



Impact of Term Limits Study Report

North Dakota Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee

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Executive Summary

North Dakota voters approved Constitutional Measure 1 in November 2022, establishing legislative term limits that restrict service to eight years in each legislative chamber. This change will result in more rapid turnover of legislators, particularly in the next four years.

In response, the Legislative Assembly directed an interim study to assess the potential impacts of term limits and identify strategies to ensure the Legislature continues to effectively lead in policymaking.

Conducted between October 2025 and April 2026, this study builds on prior work and incorporates input from legislators, the public, and stakeholder organizations through surveys, focus groups, and a review of national research. The report includes summaries of findings from each participant group and across the methods used to collect input.

Findings consistently point to five major areas of impact associated with term limits:

- Loss of institutional knowledge and experience
- Shifts in power and influence toward staff and external stakeholders
- Increased strain on legislative capacity and workload
- More frequent leadership turnover
- Challenges in recruiting and supporting future legislators

To move from identified impact themes to actionable recommendations, the study integrated findings from national research with data collected through a mixed-methods approach. Survey results, focus group discussions, and stakeholder input were analyzed to identify patterns and areas of risk. This synthesis informed recommendations designed to strengthen continuity, accelerate legislator learning, and support legislators within the constraints of North Dakota's citizen legislature model. The report outlines three primary goals:

- Goal 1: Stabilize the Legislative Assembly – Schedule, Structure, and Operations
- Goal 2: Support Legislators – Staffing, Training, and Resources
- Goal 3: Connect with the Public – Awareness, Communication, and Opportunity

Across all three goals, the recommendations are intended to be practical, scalable, and adaptable within North Dakota's existing legislative framework. The study concludes with a Recommendation Action Plan that provides additional context to support each goal and objective, including potential changes in culture, practice, rules, or statutory language that may be necessary for implementation.

Legislative Request

North Dakota voters approved Constitutional Measure 1 in November 2022 with 63% support, creating Article XV of the state constitution. The constitutional language restricts individuals to no more than eight years of service in each legislative chamber. Recent projections indicate that term limits will impact an estimated 34% of sitting legislators in 2028 and 51% in 2030.¹

During the 2025 legislative session, the legislature passed SB 2001² which included language directing the Interim Session to work with consultants to study the impact of term limits following the passage of the Constitutional Measure 1 in November 2022.³ Legislative Council, on behalf of the Interim Legislative Management Committee, issued a request for proposals (RFP) for consultant services on August 13, 2025.⁴ Study responsibilities were assigned to its Interim Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee, Senator Jerry Klein, Chairman.

The RFP required the consultant to solicit public input, in addition to recommending the study included an analysis of whether the application of term limits will:

1. Result in an increased need for educational opportunities for legislative members due to shortened tenures in the Legislative Assembly;
2. Increase the number of Legislative Council staff needed to assist new members;
3. Require legislative sessions to be held on an annual basis; and
4. Unduly impair the Legislative Assembly's ability to lead with respect to formulating policy for the state.

On September 12, 2025, the Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee heard presentations for two consultant proposals.⁵ Garty Consulting LLC was selected to assist the committee in leading its interim study on the impact of term limits.⁶ The project team consisted of Jolene Garty, Project Lead and owner of Garty Consulting, Erin Oban Stakeholder Engagement Lead and former ND State Senator for District 35 and Dean Mitchell of DFM Research, the Public Survey Research Partner. The study contract began on October 7, 2025, with the final written report due to Legislative Council by April 1, 2026.

Legislative Term Limits Background

Including North Dakota, 22 states have enacted legislative term limits, most of which were adopted during the 1990s and early 2000s. Today, 16 states continue to operate under term limits.

Of the six states where term limits were later repealed or invalidated, Massachusetts, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming had enacted term limits through statute.⁷ In each of these states, the state supreme court determined that the laws effectively imposed additional qualifications for office and therefore required a constitutional amendment. The remaining two states, Idaho and Utah, repealed their statutory term limits through legislative action, which was subsequently approved by voters.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL):

“No court has struck down term limits on the merits of the law itself; rather, in all four cases, courts objected to the method by which the limits were enacted. In Massachusetts, Washington and Wyoming, the opinions were similar. In all three states, term limits were enacted as statutes, rather than constitutional amendments.”⁷

In 2006, the NCSL in partnership with the Council of State Governments and the State Legislative Leaders Foundation, published *Coping with Term Limits: A Practical Guide*, an in-depth resource to review the impacts of term limits and strategies for managing those impacts.⁸ Based on survey data and case studies from term-limited states, the guide identified a range of approaches, including improved orientation and training for new members, the development of leadership pipelines, and adjustments to committee structures.

Because no two legislatures are the same, the impacts of term limits vary across the 16 states that currently operate under them. The guide provides broad recommendations and state-specific examples that legislatures can consider as they respond to the unique impacts in their state.

As part of this interim study, Emily Ronco of NCSL presented to the Legislative Procedure and Arrangement on January 8, 2026, highlighting common areas of impact for legislative staff and members in term-limited environments.⁹ Impacts on staff include serving as repositories of institutional knowledge, increased training demands, and potential growth in staff size or a shift toward more full-time positions. Legislators experienced higher turnover, shorter timelines to leadership roles, and less time to build relationships within the legislature and with external stakeholders such as the executive branch and lobbyists.

The NCSL presentation provided examples from Nevada, Montana, and Colorado on structural and training changes following the adoption of term limits. A crosswalk of attributes and demographics of the 16 term-limited states can be found in Appendix A.

Following the passage of the constitutional amendment during the 2023-24 Interim Session, North Dakota's Legislative Management Committee approved Resolution 2192 § 1, directing the Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee to:

Study the impact of term limits on the manner in which the Legislative Assembly conducts business. The study must include an assessment of the desirability of providing increased educational opportunities for legislative members due to shortened tenures in the Legislative Assembly, increasing the number of Legislative Council policy staff available to assist new member, and holding legislative sessions on an annual basis.¹⁰

As part of the study, Legislative Council drafted background memorandums in August¹¹ and December¹², 2023 compiling information on term limits in other states, including the roles of legislative staff, legislative leadership, and external stakeholders such as executive branch agencies and lobbyists.

The study also examined Legislative Council workforce demographics¹³, employee positions and compensation adjustments,¹⁴ and proposed staffing expansions for the 2025-27 and 2027-29 biennia.¹⁵

The outcomes of the 2023–24 interim study largely focused on addressing term limit impacts through education and training, expanding staff support, and implementing procedural controls.¹⁶ Training recommendations included a more active role for legislative leadership and committee chairs in mentorship and education, as well as expanded access to training resources for both new and returning legislators, including recorded materials.

Managing legislative workflow through procedural controls was also considered. During the 2023 legislative session, legislative staff drafted more than 3,144 documents, including bills, resolutions, memorandums, and amendments.¹⁷ Various approaches to managing workload were discussed, including limiting the number of bills introduced by each legislator. Duplicate legislation was also identified as a concern.

Currently, the drafting process between Legislative Council staff and legislators is confidential, with bill language becoming public only upon formal introduction. Absent statutory changes to this confidentiality framework, alternative approaches, such as improved coordination at the caucus level, were discussed as potential ways to address duplication.

Finally, staffing levels within Legislative Council were examined. North Dakota has one of the smallest legislative staff structures in the country, and a potential five-year staffing expansion plan, modeled in part after Montana, was reviewed. The plan proposed adding 25 staff members in each of the 2025–27 and 2027–29 biennia. This staffing expansion was approved during the 2025 legislative session.

At the conclusion of its study, the Legislative Procedure and Rules Committee made no additional recommendations.

2025-26 Interim Study Design & Methodology

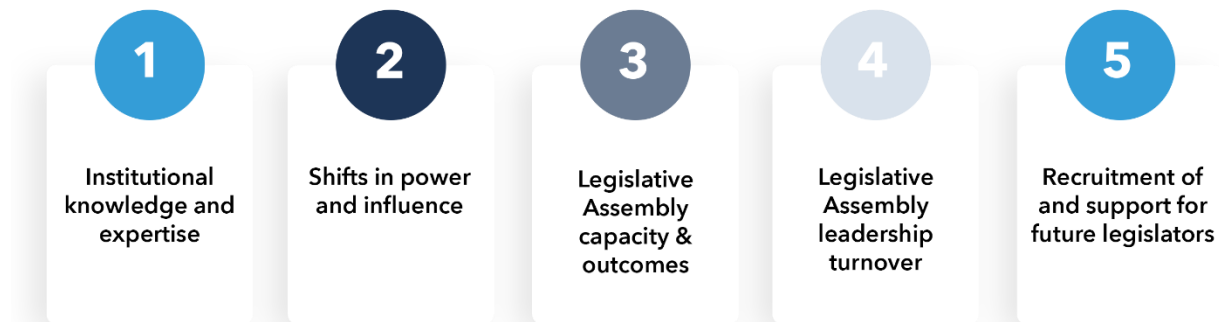
Building on the previous research and work completed by the North Dakota Legislative Council, this study began with a literature review to identify prior research on the impacts of legislative term limits to inform the design of this study.¹⁸ Examining previous studies, most of which were conducted in the 1990s and 2000s, helped establish a foundation for understanding common outcomes, challenges, and adjustments associated with term limits.

These findings were used to shape survey questions, stakeholder engagement, and areas of analysis for the current study. This approach ensures the study builds on existing knowledge rather than duplicating past work and focuses on issues most likely to affect North Dakota.

While the literature review was underway, committee leadership was interviewed to better understand key concerns and considerations, gather early input, and further tailor the study approach to meet desired outcomes. These conversations provided additional insight into concerns from current legislators regarding impending term limits, as well as current processes and procedures for onboarding new legislators. A summary of legislator interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Based on conversations with legislators and a review of prior research and literature on legislative term limits in the United States, five major impact themes emerged regarding the potential impacts of term limits:

Impact Themes



Loss of Institutional Knowledge and Experience

With more frequent turnover, legislators simply have less time to get up to speed, both on how the legislature works, and on complex policy areas. Over time, legislatures lose experienced members who traditionally help guide newer legislators and provide historical context for decisions.

Shifts in Power and Influence

Research shows that in term-limited states, institutional knowledge often shifts away from the legislature and toward executive branch agencies, where staff continuity is greater. Studies also suggest that lobbyists tend to retain, and in some cases increase, their influence, as they bring expertise and established relationships into a legislature that experiences more frequent turnover.

Challenges to Legislative Assembly Capacity & Outcomes

Studies have found that term limits can encourage a shorter-term focus, with greater emphasis on immediate or visible outcomes rather than complex, long-term policy solutions. Many term-limited states have also experienced an increase in the number of bills introduced, including duplicative legislation, which adds to the workload of both legislators and staff. In addition, legislators have reported greater difficulty tracking whether laws are working as intended after leaving office.

Revolving Legislative Assembly Leadership

In term-limited states, leadership positions tend to change hands quickly, often every two years. One NCSL report stated that no legislative leader in a term-limited state has served more than four years in leadership. This can lead to constant leadership campaigns, “lame-duck” leaders, and fewer opportunities for mentorship, continuity, and relationship-building across parties.

Challenges with recruitment of and support for future legislators

While term limit research has not focused heavily on recruitment itself, studies of state legislative elections consistently show lower competition in rural districts and in smaller states. With increased turnover under term limits, concerns have been raised about whether term limited states- particularly those with citizen legislatures like North Dakota, will be able to consistently recruit and support qualified individuals willing to serve.

Study Design

The study design employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data through survey data and targeted discussions, including one-on-one conversations with committee leadership and small focus group sessions. This approach was intended to capture both the depth of stakeholder experiences and the breadth of public sentiment, ensuring a well-rounded analysis that informs actionable recommendations.



Legislator Survey

Current legislators were surveyed to gain insights from those actively serving in the role. The survey was distributed directly by Garty Consulting in late November and remained open through the first two weeks of December. Of the 141 eligible legislators, 86 participated, resulting in a 61 percent response rate.

Among respondents, 65 percent were members of the House of Representatives, 27 percent were members of the Senate, and 8 percent had served in both chambers. A full summary of these results is provided in Appendix C.

Public Survey

The study Request for Proposals (RFP) asked that the consultant solicit public input on whether term limits may impair the Legislative Assembly's ability to lead on policy issues. Public input was collected through a survey of 600 North Dakotans conducted January 20–23, 2026, using a combination of landline, mobile phone, and text-to-web methods. Phone numbers were stratified across four geographic regions to ensure balanced representation.

The survey was designed to gather representative input on public awareness of and attitudes toward legislative term limits. Results indicate strong public support, with 84 percent of respondents somewhat or strongly supporting legislative term limits when asked at the start of the survey. That number held steady with 80 percent of respondents reporting at the end of the survey they still somewhat or strongly support legislative term limits.

Participants were asked to identify which elected officials are subject to term limits under Constitutional Measure 1. While 48 percent correctly identified that the Governor is subject to term limits and 59 percent correctly identified that the measure applies to state legislators, a notable share of respondents were unsure (33 percent and 32 percent, respectively).

During the September 23, 2025, Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee hearing, legislators raised concerns that public support for term limits may be influenced by a misperception that the measure applies to North Dakota's members of Congress. Survey findings support that this confusion exists: 40 percent of respondents incorrectly believed the measure applies to members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, while 30 percent were unsure.

However, the largest share of respondents (59 percent) correctly identified that term limits apply to members of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly. This suggests that, despite some confusion regarding other offices, a majority of respondents understood that the measure applies to state legislators. A full summary of survey results, including topline data and demographic cross-tabulations, is provided in Appendix D.

Public Focus Groups

To further explore public perspectives, survey respondents were invited to participate in follow-up focus groups. In the first two days of the survey, more than 80 respondents expressed interest and were invited to register for one of three virtual focus groups held January 27–29. A full summary of these sessions is included in Appendix E.

Association and Membership Organization Focus Groups

Six focus group sessions were conducted, both in-person in Bismarck and virtually, with approximately 40 representatives from North Dakota association and membership organizations spanning a wide range of industries. Participants ranged from individuals with over 55 years of legislative engagement experience to those with approximately one year of involvement.

These sessions focused on identifying adjustments and actions that could support the Legislature in functioning effectively under term limits. Association and membership organizations, many of which employ a registered lobbyist, work closely with the legislative process and typically have in-depth knowledge of legislative operations.

A full summary of these discussions is provided in Appendix F.

Additional Stakeholders

To ensure a broad range of perspectives were included in this study, additional stakeholder groups were consulted. During the survey of current legislators, respondents noted that a stronger understanding of tribal governments is an important area of knowledge for legislators. In response, tribal leaders were invited to complete a shortened survey focused on mitigation strategies from their perspective.

Targeted outreach also occurred in February and March, including a meeting with Legislative Council staff to better understand the operations of the office, as well as updates on current staffing plans following the approval of additional positions. Legislative Council staff shared ongoing efforts to improve efficiency through technology, including enhancements to the existing “How To” resources on the legislative website and the development of a centralized hub for topical issue areas that can be utilized across legislative sessions. Staff are also working to digitize historical documents to improve accessibility.

During these discussions, examples from Montana, Texas, and South Dakota were referenced as potential models should the Legislative Assembly consider transitioning certain session-only positions- such as Chief Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate, into year-round roles. Such a shift could further enhance continuity and operational capacity between sessions.

Beyond Legislative Council, several organizations in North Dakota play a key role in supporting elected officials as they enter office and navigate turnover. The North Dakota School Boards Association, the North Dakota League of Cities, and the North Dakota Association of Counties provide training and support to school board members, mayors, and city and county commissioners, respectively. The study sought to learn more about how these organizations structure orientation and ongoing training for elected leaders.

North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) §11-10-28 requires county commissioners to complete training provided by the North Dakota Association of Counties within one year of taking office¹⁹. Similarly, NDCC §15.1-09-32 requires newly elected school board members to complete training provided by the North Dakota School Boards Association within one year of assuming office²⁰. While no comparable statutory requirement exists for city officials, the North Dakota League of Cities offers voluntary training opportunities. All three organizations deliver training through a combination of conferences, webinars, and on-demand virtual libraries, with participation tracking and recorded sessions available for later access.

Additional examples of civic education and leadership development were also identified. The Bismarck Citizens Academy, a 12-week program open to the public, provides participants with an in-depth understanding of city government operations while fostering engagement between residents and local officials.²¹ In eastern North Dakota, The Chamber serving Fargo, Moorhead, and West Fargo has launched a Center for Civic Engagement aimed at preparing individuals for public office and encouraging civic participation within the business community.²² Initiatives include a candidate institute, public-facing civic literacy resources, and employer toolkits designed to support employee engagement in civic life.

Collectively, these examples highlight opportunities not only for structured training and orientation, but also for strengthening connections between government institutions and the communities they serve. Increased awareness, accessibility, and support may help encourage broader participation in public service, including service in the Legislative Assembly.

Workforce Turnover as a Lens for Legislative Change

The implementation of legislative term limits will introduce a level of turnover that is more commonly associated with workforce disruption in organizational settings. While the Legislative Assembly is not a traditional workplace, many of the challenges associated with high turnover- loss of institutional knowledge, increased onboarding demands, and pressure on remaining members and staff, parallel those experienced by organizations undergoing significant staffing change.

In workforce settings, sustained turnover is rarely addressed through a single intervention. Instead, businesses focus on strengthening systems that support continuity, accelerate learning, and distribute workload effectively. These include investments in onboarding and training, leadership development, staffing capacity, knowledge management, and succession planning.

Stakeholder input throughout this study reflects many of these same dynamics within the Legislative Assembly. Participants consistently noted concerns about the loss of institutional knowledge, the steep learning curve for new legislators, and the increasing demands on time and capacity during session. At the same time, there was strong recognition that North Dakota's citizen legislature model relies on accessibility, limited staffing, and part-time service, factors that both define its strengths and constrain its ability to absorb rapid turnover.

Applying a workforce turnover lens helps frame recommendations to mitigate the impacts of term limits and underscores the need for the Legislative Assembly to recognize and plan for an intentional shift in system design. Just as employers facing high turnover must stabilize operations while maintaining work performance, the Legislative Assembly will need to adapt its structures, processes, and legislator supports to ensure the Assembly continues to lead with respect to formulating policy for the state.

Key principles from workforce turnover best practices are particularly relevant in this context:

- Strengthening onboarding and early engagement to help new legislators become effective more quickly
- Investing in leadership and mentorship to compensate for reduced tenure and experience
- Expanding staffing and support capacity to reduce administrative burden and provide subject matter expertise
- Improving access to information and institutional knowledge through technology and centralized resources
- Managing workload and prioritization to ensure limited time is used effectively

Importantly, high turnover is often a symptom of structural conditions rather than the core problem itself. In the legislative context, term limits are due to a policy change that introduces expected turnover. The question, therefore, is not whether turnover will occur, but how effectively the Legislative Assembly can adapt its systems to operate successfully within that environment.

