story,
35 and I share my experience, strength and hope. It's not about where you've been. It's about where
36 you're going."

37 Corrine was arrested in July 2023 by South Dakota Highway Patrol Trooper Troy Archambeault
38 for possession of a controlled substance. She was subsequently sentenced to a suspended sentence
39 with probation and has been successfully supervised by Court Services Officer Nickol Penrod. On
40 October 15, 2024, at the Hughes County Courthouse, Corrine paid tribute to Trooper Archambeault
41 and CSO Penrod for saving and turning her life around. She presented both with a star quilt. Corrine
42 told CSO Penrod early on in her probation that she felt like the trooper that arrested her saved her
43 life. CSO Penrod reports that Corrine is doing "awesome." She has earned three more credits toward
44 her online degree through Sinte Gleska University and is seeking employment. Corrine's
45 relationships with her children and family have been restored and she will be discharged from
46 probation soon.

47 Finally, I want to share the story of Chris, who was arrested at age 14 for truancy, second-
48 degree burglary, breaking and entering, and alcohol consumption. As a high-risk, high-need
49 juvenile, Chris spent ages 15 to 16 under the supervision of CSO Amie Weglin. With CSO Weglin's
50 support and the help of community services, Chris overcame substance abuse, family and social
51 challenges, and anger issues while continuing to address childhood trauma. Today, at age 26, Chris

1 has served in the U.S. Armed Forces and on active duty. He is pursuing a career as an electrician
2 and aspires to become a business owner.

3 CSO Weglin works closely with treatment facilities, juvenile services centers, and counselors
4 to ensure juveniles are getting the services they need. Reflecting on her work, CSO Weglin said, "I
5 feel juvenile delinquency and high-risk juveniles are often a product of their environment. I feel we
6 can offer all the services we have to juveniles, but until the family unit and community is invested,
7 long-term success is more difficult. We have many parents who are addicts; lack parenting skills;
8 have mental health barriers, financial barriers, or legal issues themselves; and who would prefer
9 the juvenile be removed from the home."

10 These individual stories highlight just a few of the hundreds of individuals who successfully
11 complete probation each year. Their stories also underscore the fact that many of these offenders
12 are juveniles or young adults. In 2023, the UJS sponsored legislation to create an emerging adult
13 task force to examine barriers to services for adults aged 18 to 25 involved in the justice system.
14 The purpose of the task force was to explore opportunities to improve services and reduce
15 recidivism. In addition to specific training focused on rehabilitating young adult, out of the work of
16 this task force we have begun work on several pilot projects. While these programs are in their early
17 stages, we believe they have potential to be successful in keeping young offenders out of further
18 involvement in the justice system.

19 There are more opportunities for enhancing probation services for juveniles and young adults,
20 as we consider expanding mentoring and providing safe housing to support individuals working
21 toward restoration. For these types of services to be successful, we will need to engage community
22 volunteers, groups, and churches to walk alongside these young people. It is not easy work. If we
23 really want to see individuals overcome addictions and other life controlling obstacles, however, it
24 will take the active involvement of communities across South Dakota.

25 Another way to improve rehabilitation outcomes is through enhancing the services individuals
26 receive before trial, not just afterward. Pretrial services assist people who are charged with crimes
27 and awaiting a court date. CSOs can help gather and present information about newly-arrested
28 individuals and available release options to be used to determine what, if any, conditions should be
29 put in place prior to the person's pretrial release. Pretrial services can also provide supervision of
30 individuals released from custody, monitor their compliance with release conditions, and connect
31 them with rehabilitative services. These services are all aimed at keeping our communities safe,
32 while ensuring individuals appear for their scheduled court appearances.

33 Some larger South Dakota counties, such as Minnehaha and Pennington, have introduced
34 limited pretrial services programs to assist those in the pretrial stages of the criminal justice system.
35 The services available through these programs include assistance with completing information for
36 the judge, offering court reminders, overseeing pretrial check-ins, and other duties as needed to
37 support this phase of the justice process. Both counties have received grants to help fund these
38 programs through their respective sheriff's departments.

