JOURNAL OF THE SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIRST SESSION

FIRST DAY

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
Senate Chamber, Pierre
Tuesday, January 13, 2026

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the thirteenth day of January, A.D., two thousand twenty six, at the hour of twelve o'clock meridian, being the date and hour fixed by the Constitution of the State of South Dakota, for the convening of the Legislature, the One Hundred First regular session of the Senate of the State of South Dakota was called to order by Lieutenant Governor Tonnis H. Venhuizen in the Senate Chamber in the Capitol, in the City of Pierre, the seat of government.

The following prayer was offered by the Chaplain, Rev. Jake Krahn, New Life Assembly of God, Pierre and Gettysburg:

Heavenly Father,

Today we call upon Your name, because You are the God of heaven and earth. We ask from this opening moment of this year's legislative session all the way until its conclusion, that Your divine presence would rest upon every legislator in every aspect of their work.

In James 1:5 we are told that if any of us lacks wisdom, we can ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to us.

As each of these legislators prepares to step into this new session, we know that there will be many challenges in the days ahead, many votes to be held, and many moments where we need that wisdom. Today, God, I ask that You would provide that wisdom in abundance to each one. May this wisdom transcend that of this world and be a wisdom that comes down from above.

Today God, may each one here consecrate themselves to do Your work and to steward well the sacred trust they have been given. In all of it, may the dignity and value of all be honored, and may You be glorified.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States was led by Senate page Finn Bartlett.

12 copies were printed by the South Dakota Legislative Research Council at an estimated cost of $.20 per page.

There being no objection, the Secretary of State's certification of members of the Senate for the One Hundred First Legislative Session was placed in the record without reading.

I, MONAE L. JOHNSON, Secretary of State of the state of South Dakota, do hereby certify that the following members, having been duly elected to the Senate at the general election held on November 5, 2024, and were certified on November 12, 2024. The appointed member to District 22 of the Senate, Brandon Wipf, was certified by me on August 21, 2025. I do hereby certify that these are the members of the South Dakota Senate for the 2026 Legislative Session.

District No. 1:	Brown, Day, Marshall, and Roberts Counties Michael Rohl, Aberdeen
District No. 2:	Minnehaha County Steve Kolbeck, Brandon
District No. 3:	Brown County Carl Perry, Aberdeen
District No. 4:	Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, and Roberts Counties Stephanie Sauder, Bryant
District No. 5:	Codington County Glen Vilhauer, Watertown
District No. 6:	Lincoln County Ernie Otten, Tea
District No. 7:	Brookings County Tim Reed, Brookings
District No. 8:	Brookings, Kingsbury, Lake, and Miner Counties Casey Crabtree, Madison
District No. 9:	Minnehaha County Joy Hohn, Hartford
District No. 10:	Minnehaha County Liz Larson, Sioux Falls
District No. 11:	Minnehaha County Chris Karr, Sioux Falls
District No. 12:	Lincoln and Minnehaha Counties Arch Beal, Sioux Falls
District No. 13:	Lincoln and Minnehaha Counties Sue Peterson, Sioux Falls
District No. 14:	Minnehaha County Larry Zikmund, Sioux Falls
District No. 15:	Minnehaha County Jamie Smith, Sioux Falls
District No. 16:	Lincoln, Turner, and Union Counties Kevin Jensen, Canton

District No. 17:	Clay and Union Counties Sydney Davis, Burbank
District No. 18:	Clay and Yankton Counties Lauren Nelson, Yankton
District No. 19:	Bon Homme, Hanson, Hutchinson, McCook, and Turner Counties Kyle Schoenfish, Scotland
District No. 20:	Davison, Jerauld, Miner, and Sanborn Counties Paul Miskimins, Mitchell
District No. 21:	Aurora, Charles Mix, Douglas, Gregory, and Tripp Counties Mykala Voita, Bonesteel
District No. 22:	Beadle, Clark, and Spink Counties Brandon Wipf, Huron
District No. 23:	Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, Faulk, Hand, McPherson, Potter, and Walworth Counties Mark Lapka, Leola
District No. 24:	Haakon, Hughes, Hyde, Stanley, and Sully Counties Jim Mehlhaff, Pierre
District No. 25:	Minnehaha and Moody Counties Tom Pischke, Dell Rapids
District No. 26:	Brule, Buffalo, Hughes, Hyde, Jones, Lyman, Mellette, and Todd Counties Tamara Grove, Lower Brule
District No. 27:	Bennett, Jackson, Oglala Lakota, and Pennington Counties Red Dawn Foster, Pine Ridge
District No. 28:	Butte, Corson, Dewey, Harding, Perkins, and Ziebach Counties Sam Marty, Prairie City
District No. 29:	Meade County John Carley, Piedmont
District No. 30:	Custer, Fall River, and Pennington Counties Amber Hulse, Hot Springs
District No. 31:	Lawrence County Randy Deibert, Spearfish
District No. 32:	Pennington County Helene Duhamel, Rapid City
District No. 33:	Meade and Pennington Counties Curt Voight, Rapid City
District No. 34:	Pennington County Taffy Howard, Rapid City

District No. 35: Pennington County
Greg Blanc, Rapid City

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the state of South Dakota, this 5th day of January 2026.

Monae L. Johnson
Secretary of State

When the roll was called, all members were present except Sens. Beal and Marty who were excused.

MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that the Senate do now proceed with the organization of the Senate.

Which motion prevailed.

Sen. Chris Karr was elected President Pro Tempore of the Senate for the 2025-2026 legislative term on January 14, 2025.

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that Peggy Laurenz be elected Secretary of the Senate for the One Hundred First Legislative Session.

The question being on Sen. Mehlhaff's motion that Peggy Laurenz be elected Secretary of the Senate for the One Hundred First Legislative Session.

And the roll being called:

Yeas 33, Nays 0, Excused 2, Absent 0

Yeas: Blanc, Carley, Crabtree, Davis, Deibert, Duhamel, Foster, Grove, Hohn, Howard, Hulse, Jensen (Kevin), Karr, Kolbeck (Steve), Lapka, Larson, Mehlhaff, Miskimins, Nelson, Otten, Perry, Peterson (Sue), Pischke, Reed, Rohl, Sauder, Schoenfish, Smith, Vilhauer, Voight, Voita, Wipf, and Zikmund

Excused: Beal and Marty

So the motion having received an affirmative vote of a majority of the members-elect, the President declared the motion prevailed.

The oath of office was administered by the Honorable Robert Gusinsky, Justice of the Supreme Court of the state of South Dakota, to Secretary of the Senate Peggy Laurenz.

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

There being no objection, the reading of the appointments of the employees of the Senate for the One Hundred First Legislative Session was waived.

