



2025 South Dakota Legislature

Senate Commemoration 811

*Introduced by: **Senators** Foster and Perry and **Representatives** Pourier and Uhre-Balk*

1 **A LEGISLATIVE COMMEMORATION, Honoring Thomas Shortbull, a trailblazer and**
 2 **leader dedicated to empowering Native communities through education,**
 3 **advocacy, and leadership.**

4 WHEREAS, Thomas Shortbull, a trailblazer and visionary leader, has dedicated his life to
 5 empowering Native communities, advancing Native education, and advocating for Native
 6 voices within South Dakota; and

7 WHEREAS, Thomas served as the President of Oglala Lakota College in two distinct terms,
 8 from 1975 to 1979 and from 1995 to 2017, leaving a transformative legacy that revolutionized
 9 the institution and the lives of countless students across South Dakota, particularly within
 10 Native communities; and

11 WHEREAS, under Thomas's leadership, the Oglala Lakota College achieved remarkable
 12 growth and national recognition, expanding the campus to seven additional centers, ensuring
 13 the preservation of the Lakota culture and language while fostering academic excellence; and

14 WHEREAS, efforts by Thomas led to the substantial increase in endowments received by
 15 Oglala Lakota College, which enabled Oglala Lakota College to expand its offerings and
 16 produce highly successful graduates in fields including nursing, education, Native studies,
 17 office technology, construction, and auto mechanics; and

18 WHEREAS, Thomas bolstered Oglala Lakota College to become a top producer of degrees
 19 for Native students, with the college excelling in areas such as Native studies, education,
 20 business, and social services, and earning high rankings by national assessments of Native
 21 American higher education; and

22 WHEREAS, Thomas was instrumental in the formation of the Task Force on Indian-State
 23 Government Relations in 1973, which recommended progressive legislation that led to the

1 creation of a voting district that enabled Native Americans in Shannon and Todd counties to
2 exercise their rights and elect state representatives who truly reflected their needs; and

3 WHEREAS, Thomas Shortbull's career and achievements exemplify the power of education
4 to transform lives, build communities, and create lasting change, and his work continues to
5 serve as a beacon of hope for Native communities in South Dakota and the United States;

6 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT COMMEMORATED, by the One Hundredth Legislature of the State
7 of South Dakota, that Thomas Shortbull has made a positive difference to Native communities
8 in the State of South Dakota, and his tireless efforts have contributed to Native students
9 having access to quality education and opportunities to succeed.