This perspective reinforces the importance of the recommendations that follow, which are designed to strengthen stability, support legislators, and maintain the effectiveness of the institution under conditions of increased turnover.

Strategic Framework

Impact Themes



Goals



Objectives



RECOMMENDATIONS ACTION PLAN

Goal 1: Stabilize the Legislative Assembly – Schedule, Structure, Operations

Theme(s) Addressed: Institutional Knowledge & Expertise, Legislative Capacity & Outcomes, Shifts in Power & Influence

Objectives	Strategies
1. Address session scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Meet for annual sessions OR B. Meet for biennial sessions in <i>even</i>-numbered years C. Restructure Organizational Session D. Designate “office hours” for legislators during Regular Session
2. Strengthen effectiveness of Interim Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Align legislative committees from Regular Session through Interim Session B. Adopt a consistent schedule for committee meetings C. Authorize bill introductions and bill hearings
3. Create operational and procedural efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Use the consent calendar B. Disclose bill draft requests (internal process for legislators and Legislative Council) C. Establish a process or committee structure to review and consolidate duplicate bills D. Adopt separate bill introduction deadlines for new and returning legislators E. Add “Refer to Interim” as a recommendation of a Committee Report during Regular Session
4. Professionalize additional staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Employ Secretary of the Senate and Chief Clerk of the House as full-time, year-round positions

Goal 2: Support Legislators – Staffing, Training, Resources

Theme(s) Addressed: Institutional Knowledge & Expertise, Shifts in Power & Influence, Legislative Leadership, Legislative Capacity & Outcomes

Objectives	Strategies
1. Improve orientation of new legislators	A. Enhance and expand orientation and provide a structured onboarding process B. Formalize a mentorship program
2. Improve succession planning of legislative leaders	A. Develop a training series for leadership development and advancement B. Formalize a mentorship program for new leaders
3. Expand educational resources and ongoing training for all legislators	A. Develop and maintain an online resource directory of legislative stakeholders B. Develop a library of on-demand educational resources and organize professional learning webinars C. Plan and hold an annual professional development conference for legislators
4. Professionalize additional staff	A. Employ Majority and Minority Administrative Assistants as full-time, year-round positions B. Employ dedicated, non-partisan training and development staff as full-time, year-round positions

Goal 3: Connect with the Public – Awareness, Communication, Opportunity

Theme(s) Addressed: Shifts in Power & Influence, Future Legislator/Candidate Pool

Objectives	Strategies
1. Improve communication and engagement with the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Develop a structured learning program available to North Dakota citizensB. Develop a public-facing platform for official communications from legislatorsC. Adopt consistent rules guiding virtual testimony
2. Address barriers to legislative service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Adopt policies or programs that encourage public serviceB. Address travel costs associated with serving rural districtsC. Recognize public engagement and professional development

APPENDIX A: TERM-LIMITED STATES CROSSWALK

State	Number of Legislators	Senate Members	House Members	Number of Permanent Legislative Staff	Session Only Staff	State Population (2020 census)	Average population per Senate district (after 2020 census)	Annual sessions	Part-time legislatures	Legislative Session Length	Legislator Salary (2025)
Arizona	90	30	60	621	86	7,158,923	238,631	X		100 each year	\$24,000 annual
Arkansas	135	35	100	432	68	3,013,756	86,107	X		Odd- 60C Even- 30C	\$45,244 annual
California	120	40	80	2751	13	39,576,757	**989,419 <i>highest</i>	X		No limit	\$132,703 annual
Colorado	100	35	65	262	46	5,782,171	165,205	X		120 each year	\$47,561 annual
Florida	160	40	120	1448	103	21,570,527	539,263	X		60 each year	\$29,697 annual (2024)
Louisiana	144	39	105	735	75	4,661,468	119,525	X		Odd-45 Even- 60	\$16,800 annual + \$6,000 per year as an unvouchered expense
Maine	186	35	151	178	26	1,363,582	38,959	X	X	40 each year	\$25,000 1 st session, \$20,000 2 nd session
Michigan	148	38	110	810	0	10,084,442	265,380	X		No limit	\$71,685 annual
Missouri	197	34	163	408	37	6,160,281	181,185	X		Odd- 40 Even- 35	\$41,770 annual
Montana	150	50	100	143	147	1,085,407	21,708		X	Odd- 90	\$11,597.40 (session base) + \$128.86 per day during interim.
Nebraska	49	49	0	228	10	1,963,333	40,068	X	X	Odd- 90 L Even- 60L	\$12,000 annual
Nevada	63	21	42	291	238	3,108,462	148,022		X	Odd- 120	\$7,800 (\$130/day x max of 60 days)
North Dakota	141	47	94	45	83	779,702	*16,589 <i>fewest</i>		X	Odd- 80L	\$23,868Lo (\$569/mo. + \$213/day)
Ohio	132	33	99	436	0	11,808,848	357,844	X		No limit	\$72,343 annual
Oklahoma	149	48	101	202	27	3,963,516	82,573	X		90 each year	\$47,500 annual
South Dakota	105	35	70	61	32	887,770	25,365	X	X	Odd- 40 Even- 35	\$16,348 annual

APPENDIX B: LEGISLATIVE LEADER/MEMBER INTERVIEWS

SUMMARY REPORT

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION: Following the Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee discussion and vote to move forward with the study proposal (September 23, 2025), one-on-one conversations were scheduled and held with members of legislative leadership to help further inform the study and survey designs, to respond to concerns and refine the approach to reflect legislator considerations, and to effectively deliver study outcomes.

DATES: October 16 – November 5, 2026

APPROACH: 7 one-on-one interviews held in-person or via Zoom

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

Members of legislative leadership were asked to begin by providing any input that might helpful to consider in this study – to answer questions, to address concerns, to enhance opportunity, and to share ways they feel would better support future legislators, to ensure their districts’ constituents are well-represented by future legislators, and to maintain and uphold the authority of the Legislative Branch under term limits.

Following open-ended introduction and discussion, the major impact themes as identified in our research and early analysis of other legislative term-limited states were shared:

- Loss of Institutional Knowledge and Experience
- Shifts in Power and Influence
- Challenges to Legislative Assembly Capacity and Outcomes
- Revolving Legislative Assembly Leadership
- Challenges with recruitment of and support for future legislators

Legislative members were asked to respond with specific questions, concerns, and insights addressing those impact themes.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

These discussions explored how legislative leaders feel about the approach to the study, the impending impacts, and how to function effectively under voter-approved term limits.

There were consistent messages and consensus from legislative members that *preparation* will determine how positively or negatively the impacts of term limits will be felt. There was acknowledgement that term limits themselves are not inherently negative, but the impacts caused by them will depend heavily on if and how well, the legislature chooses to

adapt and prepare. Several legislators emphasized that negative impacts can be managed and lessened with intentional changes, while inaction will undoubtedly amplify challenges.

Training and onboarding are the most urgent gaps

The most frequently raised issue was the need for significantly expanded, ongoing, and more meaningful onboarding and training:

- Current orientation is too short, too impersonal, lacking in depth and content, and assumes prior knowledge
- New legislators need both foundational knowledge (civics, subject-area/content) and practical skills (process, bill drafting, committee work)
- Training should continue throughout the session and interim—not just at the start
- There is strong support for formal mentorship programs, including interest in engaging former legislators as their terms expire just as experience is gained

Institutional knowledge and continuity are major concerns

Legislative members consistently highlighted the risk of losing institutional knowledge:

- No current formal system but a need to capture and transfer content and subject-matter knowledge
- Expertise is largely informal and experience-based
- Suggested approaches include expanding Legislative Council capacity and using former legislators as mentors or experts.

The interim is underutilized and seen as a key opportunity

The interim is too often viewed by some legislators as “time off” rather than a working period and opportunity to deepen knowledge, build expertise, and connect with constituents. Legislative members emphasized that, with or without moving to annual sessions, interim sessions should:

- Serve as a continuation of Regular Session work
- Be used to strategically enhance leadership development and plan leadership transitions
- Support long-term policy work and legislative oversight

Staffing and capacity will need to expand

There was broad agreement that although changes are already underway, current staffing levels are likely still insufficient:

- Expansion of Legislative Council is viewed optimistically
- Interest in shared staff models and administrative support
- Staff will play a larger role in maintaining continuity and expertise

Interest in changes to the bill process and workload management

There was no consensus on whether term limits would increase or decrease the volume of bills introduced. Legislative members recognized a need to:

- Structure or limit bill introductions
- Request, review bill drafts earlier and establish more coordination to reduce duplication
- Require historical context, clearer purpose, and desired outcomes for legislation

Legislative culture will need to shift

There was broad agreement that some changes will not be in statutory language or rules but in culture. “This is the way it’s always been done” cannot be the answer anymore.

- Rethinking leadership – length, skill development, and succession planning
- Reducing reliance on seniority and increasing early expectations and responsibilities of new legislators
- Clarifying policy vs. budget roles – elevating and respecting the roles of policy experts, not just appropriators
- Strengthening expectations around oversight and professionalism

Mixed views on candidate recruitment

Most acknowledged that the challenges and barriers for individuals to serve in the legislature (time commitment, employer and family obligations, public scrutiny and political environment) remain unchanged, with or without term limits.

On the other hand, legislative members expressed optimism that term limits may open opportunity due to reduced incumbency and the recognition that term limits demand a shorter commitment to legislative service over a lifetime, potentially attracting more candidates to step forward.

Disconnect between legislators and voters/public

While most legislative members accept that the voters have made this decision, there’s a feeling of disconnect and a lack of understanding between those with experience and who engage directly with the legislature on the importance of experience and institutional knowledge needed for effective legislating and informed decision-making. Legislative members would appreciate insights on why the public supports term limits, whether the public knows which elected offices were affected by the term limit measure (as passed in 2022), and what, if any, specific changes the public would support in addressing the impacts of turnover caused by term limits.

Additionally, there was curiosity about how the public may view ideas and changes that are debated and supported as a response to term limits – if legislators will be viewed merely as being “self-interested” or if strategies will be understood as ways to improve the public’s representation in the legislature.

Major Conclusion

Legislators emphasized that the current system is not prepared for the impacts caused by the implementation of term limits. Intentional investments in training, staffing, knowledge transfer, and use of the interim will be critical to maintaining legislative effectiveness.

**APPENDIX C: LEGISLATOR SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT**

**NORTH DAKOTA
LEGISLATORS SURVEY**

**TERM LIMIT STUDY
JANUARY 2026**

Topline:

Interviews: 86 Current North Dakota Legislators
Interview Dates: November 25 – December 12
Sample: All 141 North Dakota Legislators were contacted three times by email and once by text (if number was publicly available) during the two-week window to participate in the anonymous survey.

Q1: In which legislative chamber(s) have you served in

House of Representatives.....	65%
Senate	27
Both	8

Q2: How many years have you served in the North Dakota Legislature

2 – 4 years	12%
5 – 8 years	24
9 – 12 years	19
13+ years	19
Prefer not to say	27

Q3: The district you represent is primarily described as:

Mostly city	52%
Mostly rural	34
Mix of both	14

Q4: What is your current age?

18 – 34	5
35 – 49	16
50 – 64	25
65+	48
Prefer not to say	6

Q5: What is your gender

Female	28%
Male	68
Prefer not to say	4

Q6: Prior to being elected to the legislature, did you have experience serving in any appointed or elected office (such as school board, city planning commissions, city or county commission/council, etc.)?

Yes	38%
No	62

Q7: How significantly did that experience help prepare you for being a legislator?

Very significant	39%
Significant	27
Just somewhat significant	21
Not significant.....	12

Q8: Prior to being elected to the legislature, did you interact with the legislature in any of the following ways? (select all that apply)

Through association group	44%
As a constituent.....	53
As a lobbyist	14
Through a political party.....	34
As a staff member or intern	3
Other (please specify)	8

Q9: Most term-limited states hold annual legislative sessions. Only a small number of states hold biennially sessions (including Montana, Nevada, and North Dakota). How do you believe holding annual legislative sessions (while maintaining the 80-day limit) would affect legislators in gaining more experience and building institutional knowledge more rapidly?

Positively affect	53%
Little or no effect	28
Negatively affect	16
Other (please specify)	2

Q10: In thinking about your own experience and observing current orientation for new legislators, how significantly do you believe the following would impact legislators in gaining relevant knowledge more quickly and assisting in addressing the loss of institutional knowledge?

- 10a. Dedicate year-round staff to assist all members, but especially new legislators
- 10b. Develop a library of on-demand, virtual training modules
- 10c. Expand and enhance the orientation process (length and content)
- 10d. Formalize a new legislator mentorship program
- 10e. Offer in-person “refresher” courses and/or skill-building trainings
- 10f. Participate in mock hearings and floor sessions
- 10g. Utilize former legislators as mentors or faculty

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Year-round staff	34%	29	15	21	1
b: Library on demand	16	41	26	17	0
c: Enhance orientation	28	37	27	8	0
d: Mentorship	26	38	23	10	2
e: Refresher courses	18	33	36	13	0
f: Mock hearings/floor sessions	15	29	35	20	1
g: Mentors	23	40	27	10	0

Q11: If you reach the term limit in your current chamber, how likely would you be to seek election to continue service in the other chamber?

Definitely	4%
Likely	19
Just somewhat likely	23
Not at all likely.	55
Other (please specify)	0

Q12: Do you have any ideas, suggestions, or feedback on ways to mitigate the loss of institutional knowledge and expertise? (open-ended)

Q13: How significantly do you believe legislators rely on the following to understand issues being addressed in legislation?

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Constituents	20%	41	29	9	0
b: Executive branch agencies	17	59	21	2	0
c: Legislative Council	49	41	9	1	0
d: Legislative colleagues	52	44	3	0	0
e: Lobbyist and association groups	33	51	12	5	0
f: Personal experience or beliefs	44	45	10	0	0

Q14: How significantly do you believe the following will increase their influence (if at all) in the legislature due to term limits?

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Constituents	16%	22	28	32	1
b: Executive branch agencies	49	35	10	6	0
c: Legislative Council	50	37	10	2	0
d: Legislative leadership	36	34	23	7	0
e: Lobbyist and association groups	62	23	8	6	1

Q15: Which of the following do you think stand to gain the most influence in the legislature due to term limits?

Constituents	10%
Executive branch agencies.....	42
Legislative Council	2
Legislative leadership	0
Lobbyist and association groups	41
(VOL) Unsure.....	5

Q16: Do you have any ideas, suggestions, or feedback you would like considered on ways to mitigate the impacts of the potential shift of power and influence on the legislative branch? **(open-ended)**

Q17: How significantly do you believe term limits will unduly impair the Legislative Assembly’s ability to lead with respect to formulating policy for the state?

Very significant	49%
Significant	0
Just somewhat significant	16
Not significant.....	9
(VOL) Unsure	26

Q18: How significantly do you believe the following would assist the legislature in continuing to address the long-term implications of budget and policy decisions?

- 18a. Enhance support from Legislative Council staff.
- 18b. Expand trainings, workshops, and briefings.
- 18c. Improve protocols for monitoring and evaluating program outcomes.
- 18d. Improve succession planning of committee leadership.
- 18e. Retain committee assignments through interim for continuity.

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Enhance support from LC	43%	43	8	3	2
b: Expand trainings	21	44	25	9	1
c: Improve protocols	35	37	19	8	1
d: Improve succession planning	31	39	20	9	1
e: Retain committee assignments	26	44	24	7	0

Q19: To what extent do you believe restricting the number of bills each legislator can introduce would assist in mitigating the impacts of term limits?

Very significant	30
Significant	27
Just somewhat significant	15
Not significant.....	24
Unsure.....	3

Q20: Do you believe changing these rules will assist in mitigating these impacts?

Yes, a lot	21%
Yes, somewhat	12
Yes, a little	10
No	44
Unsure.....	13

Q21: How significantly would the following support you in your role as a legislator or strengthen the legislative branch?

21a. Administrative tasks (calendar/scheduling, drafting emails).

21b. Constituent services (responding to questions and requests for assistance).

21c. Specific content or topic expertise.

21d. Monitoring or evaluating program outcomes.

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Administrative tasks	26%	31	22	21	0
b: Constituent services	24	34	26	16	0
c: Specific content/expertise	44	42	9	5	0
d: Monitoring/evaluating outcomes	44	35	15	6	0

Q22: Do you have any ideas, suggestions, or feedback you would like considered on ways to mitigate challenges in legislative capacity and outcomes impacted by term limits? (open-ended)

Q23: Have you previously served or do you currently serve in a legislative leadership position (such as majority/minority leader, caucus chair, speaker of the house, president pro-tempore, committee chair/vice-chair)?

Yes, I am/have	62%
No, but I am interested in doing so in the future	13
No	25

Q24: How significantly do you believe the following would assist in mitigating the potential impacts of shorter tenured leadership positions?

24a. Offer a training program for leadership positions (open to all but must complete to be eligible for consideration).

24b. Dedicate year-round staff to assist current leaders and to support succession planning and leadership transitions.

24c. Elect or appoint leadership positions earlier.

24d. Engage earlier with and increase the responsibilities of incoming legislators.

24e. Establish limits on lengths of service in leadership positions.

24f. Formalize a leadership mentor program.

24g. Increase the number of leadership positions available to spread the workload and to build capacity.

24h. Utilize former legislators as leadership mentors or faculty.

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Offer training programs	29%	38	23	9	1
b: Dedicate year-round staff	27	45	17	12	0
c: Elect leadership position earlier	16	33	30	19	2
d: Engage earlier incoming legislators	18	43	27	12	0
e: Limit on length of leadership	7	17	24	48	0
f: Leadership mentors	19	37	27	14	2
g: Increase leadership numbers	12	28	29	27	5
h: Utilize former legislators as mentors	20	34	28	14	4

Q25: Do you have any ideas, suggestions, or feedback you would like considered on ways to assist in mitigating the potential impacts of shorter tenured leadership positions? (open-ended)

Q26: Which statement best describes your beliefs about how term limits will impact the recruitment of individuals to run for and serve in the legislature?

I believe term limits may make it significantly easier	6%
I believe term limits may make it just somewhat easier	10
I believe term limits will have little to no effect	21
I believe term limits may make it just somewhat more difficult.....	27
I believe term limits may make it significantly more difficult.....	35
Unsure	1

Q27: Regardless of any impacts of term limits, in citizen legislatures, barriers may exist for a wider pool of individuals to consider running for and serving in the legislature. How significantly do you believe the following are barriers in North Dakota?

- 27a. Balancing personal responsibilities (home and community).
- 27b. Balancing professional responsibilities (work and employment).
- 27c. Committing the time needed to serve during the legislative session.
- 27d. Funding a legislative campaign.
- 27e. Having the employment or financial security to serve.
- 27f. Having the resources to attend constituent meetings and events that are not part of the official legislative calendar.
- 27g. Identifying as part of a specific political party.
- 27h. Understanding legislator roles and responsibilities of a legislator.