The President announced the appointment of the following named persons as employees of the Senate for the One Hundred First Legislative Session:

Assistant to the Secretary – Mike Oakland

Assistant to the Secretary – Amanda Marsh

Chief Chaplain – Jake Krahn

Sergeant at Arms – Doug Decker

Assistant Sergeant at Arms – Paul Merriman

Assistant Sergeant at Arms – Dave Bonde

Secretary to the Minority Party – Yuva Chandana

Committee Secretaries – Jean Denton, Amy Hansen, Pam Kean, Mary Kirk, Jeff Mammenga, Doug Mortenson, Anne Reisch

Pages (1st term) – Finn Bartlett, Halle Braun, Siene Geigle, Gage Miotke, Maddie Osthus, Brynn Samson, Brianna Sargent, Mallory Wells

Pages (2nd term) – Aimslee Bunker, Elliott Carbonneau, Madalyn Cole, Sadie Davis, Kaydence De Haan, Isabelle Hotchkiss, Ella Johnson, Elizabeth Meyer, Coltyn Raymond, Samuel Valle

Pages (3rd term) – Esther Burkhalter, Richard Carlson, Lee Decker, Owen Kopfmann, Danni Kotalik, Quynn Nielson, Madison Olson, Ada Rider, Grant Roth, Rachel Steffensen, Tomi White

Pages (4th term) – Levi Atkins, Joshua Brandt, Clare Cordell, Hannah DeLine, Olivia Moffitt, William Penfield, Owen Reed, Lindsey Ronning, Poppy Stevens, Ryler Stevicks, Layla Williams

Pages (5th term) – Carley Crist, Hadley Gjerde, Jaxon Johanneson, Whitney Martinsen, Brody Miller, Bryn Schooley, Makayla Strong

Legislative Interns – Phoebe Allbright, Nate Arens, Ellie Becker, Jayden Bender, Regan Bollweg, Piper Connelly, Cormac Duffy, Samantha Hegge, Claire Koenecke, Isabelle May, Zoe Meinke, Freddy Vizcaya-Garcia, Jamie Ward

The oath of office was administered by the Honorable Robert Gusinsky, Justice of the Supreme Court of the state of South Dakota, to the following named employees:

Assistant to the Secretary – Mike Oakland

Chief Chaplain – Jake Krahn

Sergeant at Arms – Doug Decker

Assistant Sergeant at Arms – Paul Merriman

Assistant Sergeant at Arms - Dave Bonde

Secretary to the Minority Party – Yuva Chandana

Committee Secretaries – Amy Hansen, Mary Kirk, Jeff Mammenga, Doug Mortenson, Anne Reisch

Pages – Finn Bartlett, Halle Braun, Siene Geigle, Gage Miotke, Maddie Osthus, Brynn Samson, Brianna Sargent, Mallory Wells

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

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that the permanent rules of the Senate for the One-hundredth Legislative Session be adopted as the temporary Senate rules for the One Hundred First Legislative Session.

The question being on Sen. Mehlhaff's motion that the permanent rules of the Senate for the One-hundredth Legislative Session be adopted as the temporary Senate rules for the One Hundred First Legislative Session.

And the roll being called:

Yeas 33, Nays 0, Excused 2, Absent 0

Yeas: Blanc, Carley, Crabtree, Davis, Deibert, Duhamel, Foster, Grove, Hohn, Howard, Hulse, Jensen (Kevin), Karr, Kolbeck (Steve), Lapka, Larson, Mehlhaff, Miskimins, Nelson, Otten, Perry, Peterson (Sue), Pischke, Reed, Rohl, Sauder, Schoenfish, Smith, Vilhauer, Voight, Voita, Wipf, and Zikmund

Excused: Beal and Marty

So the motion having received an affirmative vote of a majority of the members-elect, the President declared the motion prevailed.

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that the permanent joint rules of the One-hundredth Legislative Session be adopted as the temporary joint rules for the One Hundred First Legislative Session.

The question being on Sen. Mehlhaff's motion that the permanent joint rules of the One-hundredth Legislative Session be adopted as the temporary joint rules for the One Hundred First Legislative Session.

And the roll being called:

Yeas 33, Nays 0, Excused 2, Absent 0

Yeas: Blanc, Carley, Crabtree, Davis, Deibert, Duhamel, Foster, Grove, Hohn, Howard, Hulse, Jensen (Kevin), Karr, Kolbeck (Steve), Lapka, Larson, Mehlhaff, Miskimins, Nelson, Otten, Perry, Peterson (Sue), Pischke, Reed, Rohl, Sauder, Schoenfish, Smith, Vilhauer, Voight, Voita, Wipf, and Zikmund

Excused: Beal and Marty

So the motion having received an affirmative vote of a majority of the members-elect, the President declared the motion prevailed.

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that a committee of five on the part of the Senate be appointed to meet with a committee of six on the part of the House for the purpose of arranging a memorial recognition of deceased former members of the Senate and House.

Which motion prevailed and the President announced as such committee Sens. Perry (Chair), Karr, Mehlhaff, Smith, and Zikmund.

SCR 601: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION encouraging honest economic development rooted in the republican principles of limited government, deregulation, and organic entrepreneurial growth.

Introduced by: **Senator** Carley

Was read the first time and the President Pro Tem waived the committee referral pursuant to JR 6D-1.

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that when we adjourn today, we adjourn to convene at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, the 2nd legislative day.

Which motion prevailed.

There being no objection, the Senate reverted to Order of Business No. 4 - Communications and Petitions.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

The President Pro Tempore announced the following changes in committee assignments: Sen. Grove to the Senate Committee on Government Operations and Audit; Sen. Kolbeck to Chair of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and to the Senate Committee on State Affairs; Sen. Peterson to Chair of the Senate Committee on Taxation; Sen. Rohl to the Senate Committee on Transportation; and Sen. Wipf to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources and to the Senate Committee on Local Government.

There being no objection, the reading of the President Pro Tempore's appointments of standing committees was waived.

