



2026 South Dakota Legislature

Senate Bill 137

Introduced by: **Senator Hulse**

1 **An Act to establish procedures for anti-SLAPP actions to protect the exercise of a**
 2 **person's constitutional rights, including freedom of speech.**

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA:

4 **Section 1. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

5 Except as otherwise provided in section 2 of this Act, the provisions of this chapter
 6 apply to a cause of action against a person based on the person's protected public
 7 expression. For purposes of this chapter, "protected public expression" includes:

- 8 (1) Communication in a legislative, executive, judicial, administrative, or other
 9 governmental proceeding;
 10 (2) Communication on an issue under consideration or review in a legislative,
 11 executive, judicial, administrative, or other governmental proceeding; or
 12 (3) Exercise of the person's right of freedom of speech or of the press, the right to
 13 assemble or petition, or the right of association, as guaranteed by the United States
 14 Constitution or South Dakota Constitution, on a matter of public concern.

15 **Section 2. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

- 16 The provisions of this chapter do not apply to a cause of action asserted:
 17 (1) Against a governmental unit or an employee or agent of a governmental unit acting
 18 or purporting to act in an official capacity;
 19 (2) By a governmental unit or an employee or agent of a governmental unit acting in
 20 an official capacity to enforce a law, rule, regulation, or ordinance to protect against
 21 an imminent threat to public health or safety; or
 22 (3) Against a person primarily engaged in the business of selling or leasing goods or
 23 services, if the cause of action arises out of a communication or lack of
 24 communication related to the person's sale or lease of the goods or services.

1 **Section 3. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

2 No later than sixty days after a party is served with a complaint, crossclaim,
3 counterclaim, third-party complaint, or other pleading that asserts a cause of action to
4 which the provisions of this chapter apply, or at a later time upon a showing of good cause,
5 the party may file a special motion for expedited relief to dismiss the cause of action or
6 part of the cause of action.

7 **Section 4. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

8 Except as otherwise provided in sections 5 and 6 of this Act, upon the filing of a
9 motion under section 3 of this Act:

- 10 (1) All other proceedings between the moving party and responding party, including
11 discovery and a pending hearing or motion, are stayed; and
12 (2) On further motion by the moving party, the court may stay a hearing or motion
13 involving another party, or discovery by another party, if the hearing or ruling on
14 the motion would adjudicate, or the discovery would relate to, an issue material to
15 the motion under section 3 of this Act.

16 A stay under this section remains in effect until entry of an order ruling on the
17 motion under section 3 of this Act and expiration of the time under section 11 of this Act
18 for the moving party to appeal the order.

19 During a stay under this section, the court must allow limited discovery if a party
20 shows that specific information is necessary to establish whether a party has satisfied or
21 failed to satisfy a burden under section 10 of this Act and the information is not reasonably
22 available unless discovery is allowed.

23 Except as otherwise provided in sections 5 and 6 of this Act, if a party appeals from
24 an order ruling on a motion under section 3 of this Act, all proceedings between all parties
25 to the action must be stayed. The stay must remain in effect until the conclusion of the
26 appeal.

27 **Section 5. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

28 During a stay under section 4 of this Act, the court may hear and rule on:

- 29 (1) A motion unrelated to the motion under section 3 of this Act; and
30 (2) A motion seeking a special or preliminary injunction to protect against an imminent
31 threat to public health or safety.

1 **Section 6. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

2 A stay under section 4 of this Act does not apply to:

3 (1) A motion under section 12 of this Act for costs, attorney fees, and expenses; or

4 (2) A party's ability to voluntarily dismiss a cause of action or part of a cause of action,
5 or a motion to sever a cause of action.

6 **Section 7. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

7 The court shall hear a motion under section 3 of this Act no later than sixty days
8 after the filing of the motion, unless the court orders a later hearing:

9 (1) To allow limited discovery under section 4 of this Act; or

10 (2) For other good cause.

11 If the court orders a later hearing under subdivision (1), the court must hear the
12 motion under section 3 of this Act no later than sixty days after the court order allowing
13 limited discovery, unless the court orders a later hearing under subsection (2), in which
14 case the hearing must be held in an expedited manner.

15 **Section 8. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

16 In ruling on a motion under section 3 of this Act, the court shall consider the
17 pleadings, the motion, any reply or response to the motion, and any evidence that could
18 be considered in ruling on a motion for summary judgment.

19 **Section 9. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

20 In ruling on a motion under section 3 of this Act, the court shall dismiss with
21 prejudice a cause of action, or part of a cause of action, if:

22 (1) The moving party establishes under section 1 of this Act that the provisions of this
23 chapter apply;

24 (2) The responding party fails to establish under section 2 of this Act that the provisions
25 of this chapter do not apply; and

26 (3) Either:

27 (a) The responding party fails to establish a prima facie case as to each
28 essential element of the cause of action; or

29 (b) The moving party establishes that the responding party failed to state a
30 cause of action upon which relief can be granted, or there is no genuine

1 issue as to any material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment
2 as a matter of law on the cause of action or part of the action.

3 A voluntary dismissal without prejudice of a responding party's cause of action, or
4 part of a cause of action, that is the subject of a motion under section 3 of this Act, does
5 not affect a moving party's right to obtain a ruling on the motion and seek costs, attorney
6 fees, and expenses under section 12 of this Act.

7 A voluntary dismissal with prejudice of a responding party's cause of action, or part
8 of a cause of action, that is the subject of a motion under section 3 of this Act establishes,
9 for the purpose of section 12 of this Act, that the moving party prevailed on the motion.

10 **Section 10. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

11 The court shall rule on a motion under section 3 of this Act no later than sixty days
12 after a hearing under section 7 of this Act.

13 **Section 11. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

14 A moving party may appeal as a matter of right from an order denying, in whole
15 or in part, a motion under section 3 of this Act. The appeal must be filed no later than
16 thirty days after entry of the order.

17 **Section 12. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 15:**

18 The court shall award court costs, reasonable attorney fees, and reasonable
19 litigation expenses related to a motion filed under section 3 of this Act:

20 (1) To the moving party, if the moving party prevails on the motion; or

21 (2) To the responding party, if the responding party prevails on the motion and the
22 court finds that the motion was commenced or continued without a substantial
23 basis in fact and law and could not be supported by a substantial argument for the
24 extension, modification, or reversal of existing law.