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Personal responsibilities	58%	32	8	1	0
b: Professional responsibilities	76	19	5	0	0
c: Committing time needed	57	36	6	1	0
d: Funding legislative campaign	29	31	35	6	0
e: Financial security to serve	56	33	10	1	0
f: Resources to attend meetings	25	49	20	6	0
g: Identifying as part of a political party	10	14	32	40	4
h: Understanding roles/responsibilities	20	41	24	14	0

Q28: How significantly would the following help reduce barriers in North Dakota?

- 28a. Incentivize support and flexibility from employers.
- 28b. Improve public awareness of what the legislature is and what legislators do.
- 28c. Professionalize the position of a legislator (such as full-time staffing/support, dedicated office space and district workdays, increased pay and expectations).
- 28d. Provide “job-shadow” opportunities for members of the public to experience the legislature.
- 28e. Publicly financed campaigns (designated, taxpayer funded campaign accounts).
- 28f. Restructure the legislative calendar (such as designated district workdays, professional development days, annual versus biennial sessions).
- 28g. Remove party affiliation from legislative elections.
- 28h. Reduce the number of legislative districts, thereby reducing the number of legislators needed to serve.

	<u>Very</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Not</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: Incentivize flexibility employers	31%	37	26	6	0
b: Improve public awareness	30	29	32	10	0
c: Professionalize position	29	34	17	17	2
d: Provide ‘job-shadow’	6	33	43	13	5
e: Publicly financed campaigns	8	14	14	55	7
f: Restructure legislative calendar	23	31	22	22	2
g: Remove party affiliation	11	2	12	63	12
h: Reduce number of districts	7	8	12	58	14

Q29: Do you have any ideas, suggestions, or feedback you would like considered on ways to recruit and retain future legislators? (**open-ended**)



Related Crosstabs

Due to the length of the document, additional crosstab analyses are provided at the following link [Select Crosstabs](#)

Q9: Most term-limited states hold annual legislative sessions. Only a small number of states hold biennially sessions (including Montana, Nevada, and North Dakota). How do you believe holding annual legislative sessions (while maintaining the 80-day limit) would affect legislators in gaining more experience and building institutional knowledge more rapidly?

Positively affect	53%
Little or no effect	28
Negatively affect	16
Other (please specify)	2

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Positively</u>	<u>Little/No</u>	<u>Negatively</u>	<u>Other</u>
8 years or less	50	23	20	7
More than 8 years	59	19	22	0
Prefer not to say	48	48	4	0
<u>Type of District</u>				
Mostly City	62	27	9	2
Mostly Rural / Mix District	44	29	24	2
<u>Age</u>				
18-64	59	15	21	5
65 plus	46	41	12	0

Q10c: In thinking about your own experience and observing current orientation for new legislators, how significantly do you believe the following would impact legislators in gaining relevant knowledge more quickly and assisting in addressing the loss of institutional knowledge?

Expand and enhance the orientation process (length and content).

Very significant	28%
Significant	37
Just somewhat significant	27
Not significant	8
Unsure	0

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	27	50	20	3	0
More than 8 years	38	34	22	6	0
Prefer not to say	17	26	39	17	0
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	40	29	24	7	0
Rural / Mix District	15	46	29	10	0
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	36	41	18	5	0
65 plus	20	32	37	12	0

Q10d: In thinking about your own experience and observing current orientation for new legislators, how significantly do you believe the following would impact legislators in gaining relevant knowledge more quickly and assisting in addressing the loss of institutional knowledge?

Formalize a new legislator mentorship program.

Very significant	26%
Significant	38
Just somewhat significant	23
Not significant	10
Unsure	2

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	33	33	23	10	0
More than 8 years	28	41	22	9	0
Prefer not to say	13	39	26	13	9
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	33	38	20	4	4
Rural / Mix District	17	39	27	17	0
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	38	31	21	10	0
65 plus	15	44	27	12	2

Q10g: In thinking about your own experience and observing current orientation for new legislators, how significantly do you believe the following would impact legislators in gaining relevant knowledge more quickly and assisting in addressing the loss of institutional knowledge?

Utilize former legislators as mentors or faculty.

Very significant	23%
Significant	40
Just somewhat significant	27
Not significant	10
Unsure	0

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	30	37	23	10	0
More than 8 years	19	38	31	13	0
Prefer not to say	22	48	22	9	0
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	22	47	20	11	0
Rural / Mix District	24	32	34	10	0
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	33	33	26	8	0
65 plus	15	49	24	12	0

Q24a: How significantly do you believe the following would assist in mitigating the potential impacts of shorter tenured leadership positions?

Offer a training program for leadership positions (open to all but must complete to be eligible for consideration).

Very significant	29%
Significant	38
Just somewhat significant	23
Not significant	9
Unsure	1

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	24	45	28	3	0
More than 8 years	26	48	16	10	0
Prefer not to say	43	14	24	14	5
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	33	37	26	5	0
Rural / Mix District	26	38	21	13	3
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	27	49	19	5	0
65 plus	33	28	28	10	0

Q24b: How significantly do you believe the following would assist in mitigating the potential impacts of shorter tenured leadership positions?

Dedicate year-round staff to assist current leaders and to support succession planning and leadership transitions.

Very significant	27%
Significant	45
Just somewhat significant	17
Not significant	12
Unsure	0

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	28	48	17	7	0
More than 8 years	31	34	13	22	0
Prefer not to say	19	52	24	5	0
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	27	50	9	14	0
Rural / Mix District	26	38	26	10	0
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	34	45	13	8	0
65 plus	23	46	18	13	0

Q24f: How significantly do you believe the following would assist in mitigating the potential impacts of shorter tenured leadership positions?

Formalize a leadership mentor program.

Very significant	19%
Significant	37
Just somewhat significant	27
Not significant	14
Unsure	2

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	17	45	17	21	0
More than 8 years	19	41	25	13	3
Prefer not to say	24	24	38	10	5
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	23	41	27	7	2
Rural / Mix District	15	33	26	23	3
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	24	45	24	8	0
65 plus	18	31	28	21	3

Q28a: How significantly would the following help reduce barriers in North Dakota?

Incentivize support and flexibility from employers.

Very significant	31%
Significant	37
Just somewhat significant	26
Not significant	6
Unsure	0

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	38	28	24	10	0
More than 8 years	31	47	19	3	0
Prefer not to say	23	32	41	5	0
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	39	36	18	7	0
Rural / Mix District	23	38	35	5	0
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	45	32	16	8	0
65 plus	23	43	35	0	0

Q28f: How significantly would the following help reduce barriers in North Dakota?

Restructure the legislative calendar (such as designated district workdays, professional development days, annual versus biennial sessions).

Very significant	23%
Significant	31
Just somewhat significant	22
Not significant	22
Unsure	2

<u>Years in Legislature</u>	<u>Very Significant</u>	<u>Significant</u>	<u>Somewhat Significant</u>	<u>Not Significant</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
8 years or less	24	45	10	21	0
More than 8 years	32	16	35	16	0
Prefer not to say	9	36	18	27	9
<u>Type of District</u>					
City	34	30	23	14	0
Rural / Mix District	10	33	21	31	5
<u>Age</u>					
18-64	32	37	18	13	0
65 plus	15	26	26	28	5

**APPENDIX D: PUBLIC SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT**

**NORTH DAKOTA
STATEWIDE SURVEY**

**TERM LIMIT STUDY
JANUARY 2026**

Topline:

Interviews: 600 North Dakota Residents
Margin of Error: +/- 4.0 percentage points with 95 percent confidence.
Sample: Landline, mobile phone and text-by-web. Phone numbers stratified into four distinct geographic regions to ensure balance. Final data is weighted by: age, gender, and education.

Q1: On a scale of 1 to 5, is the country heading in the right direction or is the country on the wrong track? (with 1 being right direction and 5 being wrong track)

1 - Right direction.....	27%	
2	11	
3	9	
4	9	
5 - Wrong track	43	
(VOL) Unsure	2	3.34 Ave.

Q2: And on a scale of 1 to 5, is North Dakota heading in the right direction or is North Dakota on the wrong track? (with 1 being right direction and 5 being wrong track)

1 - Right direction.....	18%	
2	19	
3	27	
4	17	
5 - Wrong track	16	
(VOL) Unsure	3	2.94 Ave.

Q3: I'm now going to read you some elected positions and governing organizations, for each, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion, and if you have never heard of them before, just let me know:

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Never Heard Of</u>
a: U.S. President	46%	51	2	0
b: U.S. Congress	29	66	4	1
c: North Dakota's Members of Congress	41	51	6	1
d: North Dakota Governor	62	29	7	1
e: North Dakota Legislature	43	47	7	2
f: Your State Legislators	45	45	8	2
g: Your City Mayor	47	29	3	0
h: Your City Commission or Council	43	37	4	0

Q4: Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the idea of legislative term limits?

Strongly support	60%	84
Somewhat support	24	
Somewhat oppose	7	13
Strongly oppose	6	
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	4	

Q4a: ONLY THOSE WHO SUPPORT IN Q4: In your own words, what problem do you believe term limits are trying to solve? **See Appendix**

Q5: And specifically, do you support or oppose term limits for the following:

a: U.S. President

Strongly support	76%
Somewhat support	11
Somewhat oppose	3
Strongly oppose	5
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	4

b: Members of Congress

Strongly support	66%
Somewhat support	19
Somewhat oppose	6
Strongly oppose	8
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	2

c: North Dakota Governor

Strongly support	57%
Somewhat support	27
Somewhat oppose	7
Strongly oppose	5
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	5

d: North Dakota Constitutional Offices, like Attorney General or State Auditor

Strongly support	43%
Somewhat support	30
Somewhat oppose	11
Strongly oppose	7
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	9

e: North Dakota Legislators

Strongly support	58%
Somewhat support	22
Somewhat oppose	7
Strongly oppose	9
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	4

f: Local Officials, like Mayors and City Commissioners

Strongly support	42%
Somewhat support	32
Somewhat oppose	12
Strongly oppose	7
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	8

Q6: On a scale of 1 to 5, how closely do you follow the North Dakota legislature? (with 1 closely follow and 5 do not follow)

1 – Closely follow.....	16%
2	28
3	34
4	14
5 – Do not follow	6
(VOL) Unsure	2

Q7: Would you describe the North Dakota Legislature as a Citizen Legislature, where legislators serve in a part-time capacity, or as a Professional Legislature, where legislators serve in a full-time capacity?

Citizen Legislature	62%
Professional Legislature	18
(VOL) Unsure	19

Q8: In November 2022, North Dakota voters approved Constitutional Measure 1 creating term limits. For each type of elected office, tell me yes, no, or unsure whether you believe this measure established term limits?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: North Dakota Governor	48%	18	33
b: North Dakota Constitutional Offices	30	29	41
c: North Dakota Legislators	59	10	32
d: Local, like Mayors and City Commissioners	23	41	37
e: North Dakota Members of Congress	40	30	30

Q9: The constitutional measure approved by voters established term limits on North Dakota legislators of no more than eight years in the State Senate and no more than eight years in the State House, for a maximum of 16 years of service in the Legislative Assembly. Do you think 8-years of service in one legislative chamber is too short, just about right or too long?

Too short	12%
Just about right	62
Too long	20
(VOL) Unsure	6

Q10: And do you think 16 years total in the legislature is too short, just about right, or too long?

Too short	8%
Just about right	36
Too long	49
(VOL) Unsure	7

Q11: I am going to read you a list of reasons why some people oppose legislative term limits. For each, tell me if you agree or disagree that it is a good reason to NOT have term limits:

a: Increases turnover and reduces knowledge and expertise?

Strongly agree	16%
Somewhat agree	27
Somewhat disagree	26
Strongly disagree	26
(VOL) Unsure	5

b: Weakens leadership of the legislative branch?

Strongly agree	10%
Somewhat agree	17
Somewhat disagree	27
Strongly disagree	39
(VOL) Unsure	7

c: Increases the influence of the executive branch and lobbyists on the legislature?

Strongly agree	13%
Somewhat agree	18
Somewhat disagree	29
Strongly disagree	29
(VOL) Unsure	11

d: Creates challenges in recruiting qualified candidates?

Strongly agree	13%
Somewhat agree	28
Somewhat disagree	21
Strongly disagree	33
(VOL) Unsure	5

e: Diminishes legislator engagement with the public?

Strongly agree	7%
Somewhat agree	16
Somewhat disagree	26
Strongly disagree	43
(VOL) Unsure	7

f: Increases the cost of government to address impacts of term limits?

Strongly agree	7%
Somewhat agree	18
Somewhat disagree.....	23
Strongly disagree	41
(VOL) Unsure.....	12

Q12: And which is the best reason to oppose term limits?

Increases turnover and reduces knowledge and expertise	28%
Weakens leadership of the Legislative Branch.....	5
Increases the influence of the executive branch and lobbyists	12
Creates challenges in recruiting qualified candidates.....	17
Diminishes legislator engagement with the public	3
Increases the cost of government to address impacts of term limits.....	5
(VOL) Unsure	31

Q13: I am going to read you a list of reasons why some support legislative term limits. For each one, tell me if you agree or disagree that it is a good reason to have term limits:

a: Limits career politicians and entrenched incumbency?

Strongly agree	72%
Somewhat agree	17
Somewhat disagree.....	3
Strongly disagree	4
(VOL) Unsure.....	4

b: Reduces the influence of lobbyists and special interests?

Strongly agree	50%
Somewhat agree	28
Somewhat disagree.....	6
Strongly disagree	9
(VOL) Unsure.....	7

c: Improves accountability and responsiveness to the public?

Strongly agree	53%
Somewhat agree	29
Somewhat disagree.....	9
Strongly disagree	5
(VOL) Unsure.....	4

d: Brings new people and ideas to the legislature?

Strongly agree	61%
Somewhat agree	31
Somewhat disagree.....	2
Strongly disagree	3
(VOL) Unsure.....	3

e: Prevents concentration of power in legislative leadership?

Strongly agree	56%
Somewhat agree	28
Somewhat disagree.....	6
Strongly disagree	5
(VOL) Unsure.....	4

f: Creates more opportunities for regular citizens to run for office?

Strongly agree	50%
Somewhat agree	34
Somewhat disagree.....	7
Strongly disagree	5
(VOL) Unsure.....	3

Q14: And which is the best reason to support term limits?

Limits career politicians and entrenched incumbency	34%
Reduces the influence of lobbyists and special interests	16
Improves accountability and responsiveness to the public	10
Brings new people and ideas to the legislature.....	18
Prevents concentration of power in legislative leadership	11
Creates more opportunities for regular citizens to run for office	5
(VOL) Unsure.....	6

Q15: Some suggest that term limits may increase the level of influence that others have on the legislature. On a scale of 1 to 5, do you believe that each of the following may increase their influence on the legislature due to term limits? (with 1 being no real increase and 5 being increase significantly)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
a: The Executive branch and state agencies	22%	15	27	12	10	15
b: Citizens and the general public	24	10	24	17	14	11
c: Lobbyists and association groups	30	14	20	9	12	15
d: Legislative leadership	26	16	28	10	6	14
e: Legislative staff	28	12	27	10	8	14

Q16: Do you believe term limits will impair the legislature’s ability to lead in formulating policy for the state?

Yes, a lot	9%
Yes, some	16
No	71
(VOL) Unsure.....	4

Q17: Do you believe that term limits will encourage legislators to pursue more immediate, visible wins rather than long-term, sustainable policy solutions?

Yes	42%
No	38
(VOL) Unsure	19

Q18: Unlike in many state legislatures, North Dakota legislators can introduce an unlimited number of bills in a legislative session, and every bill is required to have a committee hearing and receive a floor vote. Last legislative session, legislators introduced and voted on 1,089 bills in 74 days. With term limits in place, do you support, oppose or does not matter:

a: Limiting the number of bills each legislator can introduce?

Strongly support	25%
Somewhat support	27
Somewhat oppose	15
Strongly oppose	12
Does not matter	14
(VOL) Unsure	7

b: Allowing leadership to decide which bills move forward for a hearing?

Strongly support	10%
Somewhat support	21
Somewhat oppose	18
Strongly oppose	34
Does not matter	8
(VOL) Unsure	9

c: Allowing a bill to be defeated by the committee, without a floor vote?

Strongly support	9%
Somewhat support	25
Somewhat oppose	20
Strongly oppose	30
Does not matter	6
(VOL) Unsure	10

Q19: The North Dakota Constitution limits a regular session of the legislature to no more than 80 days during a biennium. With term limits in place, do you think 80 days every two years is too long, too short, or just about right for the legislature to manage its workload and conduct its official business?

Too long	5%
Too short	41
Just about right	44
(VOL) Unsure	11

Q20: North Dakota’s legislature meets biennially, or once every two years, while most state legislatures, including those in term-limited states, meet once a year for annual sessions. For each statement, do you believe it is a good reason for North Dakota’s legislature to meet for annual sessions, yes, no or does not matter:

a: Help legislators gain more experience and build institutional knowledge more rapidly?

Yes	67%
No	16
Does not matter	17

b: Make the legislature more responsive to changing needs?

Yes	77%
No	12
Does not matter	11

c: Make it easier for citizens to run for and serve in the legislature?

Yes	57%
No	19
Does not matter	24

d: Make the legislature more focused during the constitutionally limited 80-days?

Yes	69%
No	16
Does not matter	15

Q21: And with term limits in place, do you believe the North Dakota legislature should continue to meet for its regular session every other year or meet for annual sessions?

Regular session every other year	25%
Meet for annual sessions	70
(VOL) Unsure	5

Q22: Do you believe term limits will make it easier, more difficult, or no real effect for regular citizens to run for and serve in the legislature?

Significantly easier	21%
Just somewhat easier	33
Just somewhat more difficult	7
Significantly more difficult	2
No real effect	31
(VOL) Unsure	6

Q23: Have you ever considered or would you ever consider running for the legislature?

Yes	31%
No	56
(VOL) Unsure	13

Q24: For each of the following statements, do you agree or disagree that this is a barrier for regular people running for the legislature?

a: Personal responsibilities

Strongly agree	37%
Somewhat agree	38
Somewhat disagree.	10
Strongly disagree	4
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	11

b: Professional responsibilities

Strongly agree	36%
Somewhat agree	37
Somewhat disagree.	12
Strongly disagree	5
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	10

c: Being in Bismarck for a legislative session.

Strongly agree	21%
Somewhat agree	32
Somewhat disagree.	20
Strongly disagree	13
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	15

d: Funding a campaign

Strongly agree	49%
Somewhat agree	29
Somewhat disagree.	8
Strongly disagree	4
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	11

e: Having employment and financial security to serve.

Strongly agree	47%
Somewhat agree	35
Somewhat disagree.	6
Strongly disagree	4
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	9

f: Having time and resources to attend public meetings and events.

Strongly agree	35%
Somewhat agree	43
Somewhat disagree.	10
Strongly disagree	3
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	9

g: Committing to a specific political party.