39 Pennington County recently secured an additional grant for a pilot project to further explore a
40 pretrial supervision program provided by court services. The two main goals of the program are to
41 ensure that individuals attend their court dates and that they do so without further contact with law
42 enforcement. We are conducting four site visits to learn how court systems in other states have
43 implemented pretrial supervision in their communities.

44 A statewide pretrial services program will not take the place of anything currently happening
45 in our justice system. It is intended to be an additional tool available to the courts that does not
46 currently exist. Judges make bond decisions every day, determining whether an individual is a flight
47 risk and whether they can safely be released in the community prior to trial. Often judges place
48 conditions upon individuals released on bond, but we have limited ability to ensure those conditions
49 are being followed. Pretrial services will provide the necessary supervision for individuals released
50 on bond and create opportunities for collaboration with counties and prosecutors to develop
51 diversion programs, which most counties do not have the resources to provide at this time.

1 As we think about moving forward with this project, it is important to note that the South
2 Dakota judicial system currently does not have statutory authority to monitor adults prior to
3 conviction. Once our pilot project work is completed, we anticipate offering legislation to create this
4 authority. We will continue to work with counties, states attorneys, public defenders, and community
5 partners for their assistance and input as we work toward the potential implementation of a pretrial
6 services program in South Dakota.

7 **Treatment Courts**

8 As a part of the UJS' work both in the courtroom and through probation services, South
9 Dakota's treatment courts provide enhanced opportunities to address addiction or mental health
10 issues. Individuals with mental health issues or who are struggling with addiction to alcohol or drugs
11 commit crimes at significantly higher rates than the general population. Unfortunately, these issues
12 are also some of the most difficult to rehabilitate.

13 South Dakota's 17 treatment courts, including drug court, DUI court, veterans court, and
14 mental health court, play a vital role in addressing these issues. Treatment courts provide a long-
15 term treatment program, with intensive supervision by the treatment court team, focused on
16 addressing the root causes of criminal behavior. Treatment courts help participants reintegrate into
17 society and have been shown to significantly reduce re-offense rates compared to traditional justice
18 methods.

19 South Dakota's treatment courts have served a total of 2,684 participants since inception. Of
20 these, 1,227 individuals successfully completed the program, achieving a graduation rate of 57%.
21 We exceeded projections for admissions in FY2024 by serving 809 participants in the program—
22 significantly more than the 698 anticipated and a 21% increase from the 669 clients served in
23 FY2023.

24 The average length of a treatment court program is 491 days. The average age of treatment
25 court participants is 35, and the most common addictions among participants are to alcohol (41%)
26 and methamphetamine (40.9%).

27 The future looks much different for those who have successfully completed a treatment court
28 program. These individuals experience increased stability, benefiting from access to housing
29 resources, financial counseling, and improved employment opportunities driven by reduced
30 substance abuse. They achieve better physical and mental health through consistent treatment,
31 therapy, and health care services, resulting in fewer emergency room visits and reduced long-term
32 health complications. Many participants pursue GEDs or vocational training, with a greater likelihood
33 of completing higher education. Through counseling and behavioral changes, they repair and
34 strengthen family relationships, often regaining custody of their children. Structured payment plans
35 and financial management support enables participants to meet child support obligations more
36 effectively. Additionally, sobriety and prenatal care programs reduce the likelihood of drug-affected
37 births and improve maternal health outcomes.

38 The human condition and free choice create complexities that services alone will never fully
39 resolve, but probation and treatment courts can and do play a significant role in helping individuals
40 turn their lives around. Our role as a court system in helping to rehabilitate individuals is ultimately
41 about providing the most effective services possible. We will continue to make this our mission every
42 day.