The President announced the appointment of the following standing committees:

**** Denotes Chair** *** Denotes Vice-Chair**

Agriculture and Natural Resources (7)

****Pischke, *Jensen (Kevin),** Davis, Duhamel, Marty, Voight, Wipf

Commerce and Energy (9)

****Crabtree, *Peterson (Sue),** Beal, Deibert, Hohn, Karr, Kolbeck (Steve), Larson, Perry

Committee on Appropriations (9)

****Otten, *Lapka,** Carley, Foster, Howard, Miskimins, Vilhauer, Voita, Zikmund

Education (7)

****Schoenfish, *Voight,** Marty, Nelson, Peterson (Sue), Sauder, Smith

Government Operations and Audit (5)

****Howard, *Otten,** Foster, Grove, Karr

Health and Human Services (7)

****Jensen (Kevin), *Davis,** Grove, Perry, Reed, Smith, Voight

Judiciary (7)

****Kolbeck (Steve), *Hulse,** Blanc, Duhamel, Grove, Mehlhaff, Pischke

Legislative Procedure (7)

****Karr, *Mehlhaff,** Deibert, Larson, Perry, Peterson (Sue), Pischke

Local Government (7)

****Reed, *Duhamel,** Nelson, Rohl, Schoenfish, Smith, Wipf

Military and Veterans Affairs (5)

****Zikmund, *Marty,** Blanc, Hohn, Howard

Retirement Laws (5)

****Deibert, *Vilhauer,** Foster, Kolbeck (Steve), Smith

State Affairs (9)

****Mehlhaff, *Perry,** Beal, Deibert, Jensen (Kevin), Karr, Kolbeck (Steve), Larson, Pischke

Taxation (7)

****Peterson (Sue), *Hohn,** Blanc, Crabtree, Davis, Grove, Hulse

Transportation (7)

****Deibert, *Beal,** Hohn, Larson, Rohl, Sauder, Schoenfish

MR. PRESIDENT:

The Committee on Legislative Procedure respectfully reports that the Governor has been notified that the Legislature is duly organized and ready to meet in Joint Session to receive any communications he may desire to transmit and that the Governor is ready to appear before the Joint Session to deliver his message.

Also, MR. PRESIDENT:

The Committee on Legislative Procedure respectfully reports that arrangements have been made for a Joint Session of the Senate and the House of Representatives to receive the message of the Governor. And:

That the Senate and the House will convene in Joint Session in the Chamber of the House of Representatives at 1:00 p.m., January 13, 2026.

That the President of the Senate preside over the Joint Session and that the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives act as clerks of the Joint Session.

That the Justices of the Supreme Court and the elective and appointed officials of the state government be invited to attend the Joint Session.

That when the message of the Governor has been received, the Joint Session be dissolved.

That the message of the Governor be printed in the Senate Journal.

Also, MR. PRESIDENT:

The Committee on Legislative Procedure respectfully reports that arrangements have been made for a Joint Session of the Senate and the House of Representatives to receive a message of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. And:

That the Senate and the House convene in Joint Session in the Chamber of the House of Representatives at 10:00 a.m., January 14, 2026.

That the President of the Senate preside over the Joint Session and that the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives act as clerks of the Joint Session.

That the Justices of the Supreme Court, the Governor and elective and appointed officials of the state government be invited to attend the Joint Session.

That when the message of the Chief Justice has been received, the Joint Session recess.

That the message of the Chief Justice be printed in the Senate Journal.

Also, MR. PRESIDENT:

The Committee on Legislative Procedure respectfully reports that arrangements have been made for a Joint Session of the Senate and the House of Representatives to receive a message of the State of the Tribes from a Tribal Representative. And:

That the Senate and the House convene in Joint Session in the Chamber of the House of Representatives at 1:00 p.m., January 14, 2026.

That the President of the Senate preside over the Joint Session and that the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives act as clerks of the Joint Session.

That the Justices of the Supreme Court, the Governor and elective and appointed officials of the state government be invited to attend the Joint Session.

That when the message of the Tribal Representative has been received, the Joint Session be dissolved.

That the message of the Tribal Representative be printed in the Senate Journal.

FIRST READING OF SENATE BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

SB 16: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to provide for the licensure of fishing and hunting guides, and to provide a penalty therefor.

Introduced by: **Senator** Voight

SB 38: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to modify the annual fee imposed on certain concentrated animal feeding operations.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources

SB 39: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise provisions relating to industrial hemp.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at the request of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources

SB 40: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the compliance requirements for limitations on foreign ownership of agricultural land.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at the request of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

SB 4: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise procedures for returning and withholding security deposits for residential premises.

Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

SB 6: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to reduce the duration of an individual's reemployment benefits.

Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

SB 9: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise provisions regarding notices to the one-call notification center.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Commerce and Energy at the request of the Department of Public Safety

SB 25: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to update provisions related to the permit application process for proposed energy and transmission facilities.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Commerce and Energy at the request of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of South Dakota

SB 36: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to authorize utilities to establish wildfire mitigation plans and associated liability limitations for wildfire damages.

Introduced by: **Senator** Kolbeck (Steve)

SB 60: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to restrict ownership of certain real property near military installations by certain prohibited entities and to provide for enforcement.

Introduced by: **Senator** Crabtree

SB 62: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to discontinue the issuance of new Class B electrician licenses.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Commerce and Energy at the request of the State Electrical Commission

SB 63: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to establish the state office of apprenticeship within the Department of Labor and Regulation.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Commerce and Energy at the request of the Department of Labor and Regulation

SB 64: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise and repeal provisions related to the athletic commission.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Commerce and Energy at the request of the South Dakota Athletic Commission

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Commerce and Energy.

SB 20: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to make an appropriation for tax refunds for elderly persons and persons with a disability, and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Department of Revenue

SB 21: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to modify tax refunds for elderly persons and persons with a disability.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Department of Revenue

SB 37: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to make appropriations for water and environmental purposes and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources

SB 55: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to make an appropriation for the payment of extraordinary litigation expenses and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Bureau of Human Resources and Administration

SB 67: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to make an appropriation for costs related to emergencies and disasters impacting the state and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Department of Public Safety

SB 68: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to make an appropriation for costs related to the suppression of wildfires impacting the state and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Department of Public Safety

SB 69: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to make an appropriation for the purchase of a new Division of Highway Patrol airplane and mission equipment and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Department of Public Safety

SB 72: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to extend the time for reverting moneys appropriated for the modernization of the state's enterprise resource planning systems.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Bureau of Finance and Management

SB 73: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise provisions relating to state financial practices.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Bureau of Finance and Management

SB 74: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to transfer moneys to the general fund from the budget reserve fund and the general replacement fund, and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Bureau of Finance and Management

SB 75: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to amend the type of entities eligible to participate in the cybersecurity services initiative.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Bureau of Finance and Management

SB 76: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to transfer moneys from the housing infrastructure fund to the revolving economic development and initiative fund, and to authorize loans from the revolving economic development and initiative fund for airport infrastructure.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Commerce and Energy at the request of the Governor

SB 78: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the General Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2026.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the Bureau of Finance and Management

SB 79: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to make an appropriation to the South Dakota Board of Technical Education to construct an advanced manufacturing laboratory space and classrooms on the campus of Southeast Technical College and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations at the request of the South Dakota Board of Technical Education

Were read the first time and referred to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

SB 8: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to permit a school district to administer epinephrine using a nasal spray.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Education at the request of the Department of Education

Was read the first time and referred to the Committee on Education.