Strongly agree	20%
Somewhat agree	27
Somewhat disagree.....	14
Strongly disagree	19
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	20

h: Understanding the roles and responsibilities of being a legislator.

Strongly agree	20%
Somewhat agree	36
Somewhat disagree.....	20
Strongly disagree	12
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	13

i: The state of today’s politics.

Strongly agree	36%
Somewhat agree	31
Somewhat disagree.....	11
Strongly disagree	9
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	13

Q25: The North Dakota legislature currently consists of 141 legislators, with 47 individuals elected to serve in the State Senate, and 94 elected to the State House. With term limits in place, do you think 141 legislators is too few, too many, or just right?

Too few	3%
Too many	17
Just right	58
(VOL) Unsure	22

Q26: You are represented in the legislature by one state senator and two representatives. Do you know any of your current state legislators?

Yes	65%
No	28
(VOL) Unsure	7

Q27: Do you think term limits will make legislators more responsive or less responsive to you and to the needs of the public?

Much more responsive.....	30%
Somewhat more responsive	39
Somewhat less responsive	9
Much less responsive	5
(VOL) Unsure	17

Q28: Overall, what impact do you believe term limits will have on how you are represented in the legislature?

I will be better represented	52%	
I will be less represented.....	12	
or, No change in how I will be represented	23	
(VOL) Unsure	13	

Q29: Often people change their views during an interview; after everything you have heard, do you support or oppose legislative term limits?

Strongly support	58%	80
Somewhat support	22	
Somewhat oppose	6	15
Strongly oppose	9	
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	6	



Related Crosstabs

Due to the length of the document, additional crosstab analyses are provided at the following link [Additional Crosstabs](#)

Q4: Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the idea of legislative term limits?

Strongly support	60%	84
Somewhat support	24	
Somewhat oppose	7	13
Strongly oppose	6	
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	4	

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Neutral / Unsure</u>
Male	61	21	7	7	4
Female	58	27	6	5	5
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	60	21	6	8	5
35-49	59	21	7	9	3
50-64	56	30	4	3	6
65+	63	24	9	1	2
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	63	23	6	5	5
College Degree	54	26	8	8	4
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	52	31	6	7	3
Independent	60	26	6	4	4
Traditional Republican	51	25	8	10	6
MAGA Republican	70	15	8	3	3
<u>Region</u>					
East City	62	22	7	4	6
West City	55	27	8	8	1
East Rural	53	27	7	8	6
West/Central Rural	65	21	5	5	4
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	57	23	8	8	4
Not as Close	62	25	6	4	4

Q5b: And specifically, do you support or oppose term limits for the following?

Members of Congress

Strongly support	66%
Somewhat support	19
Somewhat oppose	6
Strongly oppose	8
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	2

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Neutral / Unsure</u>
Male	67	17	6	7	2
Female	65	20	6	7	2
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	64	18	5	10	3
35-49	61	23	8	7	1
50-64	74	15	5	3	3
65+	64	21	6	7	2
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	68	19	5	6	3
College Degree	62	19	8	9	2
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	66	15	6	10	3
Independent	71	16	8	4	2
Traditional Republican	60	24	5	9	2
MAGA Republican	70	20	6	3	1
<u>Region</u>					
East City	70	16	4	7	3
West City	58	22	10	8	1
East Rural	65	16	9	9	2
West/Central Rural	69	20	4	5	3
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	64	18	7	10	2
Not as Close	67	20	5	4	3

Q5e: And specifically, do you support or oppose term limits for the following?

North Dakota Legislators

Strongly support	58%
Somewhat support	22
Somewhat oppose	7
Strongly oppose	9
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	4

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Neutral / Unsure</u>
Male	58	22	7	8	5
Female	58	23	7	9	4
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	59	22	5	10	4
35-49	55	20	10	11	4
50-64	59	23	6	5	6
65+	57	24	8	8	2
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	61	21	5	7	5
College Degree	50	24	11	11	4
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	58	20	8	10	4
Independent	63	23	8	5	2
Traditional Republican	50	23	9	10	8
MAGA Republican	56	26	6	9	3
<u>Region</u>					
East City	65	18	7	6	5
West City	55	22	8	13	2
East Rural	50	25	7	8	9
West/Central Rural	57	25	7	8	3
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	57	18	9	13	3
Not as Close	58	26	5	5	6

Q6: On a scale of 1 to 5, how closely do you follow the North Dakota legislature? (with 1 closely follow and 5 do not follow)

1 – Closely follow.....	16%
2	28
3	34
4	14
5 – Do not follow	6
(VOL) Unsure	2

<u>Gender</u>	<u>1 – CF</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5 – DNF</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Male	15	30	32	15	7	1
Female	17	27	35	12	5	3
<u>Age</u>						
18-34	11	29	37	16	6	2
35-49	17	32	32	12	6	2
50-64	19	29	31	12	5	3
65+	22	24	32	14	6	0
<u>Education</u>						
No College Degree	12	28	37	14	7	2
College Degree	24	30	27	14	4	1
<u>Party</u>						
Democrat	20	24	38	11	6	1
Independent	16	30	40	11	4	0
Traditional Republican	15	31	32	15	7	1
MAGA Republican	14	30	28	17	6	5
<u>Region</u>						
East City	16	25	37	16	5	1
West City	20	31	32	11	4	2
East Rural	10	29	35	13	11	2
West/Central Rural	18	30	32	14	5	1
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>						
Follow	37	63	0	0	0	0
Not as Close	0	0	62	25	10	3

Q7: Would you describe the North Dakota Legislature as a Citizen Legislature, where legislators serve in a part-time capacity, or as a Professional Legislature, where legislators serve in a full-time capacity?

Citizen Legislature **62%**
 Professional Legislature **18**
 (VOL) Unsure **19**

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Citizen</u>	<u>Professional</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Male	64	19	17
Female	61	18	22
<u>Age</u>			
18-34	56	21	23
35-49	64	16	20
50-64	68	17	16
65+	66	18	17
<u>Education</u>			
No College Degree	56	21	23
College Degree	74	13	12
<u>Party</u>			
Democrat	67	21	12
Independent	60	19	22
Traditional Republican	71	16	13
MAGA Republican	63	17	20
<u>Region</u>			
East City	58	21	21
West City	61	22	16
East Rural	66	16	18
West/Central Rural	65	14	21
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>			
Follow	69	15	16
Not as Close	57	21	22

Q8c: In November 2022, North Dakota voters approved Constitutional Measure 1 creating term limits. For each type of elected office, tell me yes, no, or unsure whether you believe this measure established term limits:

North Dakota Legislators

Yes	59%
No	10
Unsure	32

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Male	59	10	31
Female	58	9	33
<u>Age</u>			
18-34	52	10	38
35-49	63	6	31
50-64	61	12	27
65+	62	11	27
<u>Education</u>			
No College Degree	55	11	34
College Degree	65	8	28
<u>Party</u>			
Democrat	62	8	30
Independent	58	11	31
Traditional Republican	65	13	22
MAGA Republican	52	6	42
<u>Region</u>			
East City	58	11	31
West City	62	11	27
East Rural	53	10	37
West/Central Rural	60	8	33
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>			
Follow	68	11	21
Not as Close	51	9	40

Q8e: In November 2022, North Dakota voters approved Constitutional Measure 1 creating term limits. For each type of elected office, tell me yes, no, or unsure whether you believe this measure established term limits:

North Dakota Members of Congress

Yes	40%
No	30
Unsure	40

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
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Male	38	34	28
Female	43	26	31

Age

18-34	40	28	32
35-49	42	29	29
50-64	37	38	25
65+	42	27	31

Education

No College Degree	44	27	30
College Degree	34	37	29

Party

Democrat	45	24	31
Independent	36	36	28
Traditional Republican	40	38	22
MAGA Republican	43	19	38

Region

East City	38	28	33
West City	35	41	24
East Rural	36	34	30
West/Central Rural	50	21	30

Follow ND Legislature

Follow	42	39	19
Not as Close	39	23	38

Q9: The constitutional measure approved by voters established term limits on North Dakota legislators of no more than eight years in the State Senate and no more than eight years in the State House, for a maximum of 16 years of service in the Legislative Assembly. Do you think 8-years of service in one legislative chamber is too short, just about right or too long?

Too short **12%**
 Just about right **62**
 Too long **20**
 (VOL) Unsure **6**

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Too Short</u>	<u>About Right</u>	<u>Too Long</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Male	13	64	16	7
Female	10	60	24	6
<u>Age</u>				
18-34	12	63	20	6
35-49	17	61	16	7
50-64	8	68	17	7
65+	10	57	26	6
<u>Education</u>				
No College Degree	10	60	24	7
College Degree	16	66	12	6
<u>Party</u>				
Democrat	9	63	23	5
Independent	10	60	23	7
Traditional Republican	16	65	13	6
MAGA Republican	16	62	19	3
<u>Region</u>				
East City	10	67	17	6
West City	16	52	25	7
East Rural	11	59	24	5
West/Central Rural	10	67	16	6
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>				
Follow	19	58	18	5
Not as Close	6	66	21	7

Q10: And do you think 16 years total in the legislature is too short, just about right, or too long?

Too short	8%
Just about right	36
Too long	49
(VOL) Unsure	7

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Too Short</u>	<u>About Right</u>	<u>Too Long</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Male	9	38	45	7
Female	6	34	52	7
<u>Age</u>				
18-34	8	36	48	8
35-49	14	32	46	8
50-64	4	45	46	6
65+	6	33	54	8
<u>Education</u>				
No College Degree	6	34	52	8
College Degree	11	41	43	6
<u>Party</u>				
Democrat	5	35	52	8
Independent	7	33	52	8
Traditional Republican	11	40	44	4
MAGA Republican	9	38	47	6
<u>Region</u>				
East City	6	35	52	7
West City	11	37	44	8
East Rural	6	39	50	5
West/Central Rural	8	36	49	7
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>				
Follow	12	37	45	6
Not as Close	4	36	52	8

Q11a: I am going to read you a list of reasons why some people oppose legislative term limits. For each, tell me if you agree or disagree that it is a good reason to NOT have term limits:

Increases turnover and reduces knowledge and expertise?

Strongly agree	16%
Somewhat agree	27
Somewhat disagree.	26
Strongly disagree	26
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	5

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral / Unsure</u>
Male	19	26	26	24	4
Female	12	29	26	27	6
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	15	29	32	19	5
35-49	23	25	22	27	3
50-64	11	26	28	29	6
65+	13	30	21	29	7
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	14	25	26	28	6
College Degree	20	31	26	21	2
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	15	28	29	24	3
Independent	11	31	26	31	2
Traditional Republican	18	32	28	17	4
MAGA Republican	20	26	22	27	6
<u>Region</u>					
East City	14	26	29	27	4
West City	18	23	26	28	5
East Rural	18	26	29	23	4
West/Central Rural	14	34	21	24	7
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	23	25	22	27	2
Not as Close	10	29	29	25	7

Q16: Do you believe term limits will impair the legislature’s ability to lead in formulating policy for the state?

Yes, a lot **9%**
 Yes, some **16**
 No **71**
 (VOL) Unsure **4**

<u>Gender</u>	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Male	8	15	72	4
Female	9	17	70	5
<u>Age</u>				
18-34	7	15	74	4
35-49	13	18	66	3
50-64	8	10	77	5
65+	7	21	66	6
<u>Education</u>				
No College Degree	7	16	72	5
College Degree	12	15	70	3
<u>Party</u>				
Democrat	8	18	71	2
Independent	5	18	73	5
Traditional Republican	13	17	65	5
MAGA Republican	13	12	73	2
<u>Region</u>				
East City	7	14	75	5
West City	12	17	68	3
East Rural	8	17	68	7
West/Central Rural	8	16	72	4
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>				
Follow	14	14	69	3
Not as Close	4	18	73	6

Q21: And with term limits in place, do you believe the North Dakota legislature should continue to meet for its regular session every other year or meet for annual sessions?

Regular session every other year	25%
Meet for annual sessions	70
(VOL) Unsure	5

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Biennial</u>	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Male	27	68	5
Female	23	73	5
<u>Age</u>			
18-34	23	74	3
35-49	23	72	6
50-64	25	69	6
65+	29	66	5
<u>Education</u>			
No College Degree	23	71	6
College Degree	28	70	3
<u>Party</u>			
Democrat	18	78	3
Independent	25	71	4
Traditional Republican	26	68	5
MAGA Republican	28	67	5
<u>Region</u>			
East City	20	76	4
West City	31	62	6
East Rural	20	72	8
West/Central Rural	27	70	3
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>			
Follow	31	64	5
Not as Close	20	76	5

Q24b: For each of the following statements, do you agree or disagree that this is a barrier for regular people running for the legislature?

Professional responsibilities

Strongly agree	36%
Somewhat agree	37
Somewhat disagree.	12
Strongly disagree	5
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	10

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/ Unsure</u>
Male	35	40	12	3	10
Female	36	35	12	7	10
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	36	35	16	6	6
35-49	42	32	14	3	9
50-64	35	39	10	6	11
65+	29	46	7	5	13
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	32	37	13	6	13
College Degree	43	39	10	4	4
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	34	31	18	6	10
Independent	38	42	9	5	7
Traditional Republican	32	38	12	7	10
MAGA Republican	35	41	12	3	9
<u>Region</u>					
East City	35	34	11	9	11
West City	45	34	8	4	9
East Rural	34	41	9	3	13
West/Central Rural	30	41	18	4	7
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	43	37	8	7	5
Not as Close	30	38	15	4	14

Q24e: For each of the following statements, do you agree or disagree that this is a barrier for regular people running for the legislature?

Having employment and financial security to serve.

Strongly agree	47%
Somewhat agree	35
Somewhat disagree.	6
Strongly disagree	4
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	9

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/ Unsure</u>
Male	44	39	6	3	8
Female	49	31	5	4	10
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	52	32	5	4	7
35-49	51	31	9	2	8
50-64	41	38	7	5	9
65+	41	42	2	3	12
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	46	33	7	4	11
College Degree	48	39	4	4	5
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	54	30	6	3	8
Independent	42	40	6	5	7
Traditional Republican	42	35	8	5	10
MAGA Republican	48	40	5	1	7
<u>Region</u>					
East City	51	30	6	4	10
West City	52	31	6	4	7
East Rural	43	41	5	1	10
West/Central Rural	41	41	6	4	9
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	52	35	4	4	5
Not as Close	43	35	7	3	12

Q24h: For each of the following statements, do you agree or disagree that this is a barrier for regular people running for the legislature?

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of being a legislator.

Strongly agree	20%
Somewhat agree	36
Somewhat disagree.	20
Strongly disagree	12
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	13

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral/ Unsure</u>
Male	19	38	19	12	12
Female	21	33	20	12	14
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	20	42	17	13	8
35-49	20	29	24	11	16
50-64	19	28	25	14	14
65+	20	41	15	10	14
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	20	35	20	11	14
College Degree	19	37	20	14	11
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	17	32	17	17	17
Independent	22	39	19	11	10
Traditional Republican	15	33	28	12	12
MAGA Republican	22	44	16	7	10
<u>Region</u>					
East City	19	31	20	14	16
West City	24	32	23	11	10
East Rural	16	39	15	13	17
West/Central Rural	20	41	19	10	10
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	20	35	20	16	9
Not as Close	20	36	20	9	17

Q29: Often people change their views during an interview; after everything you have heard, do you support or oppose legislative term limits?

Strongly support	58%	80
Somewhat support	22	
Somewhat oppose	6	15
Strongly oppose	9	
(VOL) Neutral / Unsure	6	

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Strongly Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Support</u>	<u>Somewhat Oppose</u>	<u>Strongly Oppose</u>	<u>Neutral/ Unsure</u>
Male	57	20	7	11	5
Female	58	23	6	6	6
<u>Age</u>					
18-34	64	17	5	9	5
35-49	50	24	8	14	5
50-64	58	21	9	6	6
65+	55	27	4	7	7
<u>Education</u>					
No College Degree	61	20	7	7	6
College Degree	52	25	6	12	5
<u>Party</u>					
Democrat	65	19	6	6	3
Independent	61	23	7	6	4
Traditional Republican	43	28	7	15	7
MAGA Republican	58	21	7	10	3
<u>Region</u>					
East City	59	21	6	8	5
West City	60	18	6	13	3
East Rural	54	25	8	6	8
West/Central Rural	56	23	6	7	7
<u>Follow ND Legislature</u>					
Follow	58	18	7	13	4
Not as Close	57	25	6	5	7

APPENDIX E: PUBLIC FOCUS GROUPS

SUMMARY REPORT

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION: Individuals who participated in the public survey (January 20-23, 2026) were invited to register for small, online focus groups to further discuss their perspectives on the issue of term limits. 93 individuals expressed interest in participating in a focus group with 17 North Dakotans registering and 14 ultimately attending and fully participating in these focus groups. Participants were from the following communities: Beulah, Bismarck, Fargo, Garrison, Grand Forks, Hillsboro, Mandan, Minot and West Fargo. Following the focus groups, individuals received a \$50 Visa gift card via email in recognition of and appreciation for their time.

DATES: Evenings of January 27, 28, and 29, 2026

APPROACH: 3 small group, 1.5 hour sessions (4-5 individuals per session), held via Zoom

MODERATOR ORIENTATION

1. This session is being recorded for the purpose of taking accurate notes. The recording will not be shared. What you share will remain anonymous.
2. There are no right or wrong answers. You don't need to be an expert on this issue.
3. This conversation also isn't about how you voted on this issue.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

In 2022, North Dakota voters passed a constitutional measure creating legislative term limits.

Under that amendment, an individual may not serve more than eight years in the North Dakota House of Representatives and eight years in the North Dakota Senate, for a total of 16 years of service in the Legislative Assembly. Partial terms count toward these limits, and the measure included language that prohibited the Legislature from proposing any changes to term limits.

The implementation of this measure and its impact specifically on the legislature are what has led to this interim study and today's conversation. Before accounting for more "natural" turnover caused by resignations, retirements, and election outcomes, in 2028, 34% of current members of the legislature will be term limited, and 51% will be term limited in 2030, so we know that there is likely to be greater and more frequent turnover of the individuals currently serving in the legislature. That turnover can come with some benefits and some challenges. Our study is about identifying ways to best manage those challenges.

We're focused on this question:

What kinds of actions and adjustments can the Legislature take to manage those challenges and to function most effectively under term limits?

MODERATOR GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. In your own words, what problem(s) were voters trying to solve when they passed the term limits measure?
2. Once term limits really start affecting turnover, what do you think changes inside the Legislature?
3. What if I told you that in 2028, 34% of current members of the legislature will term out, and 51% in 2030. With that level of turnover, do you think there will be a shift in who might gain influence over brand new legislators and the legislative process itself?
4. Term limits are in place unless voters decide to change them, so the real question becomes: how does the Legislature adapt? Current lawmakers want to consider ways to adjust to this change and to address those concerns you and they have expressed. What do you think they should focus on?
5. Are you at all concerned in our low-population and rural state about having enough people step up to run for these offices?
6. Some of these ideas may require increased spending. If term limits require more public dollars to make the Legislature function effectively, how do you feel about that?

