



## 2026 South Dakota Legislature

# House Bill 1270

Introduced by: **Representative** Fitzgerald

1 **An Act to provide an apprenticeship pathway to practice law in South Dakota.**

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

3 **Section 1. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 16:**

4 The Legislature hereby creates a legal apprenticeship pathway to licensure as an  
5 attorney in the state of South Dakota.

6 **Section 2. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 16:**

7 The Legislature hereby creates a legal apprenticeship program if the following  
8 conditions are met:

9 (1) The applicant is a graduate of the University of South Dakota School of Law;

10 (2) The applicant is a resident of the state of South Dakota at the time of  
11 commencement of the apprenticeship and completion; and

12 (3) The applicant successfully completes six hundred seventy-five hours of supervised  
13 apprenticeship under a qualified supervising attorney within the state of South  
14 Dakota.

15 A supervising attorney may include an attorney employed by or associated with a  
16 government legal department, or any attorney engaged in the private practice of law.

17 **Section 3. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 16:**

18 A supervising attorney shall:

19 (1) Be licensed and in good standing to practice law in this state; and

20 (2) Have engaged in the full-time practice of law for not less than seven years.

21 **Section 4. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 16:**

22 The supervising attorney shall certify that:

- 1        (1) The apprentice has faithfully completed six hundred seventy-five hours of  
2        supervised apprenticeship within a period not to exceed one year;  
3        (2) The apprentice has demonstrated satisfactory performance of assigned tasks and  
4        responsibilities; and  
5        (3) The apprentice has demonstrated knowledge and proficiency in legal ethics and  
6        professional responsibility.

7        **Section 5. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 16:**

8                Prior to licensure, each applicant shall undergo and successfully pass a criminal  
9                background investigation pursuant to the provisions of § 16-16-2.6.

10        **Section 6. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 16:**

11                Upon satisfactory completion of all apprenticeship requirements, certification by  
12                the supervising attorney, and fulfillment of all statutory conditions, the apprentice shall  
13                be granted a license to practice law in this state.

14        **Section 7. That a NEW SECTION be added to a NEW CHAPTER in title 16:**

15                As a condition of licensure under this apprenticeship pathway, each newly licensed  
16                attorney shall perform a minimum of fifty hours of pro bono legal services per year for a  
17                period of five years following the date of licensure.