SB 14: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to modify provisions related to the practice of pharmacy.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Health and Human Services at the request of the State Board of Pharmacy

SB 15: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to create the Developmental Disability Services Oversight Committee.

Introduced by: **Senators** Karr, Larson, Nelson, and Voita and **Representatives** Heinemann, Baxter, Mulder, and Uhre-Balk at the request of the Community Support Providers, State and Federal Efficiencies Interim Committee

SB 61: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to ban hemp-derived intoxicants not for medical purposes.

Introduced by: **Senator** Carley

SB 77: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to ban kratom and kratom products and to provide a penalty therefor.

Introduced by: **Senator** Carley

SB 80: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to prohibit the sale of delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol products to individuals under the age of twenty-one.

Introduced by: **Senator** Vilhauer

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Health and Human Services.

SB 2: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to provide that a firearm silencer is not a controlled weapon.

Introduced by: **Senator** Crabtree

SB 41: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise a provision related to criminal invasions of privacy, prohibit the creation and distribution of digitally fabricated material of an identifiable individual, and provide penalties therefor.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Judiciary at the request of the Attorney General

SB 42: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to enhance the penalties for ingestion, possession, possession with intent to deliver, and delivery of a controlled substance in a state correctional facility.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Judiciary at the request of the Attorney General

SB 43: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to address search and seizure provisions applicable to digital currency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Judiciary at the request of the Attorney General

SB 44: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to establish investigative subpoena authority to gather business records in certain investigations.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Judiciary at the request of the Attorney General

SB 45: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise a provision regulating delta-8 tetrahydrocannabinol, THC-O acetate, and hexahydrocannabinol for persons under the age of twenty-one and to provide a penalty therefor.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Judiciary at the request of the Attorney General

SB 49: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to safeguard the integrity, privacy, and security of genetic data and provide a civil penalty therefor.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Judiciary at the request of the Attorney General

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

SB 3: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to limit the types of residential improvements for which counties, municipalities, and townships may require a permit.

Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

SB 22: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to clarify when certification of values is transmitted to the county.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Local Government at the request of the Department of Revenue

SB 34: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to amend provisions pertaining to conducting a municipal or school district election and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Secretary of State

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Local Government.

SB 35: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the process for requesting a veteran's certificate of discharge from a county register of deeds.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs at the request of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Was read the first time and referred to the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs.

SB 50: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to update the reference to the Internal Revenue Code to reflect current federal law for the administration of South Dakota Retirement System statutes.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Retirement Laws at the request of the South Dakota Retirement System

SB 51: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise certain requirements for contesting actions of the South Dakota Retirement System.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Retirement Laws at the request of the South Dakota Retirement System

SB 52: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to clarify statutes governing the administration of disability benefits by the South Dakota Retirement System.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Retirement Laws at the request of the South Dakota Retirement System

SB 53: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to ensure uniformity in member identification provisions governing the South Dakota Retirement System.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Retirement Laws at the request of the South Dakota Retirement System

SB 54: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the conditions for in-service distributions from the South Dakota deferred compensation plan.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Retirement Laws at the request of the South Dakota Retirement System

SB 65: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise certain required minimum distribution provisions of the South Dakota Retirement System.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Retirement Laws at the request of the South Dakota Retirement System

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Retirement Laws.

SB 1: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to amend the process by which moneys are distributed from the employer's investment in South Dakota's future fund.

Introduced by: **Senators** Howard, Foster, and Karr and **Representatives** Lems, Auch, Emery, Moore, and Overweg at the request of the Committee on Government Operations & Audit

SB 5: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to require the disclosure of whether a ballot question was proposed by initiative or by the Legislature.

Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

SB 13: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to clarify application of the seventy-two hour notice requirement to website posting.

Introduced by: **Senator** Reed

SB 17: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to prohibit a candidate or political committee from accepting contributions or loans made by a foreign national, to provide a penalty therefor, and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Attorney General

SB 28: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to permit the use of a ballot on demand system and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Secretary of State

SB 29: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to amend provisions pertaining to the tabulation of ballots and permit the release of any cast vote record and collection of ballot images produced by automatic tabulating equipment and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Secretary of State

SB 30: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to amend the reasons for challenging an individual's eligibility to vote.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Secretary of State

SB 31: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to permit the use of a confirmation letter to verify a voter's registration.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Secretary of State

SB 32: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to amend and repeal provisions pertaining to the ballot requirements for certain elections and to declare an emergency.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Secretary of State

SB 33: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to modify the number of signatures required on certain election-related petitions.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on State Affairs at the request of the Secretary of State

SB 46: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to modify the requirements for open meeting agendas and provide a penalty therefor.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Local Government at the request of the Attorney General

SB 47: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the requirements for executive sessions and closed meetings.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Local Government at the request of the Attorney General

SB 48: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to clarify that an official open meeting agenda must be posted online at least seventy-two hours before the scheduled start of the meeting.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Local Government at the request of the Attorney General

SB 56: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to require that agencies promulgating permanent rules publish the rules and associated rulemaking forms on a state website.

Introduced by: **Senators** Howard and Larson and **Representatives** Hansen, DeGroot, and Muckey at the request of the Interim Rules Review Committee

SB 57: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to clarify when agency financial resource information must be filed in the permanent administrative rulemaking process.

Introduced by: **Senators** Howard and Larson and **Representatives** Hansen, DeGroot, and Muckey at the request of the Interim Rules Review Committee

SB 59: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to require the use of certain geographic terminology in official materials of a state agency.

Introduced by: **Senator** Carley

SB 66: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to prohibit the use of automatic tabulating equipment and electronic ballot marking systems.

Introduced by: **Senator** Carley

SJR 501: A JOINT RESOLUTION Proposing and submitting to the voters at the next general election an amendment to the Constitution of the State of South Dakota, limiting the number of terms an individual may serve as a member of the Legislature.

Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

SJR 502: A JOINT RESOLUTION applying to the United States Congress under Article V of the United States Constitution to call for a convention proposing an amendment to the constitution fixing the number of justices of the United States Supreme Court at one chief justice and eight associate justices.

Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on State Affairs.

SB 7: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to modify the tax rate on gold severed in this state.

Introduced by: **Senator** Rohl

SB 12: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to provide for a refund of property taxes in previous years for qualifying veterans and surviving spouses.

Introduced by: **Senator** Otten

SB 18: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to repeal income modifications for the bank franchise tax pertaining to bad debts.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Taxation at the request of the Department of Revenue

SB 19: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise certain references to the Internal Revenue Code.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Taxation at the request of the Department of Revenue

SB 58: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to reduce to zero mill levies for property taxation.