43 **Courthouse and Judicial Security**

44 Courthouse and judicial security also remain important priorities for the UJS. The necessity of
45 this commitment is underscored by the 56 threats and incidents reported by UJS judges and
46 employees over the past year.

47 Our effort to improve courthouse security across South Dakota has involved a three-pronged
48 approach. The first prong is the creation of local courthouse security committees made up of court
49 and county personnel, as well as law enforcement. We now have committees in 51 of the 63 counties
50 where courthouses are located. The second prong involves conducting security assessments by

1 Homeland Security and the U.S. Marshall's Service to identify potential security gaps at each
2 courthouse in the state. To date, 56 site assessments of courthouse locations have been completed.
3 These assessments help to guide the third prong of our courthouse security initiative, which is the
4 use of grant funding to assist counties to implement recommended security improvements at
5 courthouses.

6 The grants are available as a result of the Legislature's one-time \$5 million appropriation three
7 years ago, enabling the UJS to work with counties to improve courthouse security. The UJS
8 administers the grant program, and the grants pay for 75% of the needed security upgrades at
9 courthouses. Over the last two and a half years, this funding has significantly enhanced security at
10 many courthouses. This past year, nearly \$900,000 in courthouse security improvements were
11 approved for projects statewide. Improvements have included installing camera systems, duress
12 alarms, security doors, and upgrading courthouse lighting and parking areas.

13 Two upcoming projects are a complete access control system for 63 doors and two elevators
14 at the Pennington County Courthouse and the construction of a new security checkpoint in the
15 entrance of the Brown County Courthouse. The UJS will continue to utilize data on security incidents
16 and site assessments to determine security gaps and seek future funding from the Legislature as
17 needed for ongoing security efforts and enhancements of our court facilities.

18 Unfortunately, judicial security must also extend outside the walls of the courthouse. Over the
19 past several years, judges and their families across the country have been threatened, shot, or killed
20 in or near their own homes. I recently had the opportunity to hear Texas District Court Judge Julie
21 Kocurek tell her story of being shot multiple times in the driveway of her home as she and her son
22 were returning home from a Friday night high school football game. The gunman targeted her solely
23 because he was a defendant in a criminal case before Judge Kocurek. After months of rehabilitation,
24 Judge Kocurek returned to her work and continues to serve today. Her story is a reminder of the
25 risk judges face every day.

26 The UJS continues to work on enhancing personal judicial security through threat monitoring.
27 We have also taken steps to safeguard judges' personal identifying information and made those
28 services available to employees at a reduced cost.

29 **Conclusion**

30 The court system's work that I have described today could only be accomplished through the
31 many dedicated judges and court employees of the UJS. Facilitating public trust and confidence in
32 the courts always starts with our people. They are the face of justice for individuals entering the
33 court system every day. It is our goal to create a culture where people entering the courts interact
34 with staff who are knowledgeable, caring, and helpful. We strive for people to see judges who are
35 hardworking, take the time to hear from all the parties, efficiently move cases forward, and are
36 knowledgeable and committed to following the law. We are fortunate to have excellent judges and
37 staff in our South Dakota courts, and I am proud to stand here today to talk about their good work.

38 Last week, I began my second four-year term as Chief Justice of the South Dakota Supreme
39 Court. At the same time, I also had the pleasure of reappointing the seven presiding circuit judges
40 in each of our circuits in South Dakota. These judges are Judge Cheryle Gering, Judge Robin
41 Houwman, Judge Greg Stoltenburg, Judge Mike Day, Judge Gregg Magera, Judge Christina Klinger,
42 and Judge Robert Gusinsky. They do the heavy lifting of managing staff within their circuits and
43 ensuring that cases are resolved efficiently and effectively. They are dedicated public servants, and
44 I appreciate their commitment to the work of the courts.