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

This discussion explored how North Dakotans think the legislature should adapt to function effectively under voter-approved term limits.

Participants saw term limits as a response to political frustration and entrenched power, but once discussion turned to implementation, the dominant concern became whether the legislature could function well under rapid turnover. The group did not reject turnover itself. In fact, several participants welcomed the possibility of fresh voices, newer perspectives, and a legislature that feels more responsive to them. But they also warned that without structural adjustments, term limits could unintentionally increase the influence of lobbyists, staff, and other unelected actors while making it harder for regular working people to serve.

The central tension in the group was clear:

People want new blood

Participants expressed frustration with seeing the same officials hold office for decades,

describing a sense of detachment, stagnation, and a legislature that does not always seem reflective of their constituencies or responsive enough to public priorities.

People also fear losing competence

At the same time, participants worried that rapid turnover could strip the legislature of institutional knowledge, make decision-making shallower, and leave new lawmakers over-reliant on others for information and context. That tension defined nearly every part of the conversation.

What Voters Were Trying to Solve

When discussing why voters supported term limits in the first place, participants pointed to:

- frustration with entrenched power
- a feeling that longtime officeholders become disconnected from ordinary people
- lack of responsiveness to public sentiment
- a desire for fresh perspectives and more turnover
- skepticism that voters can easily remove entrenched incumbents through normal elections alone

The emotional core was less ideological than practical: people want a legislature that feels more accessible, more representative, and less stuck.

Main Concerns About Implementation

Once participants considered what term limits would mean in practice, several concerns emerged consistently.

Loss of institutional knowledge

This was the most sustained concern in the conversation. Participants worried that new lawmakers may not know the history behind policies, the reasons past decisions were made, or even what questions to ask in the first place.

Greater influence for lobbyists and insiders

Several participants argued that inexperienced legislators would naturally rely more on the people who already know the system. In their view, that means lobbyists and staff could gain more influence, not less.

Difficulty recruiting enough people to serve

Participants doubted that the state can easily replace large numbers of legislators, especially if turnover reaches the levels discussed in the group. The concern was not just

quantity, but whether enough people with the time, financial flexibility, and confidence to run will step forward.

Barriers for younger and working people

The group repeatedly returned to the structural obstacles that make public service harder for people with jobs, families, and limited financial flexibility. Participants saw this as a major problem if the state wants broader participation.

Weak communication with the public

Some participants said they do not know what their legislators are working on unless they go looking for it themselves. This lack of proactive communication contributes to mistrust and disengagement.

What Participants Want the Legislature to Do

Create a mentorship structure

This was the clearest and most widely affirmed idea. Participants liked the idea of experienced former legislators mentoring newer ones, especially if that guidance comes from people with firsthand legislative knowledge rather than from permanent staff.

Expand onboarding and training

Current orientation was described as too basic. Participants want a more substantive training model that prepares new lawmakers for the realities of the job and the complexity of the policy process.

Consider annual sessions or structural changes to session design

Some participants were open to shorter, more frequent sessions instead of long biennial ones, especially if that helps make service more manageable and governance more responsive.

Reduce workload or bill volume

Participants saw the sheer number of bills as part of the problem. A more disciplined legislative process was viewed as one possible way to make turnover less destabilizing.

Make service more accessible

Ideas here included better compensation, stronger job protections, and other changes that would make it more realistic for regular working people to serve.

Improve public communication

Participants wanted more education about what serving in the legislature actually involves, how legislation moves, and how citizens can track what their representatives are doing.

What Success Looks Like

Asked to imagine success five years from now, participants described a legislature that:

- still functions competently despite turnover
- attracts people who are excited to serve
- includes fresher perspectives and broader participation
- remains connected to constituents
- preserves enough knowledge and continuity to make thoughtful decisions

SUMMARY CHART

Theme	What participants liked about term limits	What participants worried about	Most resonant fixes
Turnover	Fresh voices, new ideas, less entrenched power	Too much turnover too fast could weaken the institution	Phase-in supports, mentorship, stronger onboarding
Representation	Better chance for newer and younger perspectives	Legislature may still not be accessible to ordinary working people	Better pay, job protections, clearer path to serve
Institutional knowledge	Opportunity to challenge old habits	New lawmakers may not know history, process, or what questions to ask	Former-legislator mentors, expanded training
Power dynamics	Could reduce longtime insider dominance among elected officials	Could shift influence to lobbyists and permanent staff	Independent mentoring, stronger legislator education
Legislative function	New urgency may force decisions instead of endless delay	Risk of shallow or poorly informed decisions	Training, lower bill volume, session redesign

Public trust	Voters clearly wanted change	Any attempt to “fix” term limits can sound like lawmakers overriding voters	Frame reforms as making voter-approved term limits workable
Access to information	Potential for more citizen interest in who serves	Public still feels disconnected and uninformed about legislative work	Proactive communication, public education, easier bill tracking
Recruitment	More openings could invite new entrants	Hard to find enough qualified candidates willing and able to serve	Recruitment pipeline, financial support, employer/job protections

Perspective	Main instinct	Main fear	What would persuade them
Pro-turnover reformers	The system needs fresher people and perspectives	Legislature stays detached and unresponsive	Proof that reforms will expand access and responsiveness
Institutional stability worriers	Knowledge and experience matter a lot	New lawmakers become dependent on insiders	Credible systems for mentorship and training
Process skeptics	Lawmakers should not override what voters passed	“Fixes” become a backdoor rewrite	Clear evidence reforms are limited, practical, and voter-respecting
Access-focused participants	More regular people should be able to serve	Only retirees, insiders, or the wealthy can realistically do it	Pay, job protection, clearer expectations, annualized structure

APPENDIX F: STAKEHOLDERS

ASSOCIATION & MEMBERSHIP FOCUS GROUPS

SUMMARY REPORT

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION: Representatives from association and membership groups who engage in the legislative process were invited to participate in a focus group session to hear their perspectives. Six focus group sessions were held in-person in Bismarck and virtually, with 40 representatives from North Dakota association and membership organizations representing a wide range of industries. Participants included individuals ranging from 55 years to one year engaging with legislative sessions and interacting with legislators and committees.

DATES: February 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25 2026

APPROACH: 6 small-group sessions (6-8 individuals per session) – 3 held in-person (in Bismarck at the Heritage Center), 3 held via Zoom for one and a half to two hours each.

“GROUND RULES”:

1. We are documenting/recording these sessions just for the purpose of capturing accurate notes.
2. Please be honest. Nothing you share today will be attributed to you specifically, and we ask that you respect the anonymity of others who are here.
3. Because we have limited time and opportunity for these discussions, we ask that you stay engaged and aware of how much you’re engaging. Your thoughts and perspective are valuable, but so, too, are those of others, so be conscious of how much “space” you’re taking to ensure that all voices are invited and heard.
4. These focus groups are not being hosted to air grievances or question the why or doubt the voters’ understanding or intentions in creating term limits. It’s not about how you voted or how you feel generally about term limits, and it’s not about the language recently passed by the legislature to be put on the ballot and is currently being challenged in court.
5. There are also no right or wrong answers. This is a place to think differently, to provide ideas and suggestions to build on and improve the way our legislature operates. You aren’t here today as an expert but as someone who brings important experience of engaging in the legislative process and working directly with legislators.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

As you know and will remember, in 2022, North Dakota voters passed a constitutional measure establishing term limits on members of the ND legislature (as well as on the Governor).

Under that amendment, an individual may not serve more than eight years in the North Dakota House of Representatives and eight years in the North Dakota Senate, for a total of 16 years of service in the Legislative Assembly. Partial terms count toward these limits, and the measure included language that prohibited the Legislature from proposing any changes to term limits.

The implementation of this measure and its impact specifically on the legislature are what has led to this interim study and today's conversation. Before accounting for more "natural" turnover caused by resignations, retirements, and election outcomes, in 2028, 34% of current members of the legislature will be term limited, and 51% will be term limited in 2030, so we know that there is likely to be greater and more frequent turnover of the individuals currently serving in the legislature. That turnover can come with some benefits and some challenges. Our study is about identifying ways to best manage those challenges.

We're focused on this question:

What kinds of actions and adjustments can the Legislature take to manage those challenges and to function most effectively under term limits?

MODERATOR GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. What's currently working? – To date, term limits have not yet impacted current legislators. Based on your experience to date, in working within the legislative process and directly with legislators, what do you believe works really well about our system and those serving?
2. What doesn't work now? – What's *not* working so well? What about our current legislative process, engaging in it, working with legislators, etc. could use some improvement?
3. What do you anticipate will change most? – Once term limits start affecting legislative turnover, what changes give you concern? What changes provide opportunity?
4. Mitigation ideas – Where there are areas of concern, what ideas, recommendations, and suggestions could the legislature consider changing in order to mitigate those concerns, operate efficiently, and represent their communities effectively?
5. Candidate pool – What actions, if any, can we all take to ensure that individuals can engage, run for, and serve in our citizen legislature?

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES:

What's currently working:

- **Accessibility of legislators**
Participants consistently noted that legislators are highly accessible compared with many other states. Because North Dakota operates under a citizen legislature model,

stakeholders are often able to communicate directly with legislators and discuss policy proposals without navigating multiple layers of staff.

- **Transparency of the legislative process**

Participants also highlighted transparency as a strength. They noted that every bill gets a hearing, and they appreciate the move to using technology to broadcast hearings and the ability for them or their members to provide virtual testimony and monitor bills without needing to travel to Bismarck.

- **Relationships and collaboration**

Participants described the legislature as a place where long-standing relationships often support collaboration and policy development. Most legislators make themselves available to meet groups. Participants believe North Dakota's citizen legislature works well for the state.

- **Experience and institutional knowledge**

Participants emphasized that experienced legislators often develop significant expertise in specific policy areas over time, particularly through committee service. They believe this institutional knowledge, especially on complex issues, serves the state well.

What doesn't work now?

- **Volume of legislation**

Participants expressed concern about the number of bills introduced during legislative sessions and the increasing volume of legislation which will be a greater challenge when new legislators who may have less institutional knowledge join the assembly due to term limits.

- **Time constraints during the session**

Participants frequently discussed the limited time available in the lead up to and during the legislative session to communicate and work with legislators. They also commented this creates pressure for committees and legislators to make decisions quickly which may have additional negative consequences when term limits take effect. These groups said it was often difficult to find time to meet with legislators once session began due to committee meetings and the volume of work, despite legislators being willing to meet.

- **Interim legislative work**

Participants suggested that additional work during the Interim Session could help reduce time pressures during the legislative session and that the Interim Session could be operated more effectively going forward. Issues heard during the Interim Session often do not move forward to Regular Session.

- **Committee processes**

Participants also discussed the importance of committee leadership and procedures in shaping how legislation is considered, especially when it comes to duplicate bills. Not all chairmen allow remote testimony.

What do you anticipate will change the most under term limits?

- **Loss of institutional knowledge**
Participants repeatedly noted that legislative term limits could lead to a reduction in institutional knowledge, including on topics with complex funding formulas. The question was asked whether a “job description” even exists for people to understand the basics of the duties of a legislator.
- **Changes in committee expertise**
Participants discussed the possibility that committee expertise could be affected if legislators serve for shorter periods of time, which could further add to capacity challenges if the committee process isn’t managed well. Participants mentioned the importance that there’s consistency among the roles of temporary committee staff.
- **Shifts in influence**
Some participants noted that if legislators have less experience, the executive branch agencies and lobbyists could play a larger role in shaping policy discussions. Other participants expressed concern about this perception and emphasized that they view their role as providing information and perspectives to legislators.
- **Operational challenges during transitions**
Participants noted that transitions between experienced legislators and newly elected members could create challenges as individuals learn procedures and policy areas. A similar sentiment was expressed
- **Maintaining nonpartisan legislative support**
Participants discussed the importance of maintaining nonpartisan legislative support services. Participants noted that Legislative Council currently serves as an important nonpartisan resource for legislators and indicated that maintaining this role will remain important.

Mitigation ideas [Distributed “Impact Themes Document”]

- **Expanded training and orientation**
Participants suggested that expanded orientation programs could help new legislators understand legislative procedures and provide baseline policy information to help them understand their role and responsibilities quickly.
- **Mentorship opportunities**
Participants discussed the value of a formal mentorship program for legislators implemented in a structured nature covering specific topics.
- **Legislative staff roles**
Participants discussed the role of staff support in assisting legislators with information and policy analysis. Some participants suggested that not all staffing needs to be provided through Legislative Council.

- **Legislative schedule and Interim Session work**
Participants were largely happy with the biennial schedule but also said it was understandable that the Assembly may need to move to annual sessions so new legislators' work can be more consistent. They further noted that increased policy development during the interim period could help prepare legislators before the session begins.
- **Operation and workload adjustments**
Association and membership group representatives believe that several operational changes like consistent use of the consent calendar in both chambers and implementing a process for reducing duplicate and similar bills. Suggestions were also made to carve out time for legislators to meet with constituents and stakeholders. For example, having Wednesday be an "office hours" day with no committee meetings where legislators are available for meetings and to catch up on communications.

Candidate Pool

- **Encourage Supportive Employment Policies**
Participants also discussed how compensation and time away from employment could affect individuals' decisions to run for office and suggested that these factors may influence who chooses to pursue legislative service in the future.
- **Representation of rural perspectives**
Some participants noted concerns about recruiting candidates from rural communities and maintaining expertise in areas such as agricultural policy.
- **Expanding engagement opportunities**
Participants discussed the potential value of programs that allow individuals to observe legislative activity, spend time at the Capitol, or learn more about legislative responsibilities and procedures.

SUMMARY CHART

Theme	What shouldn't change	What participants are most worried about	Most resonant fixes
Institutional knowledge & expertise	expertise in specific, complex policy areas	Loss of knowledge on complex issues, especially funding and budget issues	Expanded training, orientation
Shifts in power & influence	accessibility of legislators	executive branch agencies will have more power	Additional legislative staffing roles, not necessarily through Legislative Council
Legislative Assembly capacity & outcomes	transparency of the legislative process	New legislators navigating the increasing volume of bills and additional time constraints	Legislative schedule and Interim work changes, operational and workload adjustments
Legislative Assembly Leadership turnover	relationships and collaboration	changes in committee expertise	Formal mentorship program
Recruitment of and support for future legislators	citizen legislature	Finding qualified candidates, especially in rural communities	Supportive employment policies

APPENDIX G: RECOMMENDATION ACTION PLAN

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This appendix provides additional context and details to support each goal and objective, including possible changes in culture/practice, rules, and/or statutory language that may be necessary for implementation.

For each strategy, supporting data and evidence that was gathered and helped to inform its development is identified, as collected from three primary study participant groups: legislators, the public, and stakeholder groups.

As not all recommendations were directly addressed through survey questions, the evidence supporting each strategy is expressed as the following:

- **Direct Evidence** – Specifically measured in surveys or interviews
- **Supporting Evidence** – Inferred from related findings or patterns in the data
- **Stakeholder Input** – Qualitative insights gathered through interviews and focus groups
- **Informed by Analysis** – Not explicitly assessed through survey questions; informed by analysis and practice-based approaches from other states or industries

Goal 1: Stabilize the Legislative Assembly – Schedule, Structure, Operations

Theme(s) Addressed: Institutional Knowledge & Expertise, Legislative Capacity & Outcomes, Shifts in Power & Influence

As North Dakota implements legislative term limits, the stability and effectiveness of the Legislative Assembly itself and its core operations will become increasingly important. Especially in legislator and stakeholder discussions, there was broad recognition that term limits will introduce new pressures on time, capacity, and institutional knowledge.

In conversations across all study participants, legislators, stakeholders, and the public, North Dakota's model as a citizen legislature is viewed as a significant strength and source of pride. Stakeholders consistently emphasized the accessibility of legislators, the openness and transparency of the legislative process, and the ability for individuals and organizations to work directly with elected officials rather than through staff members. However, this model also presents inherent constraints, particularly as turnover increases. Legislators must balance public service with other obligations, including other full-time employment and personal responsibilities, limiting dedicated time to build subject-matter expertise, build working relationships, engage deeply on complex issues, connect with constituents, and maintain continuity across sessions.

Input gathered through the study identified three interrelated areas where these pressures are most likely placed and which may be relieved if properly addressed. Those emerging areas within the structure of the Legislative Assembly included: the scheduling of session(s) throughout a biennium, the effectiveness of the interim, and the ability to manage the legislative workload.

Several ideas were brought forth relating to effectively managing the process when several similar bills are introduced. Currently, a bill does not become public until it is filed. As Legislative Council staff see bills with similarities, they ask legislators if they would like to be connected to the authors of those related bills, but there is no requirement to bring similar bills together as work between Legislative Council and individual legislators follows attorney-client privilege. Anecdotally, discussions mentioned that both Legislative Council and caucus leaders previously played a larger role in getting legislators to work together to avoid the introduction of duplicate bills. Going forward, many agreed caucus leaders would be more appropriate to manage this process.

Other strategies discussed, but not recommended, due to limited support or overall effectiveness to meet the objective: Limiting the number of bills each legislator can introduce, empowering a small group (majority, minority, committee chairs) to determine which bills have hearings, or allowing a bill to be defeated in committee.