Introduced by: **Senator** Carley

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Taxation.

SB 10: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise a provision related to the adoption of federal motor carrier regulations.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Public Safety

SB 11: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to increase reinstatement fees and abstract driver record fees.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Public Safety

SB 23: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to include certain types of vehicles in the unpaid repair bill titling process.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Revenue

SB 24: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to create a solid background license plate for South Dakota.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Revenue

SB 26: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise procurement for highway construction contracts.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Transportation

SB 27: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the description of certain highways included in the state trunk highway system.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Transportation

SB 70: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to revise the duties of the Transportation Commission to include responsibilities of the South Dakota Railroad Board and the South Dakota Aeronautics Commission.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Transportation

SB 71: FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, An Act to authorize the assumption of certain responsibilities and the waiver of sovereign immunity in connection with certain actions under federal environmental law.

Introduced by: The Chair of the Committee on Transportation at the request of the Department of Transportation

Were read the first time and referred to the Committee on Transportation.

Sen. Foster moved that the Senate do now adjourn, which motion prevailed and at 12:46 p.m. the Senate adjourned.

Peggy Laurenz, Secretary

JOINT SESSION

The Senate convened with the House of Representatives in the House Chamber for the purpose of receiving a message from the Governor, Larry Rhoden. The President of the Senate, Tonnis H. Venhuizen, presided.

The following prayer was delivered by Pastor Bill Meirose, Union Center Community Baptist Church, Union Center, South Dakota:

Timothy 2:1-2 "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."

Almighty Father, we pray today for our State Government leaders for the following:

Wisdom & Discernment – that our leaders make wise decisions in the many issues that will come before them during this legislative session

Justice & Righteousness – that they act justly and protect the innocent and vulnerable who need others to speak for them in our society

Peace & Order – that we may live peaceful and prosperous lives

Godliness – that in all decisions they are guided by Godly Principles

We ask these things in the Precious Name of Jesus, Amen.

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

Blanc, Carley, Crabtree, Davis, Deibert, Duhamel, Foster, Grove, Hohn, Howard, Hulse, Jensen (Kevin), Karr, Kolbeck (Steve), Lapka, Larson, Mehlhaff, Miskimins, Nelson, Otten, Perry, Peterson (Sue), Pischke, Reed, Rohl, Sauder, Schoenfish, Smith, Vilhauer, Voight, Voita, Wipf, and Zikmund

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

Andera, Arlint, Auch, Aylward, Bahmuller, Baxter, Czmowski, DeGroot, Derby, Duffy, Emery, Fitzgerald, Fosness, Garcia, Goodwin, Gosch, Greenfield, Halverson, Healy, Heermann, Heinemann, Hughes, Hunt, Ismay, Jamison, Jensen (Phil), Jordan, Jorgenson, Kassin, Kayser, Kull, Ladner, Lems, Manhart, Massie, Moore, Mortenson, Muckey, Mulally, Mulder, Nolz, Novstrup, Odenbach, Overweg, Peterson (Drew), Pourier, Randolph, Rehfeldt, Reimer, Reisch, Rice, Roby, Roe, Schaefbauer, Schwans, Shorma, Shubeck, Sjaarda, Soye, Uhre-Balk, Van Diepen, Walburg, Weems, Weisgram, Wittman, and Speaker Hansen

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that a committee of seven on the part of the Senate and a committee of seven on the part of the House be appointed to escort the Honorable Larry Rhoden, Governor of the state of South Dakota, to the rostrum.

Which motion prevailed and the President announced as such committee Sens. Karr, Mehlhaff, Perry, Larson, Smith, Jensen, and Peterson on the part of the Senate, and Reps. Lems, Odenbach, Overweg, Healy, Emery, Bahmuller, and Jamison on the part of the House.

The Lieutenant Governor, Tonnis H. Venhuizen, introduced the Honorable Larry Rhoden, who delivered the State of the State Address.

The Sergeant at Arms announced the arrival of the Honorable Larry Rhoden, who was escorted to the rostrum.

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Introduction

Lieutenant Governor Venhuizen, Mr. Speaker, members of the House and Senate, Chief Justice Jensen, Supreme Court justices, constitutional officers, and my fellow South Dakotans:

We are gathered here at the convening of another session of the South Dakota Legislature. I've thought a lot this past year about that word, convene. Convene means, "To meet formally as a group…for a serious purpose." We are gathered here for such a purpose: to do the work of the people of South Dakota.

Before I became Governor a year ago, a good friend of mine reminded me of an important power of the Governor: "the power to convene." When I served as Majority Leader in this Chamber, our Republican caucus was 52 members with a wide range of wisdom over many areas. Convening the right group at the right time helped us get things done.

We've accomplished much in the past year – much of it through convening. The last time a vote was cast on this House floor was in a Special Session after the convening of the prison task force. I have convened both the GRIT task force and the Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force to work on key issues. And of course, your legislative summer studies also convened and got to work on important problems.

I'm talking about convening because it's important for you all to understand my leadership style. I don't need to be the smartest person in the room. It's more important to me to get the right people in the room – people with different perspectives who are focused on solutions. Shortly after becoming Governor, I pledged to all of you that a cornerstone of my administration would be civility. We achieved that last year. Let's all recommit to civility this legislative session.

At face value, this session might not be as historic as last year. For starters, we won't have a change of power this session – so Tony, don't get any ideas. But our work this session matters. If we all recommit to civility, work together, and focus on our small-government, commonsense conservative principles, we can do great work for the people this year. After all, "Under God, the People Rule."

South Dakota is a pretty special place. Our strength lies in our people. South Dakota has become a beacon to the rest of the nation. Our people have tremendous opportunities because we keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free. We've protected opportunity for all South Dakotans to live, work, raise their families, and do business.

I'm committed to keeping South Dakota Open for Opportunity. Today, I'd like to share my Opportunity Agenda – my plans to keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free for our kids and grandkids.

Strong

I am focused on keeping South Dakota strong. In the past few years, the hard work of farmers, ranchers, small businesses, and families has built a remarkably strong state. We've weathered national economic headwinds with steady growth, low unemployment, and fiscal responsibility. We balance our budget and keep taxes low. We have the second most competitive tax system in America, the second least regulations, the lowest unemployment rate, and growing incomes that have exceeded the national average.

We need to keep working, though, to hold down property taxes. Last session, I convened a group of legislators to work on a solid first step, and we worked collaboratively to put together a bill that passed with bipartisan support. That was the only property tax bill that passed last session. It wasn't meant to solve every problem, but it helped to stem the bleeding. Now, it's time for more substantial relief.