45 As I end today, I want to thank my colleagues—Justices Janine Kern, Mark Salter, Patty
46 DeVaney, and Scott Myren—for their confidence in giving me another opportunity to serve in this
47 capacity. I also appreciate their work in leading and setting the vision for the court system in South
48 Dakota; it is truly a joint effort. The five Justices on the South Dakota Supreme Court bench, me
49 included, all grew up in small towns in South Dakota. We often joke that Justice Salter grew up in a
50 "metropolis"—Parker, a town of just over 1,000—as compared to the towns of Lake Andes, Mound
51 City, Polo, and Wakonda. All five of us are South Dakotans at heart. As such, we are dedicated to
52 leading a court system worthy of the faith and trust of every South Dakotan. I am grateful for your
53 support in this mission. Thank you.

1 Sen. Mehlhaff moved that the Joint Session do now recess until 1:00 p.m.

2 Which motion prevailed, and at 10:55 a.m. the Joint Session recessed.

3 **RECESS**

4 The Joint Session reconvened at 1:00 p.m., the President presiding.

5 The Senate reconvened with the House of Representatives in the House Chamber for the
6 purpose of receiving a message on the State of the Tribes from the Honorable J. Garrett Renville,
7 Chairman, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe. The President of the Senate, Larry Rhoden, presided.

8 Sen. Mehlhaff moved that a committee of seven on the part of the Senate and a committee of
9 seven on the part of the House be appointed to escort Chairman J. Garrett Renville to the rostrum.

10 Which motion prevailed and the President announced as such committee Sens. Karr, Mehlhaff,
11 Perry, Larson, Smith, Rohl, and Foster on the part of the Senate and Reps. Lems, Odenbach,
12 Overweg, Mortenson, Healy, Emery, and Pourier on the part of the House.

13 The Lieutenant Governor, Larry Rhoden, introduced the Honorable J. Garrett Renville, who
14 delivered the State of the Tribes Address.

15 **2025 STATE OF THE TRIBES ADDRESS**

16 Hau Mitakyapi, Greetings

17 Lt Governor Rhoden, Speaker Hansen, Members of the 100th Legislative Session, esteemed
18 Tribal Leaders.

19 It is both an honor and a privilege to address you today as Chairman of Sisseton Wahpeton
20 Oyate, a tribal nation located in the Northeast corner of the State. The Sisseton Wahpeton shares
21 geography with both South and North Dakota with a tribal enrollment of over 14,000 members. I
22 am also a resident of Legislative District One. The Sisseton Wahpeton is home to the original Dakota
23 people.

24 This is why I am honored by this opportunity to address the legislature at the start of this
25 historic 100th Session on behalf of the nine Tribal Nations of the Oceti Sakowin that share the
26 common borders with the Great State of South Dakota,

27 As I look around this chamber, I see leaders from every corner of our state—people of diverse
28 backgrounds, united by a shared dedication to making South Dakota stronger, fairer, and more
29 prosperous. Likewise, our Tribal Leaders and Councilmembers work tirelessly with the same
30 commitment to uplift and empower our Tribal Nations.

31 Today, I want to speak from a Tribal Leadership perspective on how we can build that future
32 together—through collaboration and open communication between tribes, the state, and local
33 businesses for the benefit of our mutual citizens. Though we might not agree on all issues, which is
34 ok, but, in the areas that we do, we must work to uplift those opportunities for future generations.

35 Now, before we delve into the challenges ahead, let me share this: If you think getting a
36 legislature to agree on something is tough, try organizing a tribal council meeting where every
37 member feels compelled to share a story first. But here's the truth—whether in a tribal council or
38 this legislature, progress is not about perfection; it's about persistence, honest communication, and
39 partnership.

1 Today, I believe we are at a historic moment. As we speak, the Governor is in Washington, DC
2 meeting with Members of the Senate in preparation for her confirmation proceedings to become the
3 Nation’s next Secretary of Homeland Security. A Senate led by a South Dakotan named John Thune,
4 who within 20 years of defeating a previous South Dakotan leader of the Senate now assumes the
5 Majority Leader position himself. Meanwhile, Congressman Johnson is brokering leadership positions
6 and bringing about appropriation bills in a divided House of Representatives. South Dakota is now
7 literally at the center of the political universe. We have an opportunity now to bring about real
8 change for our people at all levels of government—but we must work together.