Objective 1: Address session scheduling

The ND Constitution and ND Century Code either provides guidance or directly prescribes session scheduling:

	Schedule	Requirements	Citations (Note: May not represent a complete listing)
Legislative Terms Begin/Expire	Dec 1	Prescribed by Constitution and Century Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ND Constitution: Article IV, Section 7 - "begin on the first day of December following their election" • ND Century Code: 54-03-01.15
Assembly Meets for Organizational Session Length: No prescribed number of days; does not count	Month of December – between December 1 and 15	ND Constitution – prescribes as "following the election" ND Century Code states: "even-numbered years," and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ND Constitution Article IV, Section 7 - "...legislative assembly shall meet... in the month of December following the election of the members thereof for organizational and orientation purposes as provided by law..." • ND Century Code 54-03-02.1 defines "organizational session" as "meeting of the legislative

<p>toward 80-day limit.</p>		<p>“following the election,” and</p> <p>“on the first Monday in the month of December or on a date selected by legislative management” between December 1 and December 15”</p>	<p>assembly for organizational and orientation purposes held during the month of December in the even-numbered years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ND Century Code 54-03-02 states “The legislative assembly shall meet at the seat of government in the month of December following the election of the members thereof for organizational and orientation purposes and shall thereafter recess until the time provided in subsection 2. • ND Century Code 54-03.1 states “In each even-numbered year on the first Monday in the month of December or on a date selected by the legislative management but not earlier than December first nor later than December fifteenth, all persons elected at the previous November general election as members of the succeeding legislative session, and members whose terms do not expire until the first day of December following the next November general election, shall meet... at a time designated by the legislative management for the purpose of conducting an organizational session. The legislative management shall call the organizational session
<p>Session convenes</p> <p>Length: Limit of 80 natural days per biennium</p>	<p>First Tuesday after the third day in January of the year following the Organizati</p>	<p>ND Constitution – states that Regular Session days need not be consecutive</p> <p>ND Century Code - states odd-numbered years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ND Constitution: Article IV, Section 7 - “Days spent in regular session need not be consecutive, and the legislative assembly may authorize its committees to meet at any time during the biennium.” • ND Constitution: Article IV, Section 7 - states “The legislative assembly... shall meet in the

	<p>onal Session;</p> <p>Between Noon on January 2 and January 11 following the Organizational Session</p>		<p>month of December following the election... and shall thereafter recess until twelve noon on the first Tuesday after the third day in January or at such other time as may be prescribed by law but not later than the eleventh day of January.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ND Century Code 54-03-02.1 defines “regular session” as “the legislative session commencing in January of the odd-numbered years and includes any reconvened legislative session, as provided in section 54-03-02. • ND Century Code 54-03-02 states that “the legislative assembly shall reconvene at twelve noon on the first Tuesday after the third day in January of the year following the organizational session as provided in subsection 1 or at twelve noon on a date selected by the legislative management but not earlier than January second nor later than January eleventh of the year following the organizational session and, following the close of business of the regular session, shall adjourn subject to subsection 3. • ND Century Code 54-35-16 states that “The legislative management may issue a call for the legislative assembly to convene after it has adjourned under subsection 2 of section 54-03-02. The length of a legislative session called under this section may not exceed the number of natural days available under the constitution which have not been used by that
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			legislative assembly. The legislative management may exercise this authority, and the legislative assembly shall meet, regardless of whether the motion to close the regular session of the legislative assembly was to recess to a time certain, adjourn to a time certain, or adjourn sine die.”
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A summary of recent Assemblies, meeting dates, and lengths are as follows:

Assembly/ Biennium	Purpose	Dates Met	Number of Days Met
69 th – 2025-27	Organizational Session	Dec 2-4, 2024	3
	Regular Session	Jan 7- May 3, 2025	74/80
	Special Session	Jan 21- Jan 23, 2026 <i>(called by Governor)</i>	3 <i>(not counted in limit)</i>
68 th – 2023-25	Organizational Session	Dec 5-7, 2022	3
	Regular Session	Jan 3 - Apr 30, 2023	75/80
	Special Session	Oct 23- 25, 2023 <i>(called by Governor)</i>	3 <i>(not counted in limit)</i>
67 th 2021-23	Organizational Session	Dec 1-3, 2020	3
	Regular Session	Jan 5 - Apr 29, 2021	76/80
	Special Session	N/A	0
66 th – 2019-21	Organizational Session	Dec 3-5, 2018	3
	Regular Session	Jan 3 - Apr 26, 2019	76/80
	Special Session	N/A	0
65 th – 2017-19	Organizational Session	Dec 5-7, 2016	3
	Regular Session	Jan 3-Apr 27, 2017	77/80
	Special Session	N/A	0
64 th – 2015-17	Organizational Session	Dec 1-3, 2014	3
	Regular Session	Jan 6 - Apr 29, 2015; Reconvened Jun 16, 2015	79/80
	Special Session	Aug 2-4, 2016 <i>(called by Governor)</i>	3 <i>(not counted in limit)</i>

Goal 1, Obj. 1, Strategy A: Meet for annual sessions (OR) Goal 1, Obj. 1, Strategy B: Meet for biennial sessions in *even*-numbered years

While North Dakota’s Legislative Assembly has historically held its Regular Session biennially in odd-numbered years, the North Dakota Constitution does not dictate how it manages its eighty (80) day limit throughout a biennium.

Legislative Assemblies in many recent biennia have debated multiple bills to move from biennial sessions to annual sessions, most recently proposed in HB 1408, during the 69th Legislative Assembly in this current 2025-27 biennium. Ultimately, HB 1408 was passed by the House (64-26-3) on February 21, 2026, and the bill failed in the Senate (17-30-0) on April 14, 2026. A review of the approach, implications, arguments for and against, and results of HB 1408 can be found [here](#).

Support for moving to annual sessions varied among study participants, with the strongest support demonstrated by the public, especially when prompted with perceived benefits, including helping legislators gain more experience and build institutional knowledge more rapidly (67%), making the legislature more responsive to changing needs (77%), and making the legislature more focused during the constitutionally limited 80 days (69%).

Support for annual sessions was much lower among those participating in stakeholder focus groups, noting a feeling this would potentially lead to more of a “professional,” full-time legislature rather than North Dakota’s model as a part-time citizen legislature. In an early stakeholder focus group session about moving to annual sessions, a suggestion was made to maintain biennial sessions but to hold those sessions in *even-numbered years*. Perceived benefits of this change focused on the opportunity for newly elected legislators to spend more time on orientation, gaining experience, and building institutional knowledge *before* entering the depth and sprint of a Regular Session.

Of note: Stakeholder support for this change was also built on a desire for improvements in the Interim Session.

	Hold Annual Sessions	Hold Biennial Sessions In <i>Even</i> -numbered Years
Possible changes	➤ Amend ND Century Code 54-03-02 and 54-03-02.1.	➤ Amend ND Century Code 54-03-02 and 54-03-02.1.
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 53% support (<i>Appendix C - Q9</i>) ✓ Public Direct Evidence: 70% support (<i>Appendix D - Q21</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholder Supporting Evidence: (<i>Appendix F</i>) ✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence (<i>Appendix C- 28f</i>)

Goal 1, Obj. 1, Strategy C: Restructure Organizational Session

The Organizational Session has historically been held for three (3) consecutive days in early December as approved by Legislative Management. Although the ND Constitution does reference the meeting of the assembly in December “for organizational and orientation purposes,” we do not interpret this as requiring those purposes to be achieved simultaneously.

Neither the ND Constitution nor ND Century Code dictate the number of days of an Organizational Session and days met in Organizational Session do not count toward the eighty (80) day constitutional limit.

Historically, the Organizational Session has met for three (3) days, and the [agenda](#) weaves in briefly and sporadically orienting new legislators and training returning legislators on technology tools with conducting official business of the Assembly. Attempting to achieve an adequate orientation of new legislators while simultaneously conducting official business of the Assembly within a short period of time likely limits the effectiveness of orientation, diminishes knowledge retention, and stretches legislative staff capacity.

Preparing two distinctly separate agendas that allot dedicated time and attention to the orientation of new legislators *separate from* the official business conducted during Organizational Session will allow each to more effective. *(See Goal 2, Objective 1 for further recommendations on improving the orientation of new legislators.)*

Possible changes	Culture/Practice <i>(As proposed by the Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee and approved by Legislative Management)</i>
Demonstrated support	✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence <i>(Appendices B, C- Q10c)</i> ✓ Public Supporting Evidence <i>(Appendix E)</i> ✓ Stakeholder Input <i>(Appendix F)</i>

Goal 1, Obj. 1, Strategy D: Designate “office hours” for legislators during Regular Session

The rapid pace, significant workload, and constant demands on legislators’ time during a Regular Session can be challenging, even for experienced members. At the same time, building trust and maintaining effective working relationships with colleagues, stakeholders, and constituents are essential components of the legislative process and typically develop over time.

As term limits are implemented and turnover increases, establishing a consistent, designated block of time each week for “office hours” could help address these challenges. During these periods, no committee meetings or floor sessions would be scheduled, and legislators would be expected to be on-site and available to meet with stakeholders and

constituents, coordinate with Legislative Council staff, respond to communications, and complete work related to their legislative responsibilities. One suggestion raised during stakeholder discussions was to designate all or part of a midweek day, such as Wednesday, for this purpose and adjust the session calendar accordingly.

Implementing this approach would likely extend the number of calendar days in a Regular Session (estimated at 12–15 additional full or partial days per biennium). However, these days would not count toward the 80-day constitutional limit unless the House or Senate convenes for floor sessions. While this change would require additional time commitments and may have budget implications, it is anticipated to improve coordination, enhance accessibility, and create greater overall efficiency in the legislative process.

Possible changes	➤ Review (and amend if necessary) ND Legislative Rules – Chapter V related to meeting days of standing committees
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence (<i>Appendix B, Q28f</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

Objective 2: Strengthen effectiveness of Interim Sessions

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), state legislatures operate interim periods and structure interim committees a variety of ways, often focusing on pre-session policy development, oversight, and in-depth work on complex or high-priority issues.

According to input gathered by study participants, namely, legislators and stakeholders, regardless of whether Regular Sessions are held biennially or annually, there is a strong desire to use Interim Sessions more effectively. This interest is further heightened by the implementation of term limits, as legislators seek opportunities outside of formal sessions to build knowledge, develop policy expertise, and engage more deeply in the legislative process.

Goal 1, Obj. 2, Strategy A: Align legislative committees from Regular Session through Interim Session

Regular Session Standing and Procedural Committees are set in [ND Legislative Rules](#). Committee members are appointed during the Organizational Session.

As term limits are implemented and legislative turnover increases, it becomes increasingly important to identify ways for legislators to build institutional knowledge, gain experience more quickly, and effectively manage growing workloads. One approach that may provide greater continuity is to align, to the extent feasible, standing committee structures across the House and Senate and maintain committee assignments throughout the entire biennium - from Regular Sessions through Interim Sessions.

In this current biennium, the following are Regular Session Standing Committees:

Senate Rules – Chapter V, as appointed by the Committee on Committees		House Rules – Chapter V, as appointed by the Committee on Committees	
Appropriations – 16 members, meets 5 days/week (M-F)		Appropriations – 23 members, meets 5 days/week (M-F)	
3 days/week (M, T, W)	2 days/week (Th, F)	3 days/week (M, T, W)	2 days/week (Th, F)
Education – 6	Agriculture and Veterans Affairs – 6	Education – 14	Agriculture – 14
Finance and Taxation – 6	Energy and Natural Resources – 6	Finance and Taxation – 14	Energy and Natural Resources – 14
Human Services – 6	State and Local Government – 6	Human Services – 14	Government and Veterans Affairs – 14
Industry and Business – 5	Transportation – 5	Industry, Business, and Labor – 14	Political Subdivisions – 14
Judiciary – 7	Workforce Development – 6	Judiciary – 14	Transportation – 6

In this current biennium, the following are Regular Session Procedural Committees:

Senate Rules – Chapter V, as appointed by the Committee on Committees	House Rules – Chapter V, as appointed by Committee on Committees
Arrangements for Senate Committee Rooms – 3	Arrangements for House Committee Rooms – 3
Correction and Revision of the Journal – 3	Correction and Revision of the Journal – 5
Delayed Bills – 5	Delayed Bills – 5
Employment – 5	Employment – 5
Inaugural Planning – 3	Inaugural Planning – 3
Rules – 8	Rules – 5

Some Interim Session committees are authorized directly by ND Century Code [Chapter 54-35](#). Those eleven (11) committees are as follows:

Legislative Audit and Fiscal Review (54-35-02.1), Employee Benefits Programs Committee (54-35-02.3), Administrative Rules Committee (54-35-02.5), Water Topics Overview Committee (54-35-02.7), Legislative Ethics Committee (54-35-02.8), Budget Section (54-35-02.9), Energy Development and Transmission Committee (54-35-18), Committee on Tribal and State Relations (54-35-23), Legislative Interim Committee Review of Economic Development Tax Incentives (54-35-26), Legislative Interim Committee Review of State Agency Fees (54-35-27).

Additionally, the Legislative Task Force on Government Efficiency has been authorized and is set to expire, effective August 1, 2031.

Other Interim Session committees are formed by Legislative Management under its authorities in ND Century Code [Chapter 54-35](#). During this current interim, the following seventeen (17) committees and task forces were authorized by Legislative Management:

Advanced Nuclear Energy Committee, Agriculture and Water Management Committee, Child Custody Review Task Force, Education Committee, Emergency Response Services Committee, Government Finance Committee (with two subcommittees), Health Care Committee, Higher Education Funding Review Committee, Higher Education Institutions Committee, Human Services Committee, Information Technology Committee, Judiciary Committee, Legacy and Budget Stabilization Fund Advisory Board, Protection and Victim Services Committee, Rural Health Transformation Committee, Special Education Funding Committee, Tax Reform and Relief Advisory Committee (with one subcommittee).

As it relates to committee leadership and assignments, ND Century Code [54-03-04](#) states:

“... the chairmen of all procedural and substantive standing legislative committees shall continue to serve in those positions during any special legislative session which may be called, except in case of the death, resignation, or removal of one of those persons, whereupon the position must be filled, upon the convening of the special session, in the manner provided by law or legislative rule. Members serving on procedural or substantive standing committees of the senate or house during a regular session shall continue to serve on those committees during any special legislative session which may be called following that regular session.”

Of note, at the time of this report, forty-three (43) [Statutory Committees](#) are named throughout ND Century Code that require representation from and appointments of legislators.

Maintaining consistent committee assignments would deepen legislators’ subject-matter expertise, better prepare future committee leaders, and create a more seamless transition between sessions. It would also support ongoing discussion, information-sharing, and the preservation of historical context within committees, allowing work to build and carry forward over time.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Amend ND Century Code 54-03-04 to extend committee leadership and assignments across a biennium.➤ Amend Committees as set in ND Legislative House Chapter V and Senate Chapter V Rules.➤ Review relevance of Statutory Committees and committees authorized in ND Century Code Chapter 54-35.
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Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 70% support (<i>Appendix C, Q18e</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)
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Goal 1, Obj. 2, Strategy B: Adopt a consistent schedule for committee meetings

ND Century Code [54-35-04](#) states: “The legislative management or committee appointed by it, may sit at such time and place as it may deem advisable...”

Input gathered from stakeholder focus groups identified a growing challenge in effectively engaging with legislators during the interim due to variability in committee meeting schedules and delays in the posting of meeting agendas. This lack of predictability makes it difficult for stakeholders to plan for and participate in committee discussions.

Like legislators, many stakeholders who engage in the legislative process have full-time professional responsibilities beyond tracking legislative activity. As a result, inconsistent scheduling can limit participation and reduce opportunities for meaningful engagement. Legislative Management, with input from Legislative Council regarding committee staffing, could consider establishing a more consistent and predictable schedule for interim committee meetings. Improving predictability would support greater participation from stakeholders and the public, while also benefiting legislators as they balance their legislative responsibilities with professional and personal commitments.

One potential approach would be to mirror the structured scheduling used during Regular Sessions, where committee meeting times are clearly defined in legislative rules. For example, interim committees could be assigned to specific weeks within each month (e.g., Week 1, Week 2, etc.), creating a more consistent and transparent schedule for all participants.

Possible changes	➤ Review and amend ND Century Code 54-35-04
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>) ✓ Supported by Analysis <p>This strategy evolved during the later phase of the study; therefore, support was not specifically gauged by other study participants.</p>

Goal 1, Obj. 2, Strategy C: Authorize bill introductions and bill hearings

Throughout an Interim Session, ND Century Code [54-35-02](#) gives Legislative Management the power and authority “to prepare proposed bills and resolutions for consideration of the succeeding legislative assembly.”

[ND Legislative Rules 401 and 402](#) dictate who may introduce bills (or resolutions) and when they may be introduced during a Regular Session.

To strengthen the effectiveness of the interim, improve workload management during Regular Sessions, and enhance overall legislative capacity, the Legislative Assembly could consider authorizing a structured process for bill introduction and committee activity during the Interim Session. This could include allowing legislators, not only Legislative Management and its committee, to introduce bills, refer those bills to committees, conduct hearings, and issue committee reports into the next Regular Session.

In coordination with Legislative Council, parameters could be established to guide this process, including timelines and frequency for bill introduction (for example, monthly or bi-monthly deadlines during the interim), as well as a defined cutoff date prior to the Regular Session. Establishing a structured interim process would allow for more thorough review, amendment, and vetting of legislation over a longer period.

Distributing drafting, information-gathering, and committee work across the interim would reduce the concentration of activity during the Regular Session, support more informed decision-making, and increase the overall efficiency of the legislative process.

Possible changes	➤ Draft and approve authorizing language
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>) ✓ Supported by Analysis <p>This strategy evolved during the later phase of the study; therefore, support was not specifically gauged by other study participants.</p>

Objective 3: Adopt operational and procedural efficiencies

Most successful companies and organizations routinely evaluate their operations to identify efficiencies that improve outcomes and strengthen performance. The Legislative Assembly should be no exception. While operational and procedural improvements may not directly address all impacts related to the implementation of term limits, this is an opportunity to address increased pressures on legislative capacity, workload, and decision-making.

As term limits are implemented, identifying and adopting efficiencies can help the Legislative Assembly maintain effectiveness, support stronger outcomes, and uphold the role and authority of the legislative branch.

Goal 1, Obj. 3, Strategy A: Use the consent calendar

[ND Legislative Joint Rules](#) (206, 207) state the following:

206. Consent calendar.

1. Each standing committee may report an uncontested bill or resolution out of committee and may include in its report a recommendation for placement on the consent calendar.
2. As used in this rule, "uncontested bill or resolution" means any bill or resolution, except a bill providing an appropriation, which receives a do pass, do pass as amended, or do not pass recommendation from the committee of referral, by unanimous vote of the members present provided a quorum is present.
3. Following the presentation of a committee report recommending placement on the consent calendar, all bills or resolutions recommended by the committee for placement on the consent calendar must be placed on the consent calendar.
4. A resolution directing a Legislative Management study which receives a do pass or do pass as amended recommendation from the committee of referral must be placed on the consent calendar, regardless of whether the committee report recommends placement on the consent calendar.
5. Any consent calendar bill or resolution that is amended from the floor must be taken off the consent calendar and must be placed on the regular calendar.
6. Upon objection of any member to the placement or retention of any uncontested bill or resolution or any Legislative Management study resolution on the consent calendar, the bill or resolution must be taken off the consent calendar and must be placed on the regular calendar.

207. Consideration of items on consent calendar.

1. No item on the consent calendar may be considered for adoption on the same legislative day it is placed on the consent calendar.
2. Bills or resolutions on the consent calendar are not debatable, except that the presiding officer shall allow a reasonable time for questions from the floor and shall permit the proponents of the bills or resolutions to answer the questions.
3. The question of the final passage of more than one item contained on the consent calendar may be voted on in a single vote if the vote is on either bills or resolutions and not on any combination thereof in the same vote.
4. Immediately before voting on the first consent calendar bills or resolutions, the presiding officer shall call to the attention of the members the fact that the next vote will be the vote on the bills or resolutions on the consent calendar. A recorded roll call vote is necessary on items on the consent calendar only if a recorded roll call vote is required under Senate or House Rule 341.

To more effectively manage the volume of bills and legislative workload during a Regular Session, both the Senate and the House should consistently apply this approach.