I propose that we cut owner-occupied property taxes by giving the people in each county a simple option: replace the county's share of property taxes with a half-cent sales tax. The people's elected leaders at the county level could implement this plan if it fits their community, or they could refer it to a vote of the people, or the people could even initiate it. The areas with the biggest property tax increases are also those that attract the most visitors, so this proposal will allow those counties to cut property taxes and draw more revenues from tourists and out-of-staters. We've modeled this carefully, and we have estimated impacts for every county. If you'd like details on how it affects your constituents, my team will get the information to you.

This is a commonsense conservative plan: not a mandate, but a choice. We are giving local decision makers the flexibility to make the best decisions for their counties. We're empowering them to deliver significant property tax relief for homeowners. And my plan doesn't have to stand alone; legislative ideas could work in tandem, and I look forward to considering your ideas this year.

I also want to continue to listen to South Dakotans on this topic. Over the next few weeks, I will host property tax town halls in hard-hit areas like Sioux Falls, the Black Hills, and counties like Clay, Turner, and Union. If you'd like one of these events in your community, let me know. We will meet face-to-face to discuss and refine these solutions. Together, we'll keep our economy strong, our taxes low, and opportunity wide open.

After last session, I wanted to get out of my office and see the people of this state. As a new governor, I felt that I should get out so people could talk to me, and I could learn from them. Over the next several months, I toured communities across South Dakota, and we focused on turning challenges into opportunities. Much of what I'm telling you today was motivated by what I saw and heard on those visits. I've lived in South Dakota my whole life, and I am always impressed by the work ethic and creativity of our fellow South Dakotans. Everywhere I looked, I saw incredible products that aren't just Made in America – they're Made in South Dakota.

We helped tackle challenges for many of these businesses – and we even changed policies at the federal level. I heard from many businesses that are making good use of the new apprenticeship opportunities that we expanded during the Noem-Rhoden Administration, and there is room to do more in this area. This year, my Department of Labor and Regulation is bringing legislation to set up a State Apprenticeship Agency. This will give us more flexibility to structure apprenticeships in a way that makes sense for South Dakota businesses.

All told, we visited dozens and dozens of businesses on my Open for Opportunity tour, and I hate to pick favorites. But I have about a dozen leaders of those businesses here today. They reflect a variety of sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, firearms, biotech, and more. Would you all help me recognize these entrepreneurial South Dakotans?

Those business leaders are helping our state grow. And that's a good thing. An old pastor once told me, "Don't wait for doors to open. Check the doors; see if they're unlocked." Ultimately, economic development is about opening more doors of opportunity for our kids and grandkids. We want them to be able to pursue their careers right here in South Dakota. We will continue to check the doors, and we certainly should not lock the doors by limiting our economic potential.

This session, there will be plenty of conversation about economic growth and development. Let me be clear where I stand: economic growth is a good thing, and we should encourage it. But growth should not be reckless. We should be bold enough to seize opportunity – and wise enough to prepare for the future in a responsible way.

In recent weeks, I've prioritized bold, long-lasting projects. In Brookings, Dakota BioWorx is developing the technology to create new opportunities for value-added ag and bioprocessing. In Aberdeen and Watertown, community and business leaders are joining together to create new industrial development parks. These projects bring tremendous potential for strong growth in our

communities. They are excellent examples of how the Future Fund can be used, strategically, to support forward-looking projects. Future Fund investments have moved South Dakota forward by turning bold vision into reality! And for as long as I am your Governor, that is the approach that we will take to economic development.

Access to healthcare is an important building block of every community. In many communities, healthcare is also one of the largest employers. I am proud that South Dakota has some of the best healthcare in the nation. But we also have plenty of wide-open spaces. I grew up in Union Center, so I understand exactly how important access to healthcare is in rural areas.

This is a big year for rural healthcare in South Dakota. Our state was recently awarded $189 million in federal funding for our Rural Health Transformation Plan. This is the first year of a five-year investment to strengthen healthcare access across our state. As I told you in my Budget Address, we planned for $100 million a year, so this higher award is a major win for South Dakota! And we will readjust our request for federal authority, accordingly.

We didn't commit to policy changes or programs that don't make sense for South Dakota. We focused on what our communities actually need. Our plan modernizes healthcare by bringing more services to rural and remote areas – and by bolstering technology. But ultimately, healthcare is about people, and we need the best people to provide the best healthcare, so this plan strengthens our healthcare workforce. We will attract and retain health professionals, expand community health workers, integrate behavioral health into primary care, improve chronic disease management, and support rural facilities. We will also establish Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics statewide and create regional EMS hubs.

This plan was built with extensive input from rural communities, the Great Plains Tribal Leaders Health Board, and healthcare providers and other stakeholders across the state. They told us what they need, and this plan delivers it. South Dakota is competing with every other state, and in future years, the federal government will reward states that move quickly. We could be the first state in the nation to authorize this funding, so I would love it if this was the first bill that reaches my desk.

Speaking of supporting our rural communities, in the last decade, we lost 3,600 family farms in South Dakota. Farms keep getting larger, but we can help families pass their farms on to the next generation. I recently announced that we're extending the State's support for the Keep Farmers Farming initiative. The South Dakota Ag Foundation helps family farms and ranches with estate and transition planning so that the operation can stay in the family. It's about transferring more than just money and assets – it's about passing down experience, work ethic, values, and history. Ag is king in South Dakota, so let's keep it strong for the future.

A strong economy depends on strong infrastructure. I launched the GRIT task force to assess our resilience to disasters, system failures, and cyber threats. This year, GRIT recommends expanding the SecureSD program at Dakota State University to extend cybersecurity support from cities and counties to nonprofit utilities like rural water systems. It is another way that we can maintain a strong economy and strong communities, which will lead to a stronger South Dakota.

Safe

In the last year, we have also taken several key steps to keep South Dakota safe. In my first month as Governor, I announced the formation of a new Highway Patrol squad in Sioux Falls, and you all responded and funded that new squad in last year's budget.

As Sioux Falls grew, we saw a major opportunity to improve public safety, so I launched Operation: Prairie Thunder. It has two missions. First: saturation patrols between the Highway Patrol and local law enforcement to fight crime and drugs. Second, targeted support for ICE, using resources from the National Guard, Highway Patrol, and Department of Corrections.

Let me be clear: Highway Patrol troopers do not have a special mission to find illegal aliens. They are working on crime and drug enforcement. When that mission brings them in contact with someone who is here illegally, they enforce the law and hand that individual over to the proper authorities. That's just common sense, and in South Dakota, we respect the rule of law.