9 Which brings me to the central idea of improving our mutual relationship, honest and open
10 communication.

11 Over the past several years there has been a series of breakdowns in the Government-to-
12 Government Engagement that has not benefited our mutual citizens. Statements made and actions
13 taken without communication has created an environment of distrust between our sovereign nations
14 and the State. Legislation that impacts our Tribal Budgets, statements on our parents’ engagement
15 on education, to claims that our tribal leaders are involved in cartel activities have eroded the bonds
16 that previous leaders worked so hard to build.

17 Today, let’s reset. Today let’s begin to rebuild. Today, let’s start to listen and actually hear.
18 Indian Country is not a political party, we are Pte Oyate (Buffalo People)

19 Our needs are not based on political ideals but real-world problems and treaty obligations. No
20 party holds our vision OR our votes. No party operates in our tribal elections. So, let us begin...

21 **Law Enforcement, Increasing the Coverage Gap**

22 Tribal lands make up over 12% of the total land...that is 77,000 square miles or 5 million acres
23 within the borders of South Dakota. However, you choose to break it down this is a vast amount of
24 area with very low law enforcement due to woefully underfunded federal budgets, the Crow Creek
25 Sioux Tribe has only three officers, Lower Brule has two, Yankton two, Rosebud 14, and my own
26 Sisseton has 14... This is a serious problem and it is a problem we have been communicating to the
27 legislature for over six years. But last year a change happened. This esteemed body, under the
28 leadership of Representative Rocky Blare and Senator Red Dawn Foster...at the Request of the
29 Yankton and Rosebud Sioux Tribes, passed Resolution 6011 to ask congress to support a regional
30 BIA Law Enforcement Academy.

31 That Resolution worked. Congress moved and has begun to address the dire need for more
32 law enforcement in Indian Country. But here, this past Summer, Attorney General Jackley hosted a
33 tribal police academy with the support of BIA at the State’s George S. Mickelson Criminal Justice
34 Center. Nine Tribal Officers along with 12 other officers from around the State became the first
35 graduates. Our hope is that this becomes permanent and an official BIA academy. We need our
36 officers trained locally so that they stay locally.

37 As stated by a colleague at Standing Rock, “crime does not respect political boundaries.” It
38 takes all of us working together to solve these problems.

39 **Honoring Agreements**

40 Tribal Governments have signed Tax Agreements with the State to collect tax revenue on
41 behalf of the Tribes. These agreements are vital to tribal government budgets and must be honored.
42 Legislation has been proposed in previous sessions that sought to eliminate the sales tax without
43 regard to how the proposals would impact the State Tax Agreements with the Tribes and the
44 immediate impact on Tribal Governments. Though defeated, this action eroded trust in agreements
45 between the State and Tribes.

1 This erosion could have been easily prevented if the Tribes had been consulted and policy
2 implementation discussed prior to fast-tracked legislation.

3 We thank you for defeating that bill. Now we need your help on transparency.

4 This year we are requesting the legislature require the Department of Revenue to show how
5 they are collecting online sales tax revenue from tribal lands. These revenues are not stated in
6 compacts but had been promised to the Tribes after Wayfair. We would like an accounting of how
7 much online tax was collected from Tribal areas and how much was returned to the Tribes from
8 which they were collected. Transparency and trust are vital. We respectfully ask you to support HB
9 1018, An Act to require the Department of Revenue provide an annual report to tribal governments
10 regarding certain tax collections.

11 We are also interested in another idea that could be developed into legislation. A bill that would
12 provide for a capital gains tax exclusion for land that is sold to tribal interest and transferred back
13 into tribal ownership- these types of land-back transfers would enhance tribal economic activity by
14 going into agricultural use and make right lands that were once allotted against many tribes wishes.