Possible changes	➤ Cultural/Practice (<i>currently used by ND House but not by ND Senate</i>)
Demonstrated support	✓ Stakeholder support (<i>Appendix F</i>) ✓ Supported by Analysis This strategy evolved during the later phase of the study; therefore, support was not specifically gauged by other study participants.

Goal 1, Obj. 3, Strategy B: Disclose bill draft requests (internal process for legislators and Legislative Council)

Throughout this study, many study participants expressed a growing concern and source of frustration caused by the volume of bills introduced and, specifically, the introduction of duplicate bills, in a Regular Session. Study participants believe this challenge will only increase with an increase in legislative turnover (and, as such, less institutional knowledge and historical context). While there was not universal support for ways to best address this challenge, support for restricting the number of bills each legislator can introduce remains relatively weak across all study participants.

Both stakeholders and legislators referenced varied ways this issue was more effectively managed in the past. Some referenced stronger and more direct action taken by caucus leadership, and others referenced a time when Legislative Council was permitted to share more information about bill drafts with legislators. Still others expressed that, absent a change in ND Century Code, Legislative Council is prohibited from this previous practice due to the confidential nature of legislator communications and work product. Regardless of how this accomplished, study participants want legislators to be less concerned with who “gets the credit” or is the prime sponsor and more interested in working openly and collaboratively when seeking similar outcomes.

In Montana, all bill drafts (throughout varied stages of the drafting process) may be requested by members of the public from the Legislative Services Division and are available to be seen online (with their draft status).

While a solution to this challenge in ND need not be identical to Montana, the Assembly should establish a similar system and process that discloses bill drafts internal to ND Legislative Council and legislators. Though this will not eliminate or force consolidation of duplicate bills, it will provide direction and preparation for the volume of bill drafts and can encourage collaboration among and between legislators.

Possible changes	➤ Unable to identify relevant language in ND Century Code or ND Legislative Rules ➤ Draft and approve authorizing language (if necessary)
Demonstrated support	✓ Public Supporting Evidence (<i>Appendix E</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

Goal 1, Obj. 3, Strategy C: Establish a process or committee structure to review and consolidate duplicate bills

As legislative turnover increases with the implementation of term limits, study participants identified a potential increase in the number of duplicate bills that may be introduced as institutional knowledge, historical context, and relationships with and between legislators and stakeholders are diminished.

The ND Legislative Assembly has demonstrated open, transparent processes, both long-standing and very recent examples, of “screening” certain bills that are offered for introduction through existing committees. As stated in [ND Legislative Rules 402 and 403](#), bills (and resolutions) offered for introduction in a Regular Session after specified deadlines must receive majority approval from the Procedural “Delayed Bills” Committee to be introduced.

Likewise, [certain bills offered for introduction during the 2026 Special Session](#) were required to receive majority approval from the Legislative Management.

The North Dakota Legislative Assembly could apply a similar approach by establishing a process or committee structure to review proposed bills prior to introduction. Under this approach, bills that closely mirror or duplicate legislation already introduced could be held for review and would require majority approval to proceed.

This process has the potential to reduce duplication, save time and resources, and improve overall legislative efficiency. At the same time, it preserves a collaborative decision-making structure by avoiding concentration of authority in legislative leadership or individual committee chairs, an approach that was not favored by the public or stakeholders participating in this study.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Review and amend ND Legislative Rules➤ Draft and approve authorizing language
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Stakeholders Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)✓ Supported by Analysis <p>This strategy evolved during the later phase of the study; therefore, support was not specifically gauged by other study participants.</p>

Goal 1, Obj. 3, Strategy D: Adopt separate bill introduction deadlines for new and returning legislators

Deadlines and limits for bill introduction directly affect the capacity of Legislative Council staff and the management of workflow of a Regular Session.

[ND Legislative Senate/House Rule 401](#) states:

” any bill or resolution may be introduced after the organizational session convenes and through the third Friday in December before the convening of the regular session, or a time designated by Legislative Council, by pre-filing the bill or resolution with Legislative Council.”

Further, [House Rule 402](#) states:

“No member other than the Majority and Minority Leaders may introduce more than five bills as prime sponsor after the third legislative day. No bill may be introduced after the eighth legislative day, and no resolution, except those resolutions described in subsection 3, may be introduced after the sixteenth legislative day, except upon approval of a majority of the Delayed Bills Committee or upon two-thirds vote of the members of the House present and voting.”

And [Senate Rule 402](#) states:

“No member other than the Majority and Minority Leaders may introduce more than three bills as prime sponsor after the eighth legislative day. A bill containing an appropriation clause may not be introduced after the eighth legislative day. No bill may be introduced after the thirteenth legislative day, and no resolution, except those resolutions described in subsection 3, may be introduced after the sixteenth legislative day, except upon approval of a majority of the Delayed Bills Committee or upon two-thirds vote of the members of the Senate present and voting.”

As term limits are implemented and legislative turnover increases, study participants noted that expectations for both new and returning legislators are likely to evolve. Returning legislators are expected to bring greater familiarity with legislative processes, while newly elected legislators often require additional time to develop and refine policy proposals.

To more effectively manage Legislative Council workload and improve the flow of a Regular Session, the Legislative Assembly could consider establishing separate bill introduction timelines for new and returning legislators. This approach could include earlier deadlines, or required pre-filing, for bills introduced by returning legislators, while maintaining a later deadline for newly elected members.

Differentiating deadlines in this way would help distribute drafting and review demands more evenly, encourage early preparation among returning legislators, and provide additional time and flexibility for new members as they transition into their roles.

Possible changes	➤ Amend ND Legislative SR/HR 401 and 402
Demonstrated support	✓ Supported by Analysis This strategy evolved during the later phase of the study; therefore, support was not specifically gauged by other study participants.

Goal 1, Obj. 3, Strategy E: Add “Refer to Interim” as recommendation of a Committee Report during Regular Session

In discussions related to improving the effectiveness of the interim, concerns were raised by study participants in stakeholder focus groups about bills introduced during a Regular Session being amended to interim studies. There was two distinctly different feelings about this – one, that some bills just deserve to be given a “do not pass” recommendation (rather than “softening the blow” by amending to a study), and the other, that some bills deserve more time, deeper analysis, and more public and stakeholder input to get it right. This discussion piqued curiosity in defining a new path that a bill could take that doesn’t significantly amend the language (to a study), doesn’t recommend a do pass or do not pass, but that would maintain the bill as introduced (with or without amendments) and refer it to the interim for further debate.

[ND Legislative Rules SR/HR 601](#) inform how committees report a recommendation of a bill (or resolution) to the Senate or House of a Regular Session. Those reports must include one of the following recommendations: do pass, do not pass, be amended, be rereferred to another committee, or be placed on the calendar without recommendation.

There are long-term benefits when decisions about significant policy and budget changes are made after extended debate and more thorough analysis. Achieving this may be as simple as allowing a bill to be “referred to Interim Session” as an additional recommendation of a committee report in a Regular Session.

Possible changes	➤ Amend ND Legislative Rule 601
Demonstrated support	✓ Supported by Analysis This strategy evolved during the later phase of the study; therefore, support was not specifically gauged by other study participants.

Objective 4: Professionalize additional staff

Goal 1, Obj. 4, Strategy A: Employ Secretary of the Senate and Chief Clerk of the House as full-time, year-round positions

Current and previous Legislative Assemblies have already approved the hiring of additional positions in Legislative Council to prepare for anticipated impacts of term limits and to adapt to an increase in legislative turnover by providing an increase in staff support. These positions consist of attorneys, accountants, researchers, and auxiliary personnel who are hired and who serve on a strictly nonpartisan basis to provide fiscal, legal, IT, policy and program evaluation, and administrative and operational services to the Legislative Assembly.

Legislative Council has previously proposed the hiring of additional staff in the 2027-29 biennium, though workforce challenges may impact the number of those requests.

In discussions during this study, most participants agreed that increasing the level of support, the positions required to provide that support, and the costs associated with that support is necessary to address the impacts of term limits.

Legislators and stakeholders provided more context in terms of the specific support that would help create continuity and stability of the Legislative Assembly, especially as transitions between and changes to legislative leadership will occur more frequently. Reaching this goal isn't achieved by adding staff solely to Legislative Council but also by employing and professionalizing other positions integral to the function, operations, and effectiveness of the Legislative Assembly.

It is recommended that the Legislative Assembly employ (rather than "elect") the Secretary of the Senate and Chief Clerk of the House as full-time, year-round positions. A thorough review and analysis should be conducted of current roles and responsibilities, and an expansion of duties should be developed to maximize benefits and service to the Legislative Assembly.

ND Century Code [54-03-12](#) currently states "The secretary of the senate and chief clerk of the house of representatives shall perform the duties required of them by the rules of the senate and the house of representatives, as appropriate."

[ND Legislative Rules](#) identify these positions as "Group A" officers and employees and state that, "the powers, duties, and qualifications of each officer or employee are as provided by law, these rules, and the current Legislative Session Employee Handbook."

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review and amend ND Century Code 54-03-04 and 54-03-08 ➤ Review and amend ND Legislative House Rule 203, 204, and 206 ➤ Review Legislative Session Employee Handbook (as referenced in ND Legislative Rules)
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence: 63% support for year-round staff (<i>Appendix B- Q10</i>) ✓ Public Input (<i>Appendix E</i>) ✓ Stakeholders Supporting Evidence (<i>see Appendix F</i>)

Goal 2: Support Legislators – Staffing, Training, Resources

The effectiveness of the Legislative Assembly and its ability to lead with respect to formulating policy for the state relies directly on the effectiveness of individual legislators and the level and quality of support the Assembly and individual legislators receive. As term limits are implemented and turnover increases, the input gathered through this study consistently emphasizes the need for and importance of investments in targeted staffing, training, and resources to prepare new legislators, improve leadership succession planning, and to maintain legislative capacity and continuity.

North Dakota’s model as a citizen legislature means that many individuals elected as legislators often enter legislative service with limited or insufficient understanding of legislative rules, procedures, norms, institutional knowledge, and subject matter expertise. While this has long been a feature of the citizen model, participants in this study noted that increased turnover and shorter experience of leaders will require an accelerated learning curve and higher expectations of all legislators, regardless of their years of experience.

Throughout the varied study inputs, there was strong agreement that existing support structures, particularly provided through Legislative Council, are highly valued and play an essential role in maintaining a professional, nonpartisan, information-driven lens in the legislative process. However, study participants also identified growing demands on legislators, legislative leaders, and Legislative Council staff, particularly as the quantity and complexity of legislation increases and as higher numbers of new legislators enter the Assembly at the same time.

Study participants identified three key areas where targeted support would be especially beneficial: orientation, leadership development, and ongoing training for legislators, expanded access to informational and educational resources, and targeted staff support.

Objective 1: Improve orientation of new legislators

Very broad guidance and general direction is provided in both the ND Constitution and in ND Century Code as it relates to when and how the orientation of new legislators takes place.

[ND Constitution Article IV, Section 7](#) states:

“The terms of members of the legislative assembly begin on the first day of December following their election. The legislative assembly shall meet at the seat of government in the month of December following the election of the members thereof for organizational and orientation purposes as provided by law and shall thereafter recess until twelve noon on the first Tuesday after the third day in January or at such other time as may be prescribed by law but not later than the eleventh day of January.”

[ND Century Code 54-03.1-02](#) states:

“In each even-numbered year on the first Monday in the month of December or on a date selected by the legislative management but not earlier than December first nor later than December fifteenth, all persons elected at the previous November general election as members of the succeeding legislative session, and members whose terms do not expire until the first day of December following the next November general election, shall meet in the state capitol in the city of Bismarck, or at such other place as may be designated, at a time designated by the legislative management for the purpose of conducting an organizational session. The legislative management shall call the organizational session and the legislative council shall make such arrangements as may be necessary for operation of the session.

[ND Century Code 54-03.1-03](#) outlines the Organizational Session Agenda as follows:

1. Orientation classes upon legislative rules and procedure for new legislators;
2. Presentation of reports by legislative interim committees or commissions;
3. Party caucuses to review proposed legislative rules and committee assignments, as appropriate;
4. Appointment of procedural committees;
5. Presentation of the budget and revenue proposals recommended by the governor as provided in section 54-44.1-07; and
6. All other similar matters, in order that the legislative assembly be fully organized and ready to begin its business by the first day of the regular session.

[ND Century Code 54-03-02](#) reiterates constitutional language stating:

“The legislative assembly shall meet at the seat of government in the month of December following the election of the members thereof for organizational and orientation purposes and shall thereafter recess until the time provided in subsection 2.

And [ND Century Code 54-03-02.1](#) defines “organizational session” as “the meeting of the legislative assembly for organizational and orientation purposes held during the month of December in the even-numbered years.”

Even with all those references and authorizing language, current orientation of new legislators provides opportunity for improvement and will be especially important as term limits are implemented.

Goal 2, Obj. 1, Strategy A: Enhance and expand orientation and provide a structured onboarding process

As detailed in Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategy C, orientation of new legislators should be distinctly separated from the official business conducted in an Organizational Session.

To date, orientation of new legislators is brief, scheduled intermittently throughout the Organizational Session agenda, provided by Legislative Council and left to individual caucuses.

Orientation and onboarding should be intentionally designed and led as a phased approach, based on a curriculum, delivered by dedicated staff through interactive, in-person instruction over a multi-day agenda, separate from and, ideally, prior to (and, perhaps, also immediately following), the joint business of Organizational Session.

As examples, the [Nevada](#) and [Ohio](#) Legislatures provide orientation for new legislators beginning in late November or early December. Nevada's orientation is conducted in three phases over eight days, scheduled for two or three sequential across November, December, and January, prior to the start of their general session. (Legislators in Nevada assume office the day after the election.) Even though their legislative terms of office commence on January 1 after a general election, Ohio conducts orientation of new legislators over three days, also beginning in November.

To highlight the importance of and give further guidance on this strategy, the following agenda items should be separated from the Organizational Session agenda and moved into new legislator orientation agenda:

- Legislative Council services to legislators
- Division of powers and duties among the three branches of government
- Responsibilities of the legislative branch
- Legislative branch structure
- Laptop orientation and open records laws

The agenda should also add information, resources, and training including (but not limited to):

- Legislator compensation, benefits, and travel
- Working with legislative stakeholders (associations, organizations, lobbyists)
- Working with the executive branch (introduction to agency heads)
- Working with constituents
- Working with the media
- Tribal history and working with Tribal Nations
- Ethics Commission overview
- Drafting and amending a bill

- Working with Legislative Council
- Floor session 101
- Committee procedures 101
- Tour of the Capitol
- Communication with the public
- Overview of upcoming legislative session, including calendar and schedule
- Navigating the ND Legislature’s website
- Social and networking opportunities

Possible changes	➤ Cultural/Practice ➤ Review and amend (if necessary) ND Century Code 54-03.1-03
Demonstrated support	✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 65% support (<i>Appendices A, B- Q10c</i>) ✓ Public Supporting Evidence (<i>see Appendix E</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>see Appendix F</i>)

Goal 2, Obj. 1, Strategy B: Formalize a mentorship program

Although there is existing informal mentorship opportunities offered to new legislators, many are not structured nor set clear expectations of both the mentor and the mentee.

A strong, formal mentoring program supports incoming legislators by accelerating learning, building confidence, and fostering a culture in the Legislative Assembly of growth, trust, and shared responsibility. Mentors might be current, mid-experienced legislators or former legislators engaged through a “Legislator Emerita” program or network. The goal is not to create replicas of existing leaders, but to help new legislators develop their own skills, leadership abilities, and effectiveness within the context of the legislature.

Core elements present in long-standing mentoring systems include:

- Establish buy-in – all legislators, especially leadership, should communicate mentoring as a priority
- Identify effective mentors – selection should be intentional and values-based rather than automatic or seniority-driven
- Train and support mentors – initial training and ongoing supports ensure mentoring is valued, skilled work, not informal advice-giving
- Structure mentor-mentee conversations - a simple, repeatable structure helps mentoring conversations stay focused and productive
- Create consistency and value of meetings – builds trust and momentum

When mentors are thoughtfully selected, trained and supported by dedicated staff, and aligned with a clear purpose, mentoring can be a critical strategy in supporting new legislators, advancing future leaders, building trust and relationships, and strengthening the Legislative Assembly as a whole.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 64% support (<i>Appendices A, B- Q10d</i>) ✓ Public Input (<i>Appendix D</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix E</i>)

Objective 2: Improve succession planning of legislative leaders

While the Legislative Assembly does not control who is serving in it or how long legislators serve, it can take steps to improve structural support, particularly in developing leadership within both chambers.

Effective succession planning addresses leadership continuity, preserves institutional knowledge, and minimizes disruption during transitions. It should begin well before leadership vacancies occur and extend well beyond simply replacing individuals. Strong succession planning focuses on building institutional capacity and developing future leaders over time.

As term limits are implemented and legislators assume leadership roles with less tenure and legislative experience, the Legislative Assembly should take proactive steps to strengthen leadership development and succession planning processes.

Goal 2, Obj. 2, Strategy A: Develop a training series for leadership development and advancement

Preparing legislators more quickly for potential leadership roles, whether formal or informal positions, requires intention and strengthens the effectiveness of the Legislative Assembly. Training and leadership opportunities should be developed and made available to engage legislators, build relevant skills, and ready for advancement.

Trainings should focus on governance competence (how institutions work), public leadership skills (how to lead people and decisions), policy and strategic thinking (how to inform and shape outcomes), and personal leadership capacity (how to maintain and sustain).

Development opportunities should also provide legislators with information that builds skills and provides a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of leadership

positions, open meetings, ethics and ethical decision-making, parliamentary procedure and effective meeting management, working through disagreement, negotiation and facilitation skills, managing conflict in public settings, systems thinking, data-informed, communication skills, conflicts of interest, maintaining nonpartisan governance norms, managing political pressures, time management, agenda setting and priority management, and handling criticism.

These trainings should be professionally developed, accessed on-demand, self-paced, and voluntary, though the Legislative Assembly may want to consider participation and/or demonstration of readiness to be eligible for leadership advancement.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 67% support (<i>Appendices B, C- Q24a</i>) ✓ Stakeholders Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

Goal 2, Obj. 2, Strategy B: Formalize a mentorship program

Like the context and guidance outlined in Goal 2, Objective 1, Strategy B, a formal mentorship program specifically designed to serve newly appointed and elected legislative leaders, chairs, etc. should be considered. Mentorship should be organized and supported by dedicated staff, and mentors might be current, term-limited legislators or former legislators engaged through a “Legislator Emerita” program or network.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 64% support (<i>Appendices C, D-Q10d</i>) ✓ Public Input (<i>Appendix E</i>) ✓ Stakeholders Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

Objective 3: Expand educational resources and ongoing training for all legislators

As North Dakota implements legislative term limits, expanding and modernizing the training and professional development that supports legislators will be critical to maintaining institutional knowledge, strengthening legislative capacity, and advancing effective policymaking. With more frequent turnover and shorter tenures, legislators will have minimal opportunity to build expertise over time and through experience alone. A more intentional, structured approach to learning- beginning with orientation and

continuing throughout a legislator's service, can help ensure members are better equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their roles effectively.