Our saturation patrols were so successful in Sioux Falls that we took them on the road to Belle Fourche, Huron, Sturgis, Winner, and Yankton – and yes, we were in Brookings last week. And the numbers speak for themselves. To date, Operation: Prairie Thunder has yielded 432 individuals brought into custody, over 1,000 drug charges, nearly 250 warrants executed, 20 parole and probation absconders arrested, more than 2,100 traffic citations including 38 DUIs and 112 revoked licenses, 22 vehicle pursuits – nearly all of which were successful, 63 illegal aliens handed over to ICE custody, and 9 cartel or gang members apprehended. Separate from the saturation patrols, there was also a record 207 pound meth bust.

Operation: Prairie Thunder is not done. I said that we'd start with six months, and now it's time to reassess. We will continue the saturation patrols and add a trooper to the Sioux Falls Drug Task Force later this year. We'll continue the support for ICE, increase our 287(g) agreements with Highway Patrol and the Department of Corrections, and extend our administrative support from the National Guard.

Today, we have with us several of the Highway Patrol troopers and their leadership who delivered those outstanding results. We also have some of the National Guard soldiers who have provided administrative support to ICE. Please stand – and please join me in honoring these heroes who do so much to keep us safe.

Our National Guard also supported crucial national security missions this year. Our guardsmen served at the southern border and helped to deliver the most secure border in American history. And when President Trump committed to Make D.C. Safe and Beautiful Again, we did our part. Today, we have leadership of the South Dakota National Guard who do so much to keep America safe. Please stand – let's honor all of our men and women who have served in our armed forces, especially those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our nation.

The men and women in uniform are heroes. They signed up, and they show up. They truly go above and beyond. Last August, one Highway Patrol trooper took decisive action to save lives. She saw a vehicle speeding down I-90 – only it was going the wrong direction. So she drove her vehicle across the median and initiated a collision. When the vehicle again tried to drive away, she initiated another collision, then arrested the offender. Today, Trooper Emily Metzger is here with us. Would you please stand? Today, I am proud to honor Trooper Metzger with the Governor's Award for Heroism. Please join me in thanking her for her incredible courage!

Our law enforcement deserves respect – at all levels. But for too many years, tribal law enforcement officers have not had the full protection of South Dakota law. This year, I will be supporting the State-Tribal Relations Committee's bill to recognize tribal law enforcement under the definition of "law enforcement officer" in state law.

We also must increase protections for all law enforcement officers. In recent years, law enforcement officers have come under fire across the country. Well, South Dakota took a different path. The Noem-Rhoden Administration recruited law enforcement officers to move to South Dakota, and many answered that call. Now that they're here, we're going to protect them. Doxxing of law enforcement officers has become a serious problem in other states. They've had their homes targeted and their families attacked. We've also seen elected officials targeted, including the tragic attacks on state legislators in Minnesota.

To address this, my office is bringing forward two bills to protect the personal information of law enforcement, judges, legislators, and statewide officials by removing it from public voter files. We will also add doxxing to the crime of stalking and increase penalties when it targets law enforcement and public officials. South Dakota will not tolerate threats against those who uphold the law and serve the public.

In the last year, my office has worked with this Legislature to make important progress on improving our entire criminal justice system. We got the plan done for the new prison in Sioux Falls, and dirt work has started! And the new women's prison in Rapid City is set to open in just a few months.

The Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force is hard at work. They've already recommended the Prison Seminary Model, and I was proud to accept that recommendation. This faith-based program will restore hope, build character, and strengthen our correctional system from the inside out. The task force has also advanced other recommendations, including tribal-focused rehabilitation opportunities. Thank you to the legislators on that task force – keep up the good work!

While we keep South Dakota safe, South Dakota is keeping the nation safe and secure. In fact, our state is punching above our weight in national security. Of course, our Secretary of Homeland Security is my predecessor, Kristi Noem. John Thune is our U.S. Senate Majority Leader. Senator Mike Rounds serves on the armed services committee and focuses on defense, intelligence, and cybersecurity. The Secretary of the Air Force is a South Dakotan, Dr. Troy Meink. The next generation B-21 bomber is coming to Ellsworth Air Force Base in Western South Dakota. And our cybersecurity industry has grown by 350% over the last decade, the second-fastest growth in the nation.

Governor Noem declared that cybersecurity would be South Dakota's "next big industry," and we've put real action behind those words. Today, I am taking it a step further. I am declaring that national security is South Dakota's next big industry. This will be the major focus of my economic development efforts. National security creates major opportunities for South Dakota, and we need to seize them.

Businesses are already recognizing South Dakota as a great place for national security companies. When I recognized businesses earlier, one of those was MMS Products. They're a Sioux Falls-based warfare-technology company. And they're leading the field for innovation of drone munitions. Just last month, we announced that they received a $35 million contract from the Department of War to produce groundbreaking warheads for America's drone fleet.

And they won't be the last announcement we make. The continued growth and leadership of Ellsworth Air Force base will pave the way for economic development in national security. Dakota State University will continue leading the field in cybersecurity. And bold, innovative companies like MMS Products will continue to make important contributions to America's security. I talked to Senator Rounds about this last month, and he agreed that there is huge potential in this area.

We also recognize that food security is national security, and that is why I will continue to prioritize value-added ag. The new High Plains Processing plant near Mitchell and the CJ Schwan's development in Sioux Falls are each half-a-billion dollar investments in our state. Both will create new markets and better prices for our farmers. I look forward to more announcements in value-added ag as well.

Free

In all those ways, we are keeping South Dakota – and our nation – safe. And we will also keep South Dakota free. We're the freest state in America, and we will keep it that way for our kids and our grandkids.

This past year, we took some important steps to protect freedom. This Legislature protected landowner rights, and I was proud to sign that into law. When the issue with the Maude family came up, I worked with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins to make sure that the charges against them got dismissed. And when out-of-state organizations tried to attack the right to life of unborn South Dakotans, I worked quickly with Attorney General Jackley to put a stop to it.

South Dakota is the most pro-life state in America, and we will keep it that way. The biggest threat to unborn lives is abortion pills being illegally mailed into our state. Abortion pills cause a higher rate of medical complications for women – that's a fact. More than that, they end the life of an unborn child. I've worked on this issue for over 20 years. Back in my freshman term in the Legislature, I was the prime sponsor of a House Concurrent Resolution urging the FDA to reconsider its approval of drugs that kill babies.

Some folks have tried to question whether abortion pills are actually dangerous. Well, don't take my word for it. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is actively reviewing the safety of these pills. Here today, we have medical professionals from two crisis pregnancy centers, the Alpha Center in Sioux Falls and Black Hills Pregnancy Center in Rapid City. They are seeing firsthand how abortion pills harm women. Some moms come in with medical complications; other moms come in seeking reversal pills, which are a medical miracle. Would you please join me in thanking these medical professionals for their life-saving work?