15 **Revitalizing Agriculture: Farming Our Own Lands**

16 Agriculture has always been the heart of South Dakota’s economy. It’s more than just a job—
17 it’s a way of life. However, we face some challenges: much of the land our Tribal Nations reside on
18 isn’t ideal for farming, and farmers across the state are dealing with higher costs and lower profits.

19 It does not have to be this way. By empowering tribal nations to farm their own lands, we can
20 stimulate local economies, increase food security, and boost agricultural output for the entire state.

21 This is about more than economics. It is about reclaiming a relationship with the land that our
22 ancestors honored for generations. By blending traditional wisdom with modern practices, we can
23 pioneer sustainable agriculture that respects the land and feeds our communities.

24 I invite state leaders and local businesses to join us in this effort. Together, we can create
25 training programs, share resources, and open markets for crops and livestock raised on tribal lands.
26 In doing so, we will strengthen South Dakota’s agricultural legacy while honoring the spirit of the
27 land itself.

28 **Education: The Heart of Our Future**

29 If agriculture is our backbone, education is our heart. It empowers our children to dream,
30 innovate, and lead. Yet, in too many of our communities, education remains an unmet promise.

31 Our tribal schools face unique challenges—underfunding, high dropout rates, and a lack of
32 culturally relevant curricula. But these challenges are not insurmountable. Imagine a South Dakota
33 where every child, whether in Pine Ridge, Pierre, or Sisseton have access to the same high-quality
34 education. Imagine classrooms where Native history and culture are celebrated, not as a side note,
35 but as a fundamental part of learning and history of South Dakota. I applaud previous efforts of
36 elevating this history

37 We can make this vision a reality by investing in tribal schools, building partnerships between
38 state universities and tribal colleges, and supporting programs that inspire native students to pursue
39 careers in teaching, healthcare, and technology. Education is a bridge from our past to our future.
40 Let’s ensure it’s a bridge every child can cross.

41 I understand several bills are already introduced to look at options for our parents and students
42 in education, we are curious to see how these bills work in regards to impact aid, Bureau of Indian
43 Education students, impact on BIE funding, and other issues. We are not stating opposition but we
44 are again asking that the state work with the Tribes to ensure that all students are being considered.

1 In addition, we support the return of the Office of Indian Education back to the Department of
2 Education, as was the purpose when it was created in the 2007 Indian Education Act. The office's
3 mission was to "support initiatives that help students and educators appreciate South Dakota's
4 American Indian culture. To be able to do this in partnership, it makes complete sense to reintroduce
5 the Indian education advisory council with education representatives from all nine South Dakota
6 Tribes.

7 **Tribal Nations-Managed Care: A Collaborative Opportunity**

8 Let's talk about healthcare—because there is no prosperity without well-being. For too long,
9 many communities in South Dakota, both tribal and non-tribal, have faced significant barriers to
10 quality healthcare. Some barriers are geographic; others are systemic. But all are solvable—if we
11 work together.

12 Where no family has to travel hours for medical care, where children grow up healthy, and
13 where our elders receive the dignity and care they deserve. That future is within reach—if we
14 continue the work we started over a year ago with Governor Noem and DSS Secretary Althoff.

15 Under Sec. 5006 in the American Rescue and Recovery Act (ARRA) of 2009 Protections for
16 Indians under Medicaid and CHIP. Tribes have the opportunity to establish an Indian Managed
17 Health Care Entity to Self-Determine more health care opportunities, with Sisseton Wahpeton taking
18 a lead role and our sister tribes in support we are hoping to establish this opportunity while,
19 partnering with a local South Dakota Business. With a better coordination of care – shifting a focus
20 of reactive to proactive when it comes to Medicaid member health outcomes. The benefits of an
21 Indian Managed Care Entity to the State could be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. It contributes
22 to state budget; stability and predictability by providing a set, pre-negotiated cost for healthcare
23 services to the states Medicaid program.