This session, I will be working with legislators and the Attorney General on legislation to stop abortion pills from coming into South Dakota, and I hope that legislation reaches my desk.

South Dakota is also the most pro-Second Amendment state in America, and we will keep it that way. I'm proud of our state for recognizing the right to Constitutional Carry for every South Dakotan. I focused on it as a legislator and during the Noem-Rhoden years, and there's more work to do. This year, I am working with legislators including Senator Crabtree to deregulate suppressors as part of a movement at the national level. This is another opportunity for our state to be first, and I look forward to signing that bill.

My wife, Sandy, is in the gallery today with some of our family. Our children and grandchildren are our greatest asset, and our pride and joy. I'm proud to tell you that, in 2026, our brood of grandkids will be growing from seven to ten! Please help me welcome Sandy and our family.

Sandy will be busy as a grandma, but she's also been busy as First Lady. She spent her career as a teacher and coach, and she is applying that experience now. Over the past year, Sandy has visited schools and talked to school leaders. They've discussed the problems caused by cell phones in the classrooms, and we've seen how local decision-makers are already confronting that issue without a state mandate. Her "South Dakota Rising" initiative is all about encouraging South Dakotans to pursue a positive lifestyle of a sound mind in a sound body. She is doing great work – please help me thank her!

A free state is one where students are able to learn in a commonsense way. We emphasize innovation through competition, excellence, and new pathways to brighter career opportunities. Even in a tough funding year – maybe especially in a tough funding year – we can be proud of our educators and the work they do. And we can look for ways to support that work.

I am very proud of the work that my Department of Education is doing to improve outcomes in key areas, including reading and math. Our Science of Reading initiative is bringing phonics back into the classrooms. This effort is fueled by a $6 million investment from this Legislature, which leveraged $54 million in federal dollars. We rewrote our reading standards, changed our teacher training at the universities and offered training to current teachers. Last year, we began bold changes to the math standards, as well, to make it easier for parents to help with homework. We're replacing common core with common sense. And the Noem-Rhoden Administration's social studies reforms were implemented this fall.

And we're addressing teacher shortages. The Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway produces dozens of new teachers yearly. We're helping paraprofessionals achieve full teacher certification while still filling classroom jobs. Our teacher pay reforms are also helping recruit quality teachers.

For students, freedom means options. I was proud to opt-in to the Trump Administration's school choice opportunity through the One Big Beautiful Bill. This is not about public versus private schools. It's about unleashing innovation for every child, just as competition drives success in business and beyond. Over the next year, we will be working with leaders from private schools, public schools, and the homeschooling community, so that our state is ready to implement this program on January 1, 2027. It's a great opportunity to increase options for students and families.

Career and Technical Education is helping steer our kids toward high-demand fields, so we will continue prioritizing the growth of our Tech Colleges, such as our proposal this year for the new welding and machining facility at Southeast Tech. I also know CTE is an important part of the high school curriculum. Just last month, I visited the CTE Academy in Sioux Falls, where high school students learn everything from nursing and homebuilding to baking and aviation. They are even adding a large animal livestock facility.

Our schools sometimes have to deal with students who come from tough circumstances and cause disruptions in class. This year, my Department of Education will be bringing a bill to address the most challenging circumstances. It will give school boards more flexibility to find alternative settings for students in these tough situations. Legislators are focused on this issue, as well, and I hope we can work together on this important topic.

In South Dakota, you never feel freer than when you are enjoying the great outdoors. 2024 was our strongest pheasant season in a decade, and by all accounts, 2025 was just as strong. We have nearly 1.7 million acres of private land enrolled for public hunting access. And over 120,000 acres are enrolled by GFP's habitat programs. GFP fisheries stocked nearly 300,000 pounds of fish across the state in 2025. And we welcomed nearly 23,000 visitors for the 60th annual Buffalo Roundup.

In particular, we're focused on expanding opportunities for youth hunting and fishing. In October, we opened up Capitol Lake to youth mentored fishing for the first time – it's been fun to see families fishing and making memories. Last year, I signed legislation to streamline requirements for mentored youth hunting and fishing to encourage more participation and recruit the next generation of outdoors enthusiasts. As Kristi often said, we're encouraging our kids to put down the Xbox and pick up the tackle box.

Talking about the outdoors reminds us what makes South Dakota special. I have talked to you today about a vision for the future, but we also can't lose sight of all there is to celebrate, to preserve, and to imitate about our past.

This year is the 250th birthday of the United States of America, the freest nation in history. And South Dakota will host the very best and brightest celebration of that occasion when fireworks go off over Mount Rushmore on July 3rd. That monument celebrates four of our greatest presidents, who fought for the revolutionary ideal "that all men are created equal, and that [we] are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights." Nearby, Crazy Horse monument celebrates the legacy of the native people who met us here.

We are able to enjoy our Black Hills today, in part, because of the foresight of one of South Dakota's greatest leaders, our ninth governor, Peter Norbeck. As I close today, I would like to read the conclusion to his State of the State Address from 1919:

"I believe in South Dakota, in the fertility of her soil, the warmth of her sunshine, and the nurturing tenderness of her winter snows; I believe in the simple beauty of her rolling prairies and the more pretentious splendor of her western hills; I believe in her government, and in her institutions of home and church and school; I believe in the sturdy, intelligent manhood of her sons, and the chaste womanhood of her daughters; the hundred percent Americanism of her whole people;

"I believe that under the skies of South Dakota will continue to grow and prosper an intelligent, patriotic, and God-fearing people amply able to work out and solve the perplexing problems of the future as they have those of the past. I believe that as the bright noonday sun is only the fulfillment of the morning prophecy of its dawning splendor, so the accomplishments of our State today are the monuments of the hardy pioneers of yesterday. I believe that as the gorgeous tints of the sunset skies predict the coming of a bright tomorrow, the proud record and accomplishments of South Dakota surely point to a State whose star shall outshine all others in the Flag of our Country."

Conclusion

Governor Norbeck's words hold true today. And it is why I am committed, as he was, to keeping our state strong, safe, and free. Today I have shared my Opportunity Agenda with you. South Dakota is in good shape. We have the opportunity this year to do commonsense things to make our state even better. If you need to talk to me or someone on my team, we'll be open and responsive. As I told you a year ago, I am not hard to find.

For as long as I have the honor to serve as your Governor, I will continue to make sure our people are blessed to live in the freest state in a nation founded on the principle of freedom.

Thank you. God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the great state of South Dakota.

Sen. Mehlhaff moved that the Joint Session do now dissolve.

Which motion prevailed.