24 **A Shared History, A Unified Future**

25 South Dakota's history is complex. It is a story of resilience and conflict, division and unity.
26 But while we must acknowledge the challenges of the past, we must also recognize our shared desire
27 to write a new chapter together.

28 This chapter begins with truth. Yes, there have been struggles—land disputes, policy
29 disagreements, broken promises. But there have also been moments of cooperation—when
30 neighbors came together to face challenges greater than any one group could solve alone.

31 Let us learn from both the struggles and the successes. Let us commit to listening, respecting,
32 and working together—not as adversaries, but as allies.

33 Let us start to update our past. We are asking the State to support a Resolution calling on
34 Congress to remove the exile of the Dakota People from Minnesota by amending the Dakota Removal
35 Act of 1863. We are not looking for land, or any other concessions. We seek only to remove the
36 exile language. This act is a source of great historical trauma to the Dakota people and we must
37 heal from that past if we are to evolve as healthy people in the future. Minnesota passed a similar
38 resolution in 2009. We ask for your support. As stated earlier, Resolutions from this body to
39 Congress- WORK!!

40 **A Call to Action**

41 This past November the country voted for change. Change that includes respect for property
42 rights and the environment. Change to reduce the size of the federal government while also shifting
43 programs more directly to the local level. Change in how we communicate to our mutual citizens.

44 Change is good. The Tribes agree that a reduction in bureaucratic overhead could be extremely
45 beneficial for Tribes like ours, especially for top heavy programs like Health Services and Housing.

1 In addition, the move to shift programs within the federal government to areas with stronger
2 implementation infrastructures could result in better use of limited program dollars.

3 As we did on law enforcement last year, we will be kindly requesting this body for a Resolution
4 to ask congress to reauthorize the Native American Housing and Self Determination Act, a program
5 much needed to help reduce the housing crisis in tribal areas. A stable home creates a stable
6 environment for our children and a stable environment creates a healthy education and healthy
7 education creates strong economies

8 On the State level the citizens voted for change to ensure respect for property rights and the
9 environment in regards to the carbon pipeline. This change is welcomed by the Tribes.

10 I want to make clear to this body. AS WE OPPOSED DAPL and KXL, THE NINE TRIBAL
11 GOVERNMENTS OPPOSE THE CARBON PIPELINE—PERIOD!

12 What does this mean for us here, today? It means we cannot afford to wait for someone else
13 to lead. The challenges we face—whether in healthcare, law enforcement, agriculture, or education—
14 are urgent. And the opportunities before us are great.

15 It is time to reset our relationships. It is time to truly listen and hear each other. It is time we
16 work for our citizens. It is time we begin to trust.

17 Thus, today I call on this 100th legislature to join us in a new era of collaboration and
18 communication. Let us craft policies that empower tribal nations to manage their own healthcare
19 systems. Let us invest in agricultural initiatives that make full use of our state’s lands and talents.
20 Let us ensure every child, in every community, receives the education they deserve. Let’s work to
21 secure our communities and let’s build an environment in which our economies can thrive.

22 South Dakota’s strength lies not in our divisions, but in our diversity. We are richer because of
23 the cultures, traditions, and perspectives we share. When we work together, there is nothing we
24 cannot achieve.

25 **Conclusion**

26 As I close, I leave you with the words of the great Lakota leader Sitting Bull: “Let us put our
27 minds together and see what life we can make for our children.” That is the challenge before us
28 today.

29 Let us rise to meet it—not just as tribal leaders or state legislators, but as parents, neighbors,
30 and South Dakotans. Because the future we build together will be the legacy we leave behind.

31 Lastly, Success is not easy, it takes work. But as you embark on this 100th Legislative Session,
32 let’s remember it takes only one success to rewrite history. Let’s find a way to rewrite ours and
33 bring success to those we serve.

34 Wopida, Thank you

35 Senator Mehlhaff moved that the Joint Session do now dissolve.

36 Which motion prevailed.