This objective focuses on building a comprehensive and sustainable system of learning that is led and supported by dedicated staff, accessible, on-demand resources, consistent training opportunities, and intentional relationship-building. Strategies such as establishing a centralized library of resources, organizing ongoing webinars, convening an annual professional development conference, and employing specialized staff to manage these efforts, work together to create a continuous improvement and learning environment. These objectives and strategies recognize and translate best practices that are used in other sectors and by organizations representing elected officials in North Dakota, where structured training systems are used to support members and manage turnover.

In combination and when implemented, these strategies move beyond one-time orientation and toward a more integrated model of professional development that is flexible, scalable, and responsive to legislators' needs. By investing in these resources, the Legislative Assembly can strengthen its capacity, deepen collaboration, and better adapt to the operational realities of a term-limited legislature.

Goal 2, Obj. 3, Strategy A: Develop and maintain an online resource directory of legislative stakeholders

Stakeholders consistently noted that as legislators work to build content knowledge on policy, North Dakota association and membership organizations, state agencies, Tribal leaders, and other subject matter experts play an important role in providing information and historical context. For all legislators, and new legislators in particular, knowing who to contact for reliable information can be challenging and often relies on informal relationship-building over time.

While a lobbyist registration process exists, it does not capture the broad and deep range of the North Dakota organizations that possess relevant expertise and with representatives who may or may not lobby or regularly engage in the legislative process. Legislators also receive a high volume of printed materials and constant outreach from countless individuals and various groups, making it difficult to track, organize, and reference efficiently when needed.

To improve access to information and support more effective engagement, the Legislative Assembly should develop a publicly accessible, online resource directory of legislative stakeholders. Stakeholders could include North Dakota association and membership organizations, state agencies, Tribal governments, advocacy groups, registered lobbyists, etc.

This directory would serve as a centralized, searchable tool to assist legislators, candidates, and the public in easily accessing and identifying relevant stakeholders and key contacts. Submissions would be standardized to include the stakeholder’s name, mission, primary contact information, and areas of expertise. Participating in the directory would be voluntary and on an “opt-in” basis, and stakeholders would be responsible for originating, maintaining, and updating their own information to ensure accuracy.

If feasible, the directory could be associated with the North Dakota Secretary of State’s organization/business and lobbyist registration systems to reduce duplication and improve efficiency and usability. Overall, this strategy would provide a more efficient, transparent, and manageable way to connect legislators with stakeholders who contribute valuable expertise, experience, and engagement in the legislative process.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholders (<i>see Appendix F</i>) ✓ Informed by Analysis

Goal 2, Obj. 3, Strategy B: Develop a library of on-demand educational resources and organize training webinars

To support continuous learning and improve access to information, a centralized library of on-demand educational resources for legislators which would also be available to the public should be developed. An on-demand library allows legislators to complete training as their schedules allow or as specific topics arise.

The proposed library would be housed in a learning management system that would inventory and track completion of training. Organizations representing elected officials in North Dakota- including the North Dakota Association of Counties, North Dakota School Boards Association, and North Dakota League of Cities, who also regularly manage turnover among elected officials and have established similar training libraries to provide members with foundational knowledge and ongoing support.

Several state agencies already use dedicated Learning Management Systems (LMS). The North Dakota Supreme Court, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, and the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services came up in focus group sessions. All new legislator orientation content could be recorded and made available for ongoing access, allowing legislators to revisit key topics as needed and enabling new members to prepare in advance of formal orientation. Additional content could include legislative procedures, policy issue overviews, and emerging topics relevant to legislative work.

To complement the on-demand library, the Legislative Assembly could also offer regular live webinars on targeted topics, which could be recorded and added to the resource library. Over time, this approach would create a growing body of institutional knowledge while also providing opportunities for legislators to engage in ongoing professional development and build relationships with colleagues.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislators Direct Evidence: 57% support (<i>Appendix C- Q10b</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>see Appendix F</i>)

Goal 2, Obj. 3, Strategy C: Plan and hold an annual professional development conference for legislators

To support ongoing learning and strengthen relationships across the Legislative Assembly, an annual professional development conference could be established and coordinated by dedicated staff. This conference would provide an opportunity for all legislators, not just new members, to participate in structured training, policy briefings, and skill development sessions.

In addition to formal training, the conference could intentionally include time for networking, relationship-building, and informal interaction among legislators. As opportunities for social engagement, such as sponsored receptions, have declined in recent years, this type of setting could help foster collaboration and strengthen working relationships across caucuses.

The conference could also serve as a platform for state agencies and subject-matter experts to provide updates on emerging policy issues, implementation of recent legislation, and areas requiring legislative attention. While some legislators have participated in topic-specific opportunities in-state via invite through the Hunt Institute, this approach would create a consistent, statewide opportunity for all legislators to engage in ongoing professional development.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Draft and approve authorizing language (if necessary) ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence: 65% support expanding trainings workshops and briefings (<i>Appendix C- Q18b</i>) ✓ Informed by Analysis

Objective 4: Professionalize additional staff

Goal 2, Obj. 4, Strategy A: Employ Majority and Minority Administrative Assistants as full-time, year-round positions

Building on the context provided in Goal 1, Objective 4, Strategy A, in discussions throughout this study, participants, particularly legislators and stakeholders with a working knowledge of existing structures and staffing of the Legislative Assembly, agreed that increasing the number of positions is likely a necessity of managing the impacts of term limits. This will be especially important to create continuity and stability as transitions between and changes to legislative leadership will occur more frequently.

Of note, in terms of staffing, the study found little support for the idea of having one-to-one, legislator-to-staff ratios like many state legislatures employ. North Dakotans value the accessibility of their citizen legislators and do not want legislative staff to become “gate-keepers” that create barriers or limit access to legislators.

Again, reaching this goal need not be achieved by adding positions solely to Legislative Council but also by employing and professionalizing other positions integral to legislative leaders and to individual legislators themselves.

It is recommended that the Legislative Assembly employ the Administrative Assistants to the Majority and Minority Leaders as full-time, year-round positions. Legislative leadership, together with Legislative Council, should conduct a thorough review and analysis of those roles and responsibilities and assist in identifying a clear delineation and expansion of duties to maximize possible benefits to legislative leaders and to individual legislators.

[ND Legislative Rules](#) identify these positions as “Group C” officers and employees and state that, “the powers, duties, and qualifications of each officer or employee are as provided by law, these rules, and the current Legislative Session Employee Handbook.”

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Review and amend (if needed) ND Century Code 54-03-04 and 54-03-08.➤ Review Legislative Session Employee Handbook (as referenced in ND Legislative Rules)
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence: 63% support dedicated year-round staff (<i>Appendix C- Q10a</i>)✓ Informed by analysis

Goal 2, Obj. 4, Strategy B: Employ dedicated, non-partisan training and development staff as full-time year-round positions

One of the most significant challenges associated with legislative term limits is the loss of institutional knowledge. Many of the recommendations outlined in this study emphasize

the need for a more structured and sustained approach to legislator orientation, training, and professional development. Implementing these recommendations will require both an initial investment in developing a comprehensive orientation curriculum and an ongoing effort to provide training that evolves alongside legislative processes, policy areas, and member needs.

Developing and maintaining this type of program requires specialized expertise in instructional design, learning management systems, and adult learning principles. Training resources should be designed to be accessible and flexible, including on-demand video and audio formats to accommodate legislators’ schedules and travel, particularly for those commuting to Bismarck.

To support this work, the Legislative Assembly could establish dedicated, non-partisan staff position(s) responsible for the design, coordination, and continuous improvement of legislator training and professional development.

For the initial development of curriculum and training materials, the Legislative Assembly could consider partnering with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) or engaging external consultants with expertise in legislative training and professional development. These partnerships could help accelerate development while ensuring alignment with best practices from other states.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Draft and approve authorizing language (if necessary) ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence: 65% support expanding trainings workshops and briefings (<i>Appendix C- Q18b</i>) ✓ Informed by analysis

Goal 3: Connect with the Public – Awareness, Communication, Opportunity

Theme(s) Addressed: Shifts in Power & Influence, Future Legislator/Candidate Pool

As term limits reshape the composition of the Legislative Assembly, they also increase the importance of the public’s understanding, engagement, and participation in the legislative process. With more frequent turnover, North Dakotans may have increased opportunities to engage with the Legislature- whether as constituents, participants in the legislative process, or as future candidates. The following strategies focus on making the Legislature more accessible to and connected with the public, while also mitigating barriers to public service,

particularly in a state with significant geographic distances and a citizen legislature model. These strategies are intended to support both informed participation and long-term sustainability of legislative service.

Objective 1: Improve communication and engagement with the public

Goal 3, Obj. 1, Strategy A: Develop a structured learning program available to North Dakota citizens

To improve public understanding of legislative service and encourage broader civic participation, the Legislative Assembly could establish a structured cohort-based learning program for North Dakota residents. Modeled as a “North Dakota Legislative Citizens Academy,” the program could include a combination of in-person and virtual sessions held during the interim and supported by dedicated staff.

Individuals could apply themselves and/or be referred by legislators, stakeholders, or others, and participants would engage in a series of sessions designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the legislative process. Topics could include the authority of the Legislative Branch, the roles and responsibilities of legislators, how legislation is developed and debated, constituent engagement, and many others.

Several states offer public-facing legislative education events, such as workshops and informational sessions, typically one-time or short-term opportunities. Some North Dakota communities, like the city of Bismarck, have designed and provide opportunities like the Bismarck Citizens Academy, to improve public understanding, increase communication and transparency, and “peel back the curtain” to how the city is run. Similarly, internship and page programs provide valuable exposure but are primarily designed for students.

A structured, multi-session program made available to North Dakota citizens would provide a more intentional and sustained way to build public understanding, strengthen civic engagement, and encourage individuals to run for the legislature.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, or ND Legislative Rules are required ➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 59% agree that improving public awareness of what the legislature is and what legislators do will reduce barriers of service (<i>Appendix C</i>) ✓ Public Direct Evidence: 56% agree that understanding the roles and responsibilities of being a legislator is a barrier for regular people running for office (<i>see Appendix D</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>see Appendix F</i>)

Goal 3, Obj. 1, Strategy B: Develop a public-facing platform for official communications from legislators

Public focus group participants expressed feelings about legislator communication quite extensively, noting that the legislative session moves quickly and can be difficult for citizens to follow, especially as bills advance and the session approaches its conclusion.

Currently, legislators determine the method and frequency of constituent electronic communication- some use email, newsletters, or social media platforms. While these approaches can be effective, they are inconsistent and vary widely depending on the individual legislator’s time, resources, and preferred communication methods.

To support a universal and accessible way for legislators to communicate with the public, the Legislative Assembly could consider establishing an official platform that legislators can use to communicate official updates with the public. Such a platform could serve as a centralized, public-facing tool where legislators can post updates, share information about legislation, and publish official engagements or event calendars. Taking this approach would offer a more consistent and professional alternative to existing communication channels, while still allowing legislators to determine how and if to use it.

State agencies across North Dakota, like the Department of Public Instruction, Health and Human Services, and Department of Commerce, currently utilize centralized communication platforms to distribute newsletters, alerts, and program updates to stakeholders. These existing systems demonstrate that scalable, subscription-based communication tools are already in use within state government and could be adapted to support legislative communication needs.

Participation in the platform would be optional, allowing legislators to determine how and to what extent they use the tool. However, providing a standardized and supported option may help expand communication capacity and improve public access to official legislative information.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ To our knowledge, no changes to ND Constitution, ND Century Code, of ND Legislative Rules are required➤ Dedicate resources to implement
Demonstrated support	✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

Goal 3, Obj. 1, Strategy C: Adopt consistent rules guiding virtual testimony

The Legislative Assembly made significant improvements to remote technology and live streaming capabilities during the 2021 legislative session in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These improvements, including archived and indexed online recordings of committee hearings and floor sessions, have remained in place.

This increased accessibility was widely recognized and valued by both the public and stakeholders as enhancing transparency and convenience, particularly given that legislative sessions are held during North Dakota’s winter months, when travel may be impacted by inclement weather. Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of and appreciation for maintaining multiple options for participation and engagement, including by being able to provide both written and verbal testimony.

However, as currently practiced, committee leadership is given authority and discretion on whether to allow virtual testimony. While stakeholders noted that this approach is generally applied consistently, they also emphasized the need to establish uniformity and consistency across both chambers and all committees. This is particularly relevant as committee leadership will revolve more frequently, with new chairs and vice chairs assuming responsibility for managing hearings.

The Legislative Assembly should adopt consistent guidance that allows for virtual testimony to ensure predictability and consistency for those who engage in the legislative process and to support continuity of operations across leadership transitions and legislative sessions, regardless of who is serving.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Cultural/Practice(?)➤ Unable to identify relevant language in ND Century Code or ND Legislative Rules
Demonstrated support	✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

Objective 2: Address barriers to legislative service

Goal 3, Obj. 2, Strategy A: Adopt policies or programs that encourage public service

As term limits are implemented, a greater number of North Dakotans will be called upon to run and serve in the Legislative Assembly. Across all groups participating in this study, concerns were consistently raised about the challenge of balancing professional responsibilities with legislative service. At the same time, there was respect, admiration, and strong support for maintaining North Dakota’s citizen legislature model.

To encourage broader participation in public service, policies or programs should be considered to secure employment stability for individuals running for and serving in public

office. This may include employer policies that address job protection, compensation structure, or continuity of benefits during periods of legislative service. Encouraging service in local public offices also helps build a pipeline of individuals prepared for future legislative service.

In stakeholder focus group discussions, some participants referenced models such as National Guard service, where employment protections and structured leave policies encourage and better support individuals in balancing public service with primary employment. While the types and demands of this service may not be comparable to that of legislative service, elements of these models may provide useful considerations for strengthening support for legislative service.

In addition, the state could explore policies that support employers who encourage civic participation. This could include targeted tax incentives, salary off-set programs, or other mechanisms that help reduce the financial and operational impact on employers when their employees serve in the legislature.

Possible changes	➤ Draft and approve authorizing language
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Direct Evidence: 68% agree incentivizing support and flexibility from employers will reduce barriers to serving (<i>Appendix B- Q28a</i>) ✓ Public Direct Evidence: 82% agree that having employment and financial security to serve is a barrier (<i>Appendix D- Q 24e</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

Goal 3. Obj. 2. Strategy B: Address travel costs associated with serving rural districts

North Dakota’s legislative districts vary widely in geographic size, with some districts spanning multiple counties and hundreds of miles. This variation of geographic size presents different and unique challenges for all legislators, but particularly for those representing rural areas where the extent of travel required to attend community and constituent meetings comes at a cost, and those expenses, though incurred while engaging in duties expected of legislators, are not reimbursable.

These expenses create inequities and increase barriers to engagement and effective representation, particularly for legislators who must balance legislative service with other professional and personal responsibilities.

To help address this disparity, the Legislative Assembly could consider establishing a process and designating a pool of funds to reimburse legislators for pre-approved, in-state mileage associated with legislative-related travel within their districts. A structured reimbursement approach, based on district geographical size would provide support for legislators serving large geographic areas while maintaining clear parameters and

administrative oversight. This approach aligns with the goal of reducing structural barriers to service while maintaining the accessibility and flexibility of North Dakota’s citizen legislature model.

Possible changes	➤ Review and amend ND Century Code 54-03-20 relating to legislator travel reimbursement
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Public Direct Evidence: 78% agree having time and resources to attend public meetings and events is a barrier (<i>see Appendix D- Q24f</i>) ✓ Informed by analysis

Goal 3, Obj. 2, Strategy C: Recognize public engagement and professional development

While increasing legislator compensation across the board was not included among the recommendations, engaged and effective service in a citizen legislature requires work well beyond the 80-days of a Regular Session and by attending official meetings. This includes ongoing engagement with constituents, preparation on policy issues, and continued development of subject matter knowledge.

The intent of this recommendation is not to compensate legislators for individual constituent meetings or general district engagement, which would be difficult to standardize and verify. Rather, there is an opportunity to recognize and reward legislators who go beyond baseline orientation and who attend required training by completing additional approved professional development and related activities that strengthen legislative effectiveness.

Similar approaches are widely used in other sectors, particularly in education and public service, where compensation structures such as “lanes and steps” recognize additional training, certifications, and professional contributions beyond core responsibilities. Applied to the Legislative Assembly, a comparable approach could include budgeting a pool of funds and establishing a defined set of approved activities- such as completion of advanced training, participation in policy-focused workshops, or other structured learning opportunities, that are eligible for modest additional compensation. This model would provide a clear and administratively manageable framework while encouraging continued development and engagement outside of formal session days.

Possible changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review and amend ND Century Code 54-03-20 relating to legislator compensation ➤ Draft and approve authorizing language
Demonstrated support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Legislator Supporting Evidence (<i>Appendix A</i>) ✓ Stakeholder Input (<i>Appendix F</i>)

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APPENDIX I: ABOUT THE CONSULTANTS

This study was conducted through Garty Consulting LLC, by a curated consulting team with deep experience in North Dakota public policy, stakeholder engagement, and applied research. The team was assembled to combine expertise in legislative processes, statewide program implementation, and public opinion research, ensuring a practical and data-informed approach to the study.

Jolene Garty – Project Lead & Owner

Jolene Garty has over 20 years of experience in public sector and nonprofit leadership in North Dakota. She holds a B.A. in Political Science and a Master of Public Administration from Minnesota State University Moorhead. She most recently served as Deputy Executive Director for Operations at the South East Education Cooperative, where she led multi-year, multi-million-dollar statewide initiatives in partnership with state agencies.

Garty brings expertise in project management, policy analysis, and program evaluation, with a focus on developing practical, actionable recommendations. For this study, she served as project manager and fiscal agent.

Erin Oban – Stakeholder Engagement & Policy Lead

Erin Oban is a former North Dakota State Senator, representing District 35 for eight years. During her legislative service, she held several leadership roles, including Assistant Minority Leader. She most recently served as State Director for USDA Rural Development, a federal appointment overseeing investments in housing, infrastructure, and economic development across North Dakota. Prior to her legislative service, she held positions in both the public and nonprofit sectors.

For this study, she led stakeholder engagement and statewide outreach, along with extensive knowledge of North Dakota legislative policy and code.

Dean Mitchell – Public Survey Research Partner (DFM Research)

Dean Mitchell is the principal of DFM Research and has conducted public opinion research in North Dakota and nationally since 2008. Based in Minnesota, he holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Alaska and a Master's in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota.

Mitchell has led more than 80 surveys for North Dakota organizations and has conducted research in over 30 states. For this study, he led survey design, implementation, and analysis, ensuring accurate and representative data collection.

For questions, please contact [Garty Consulting, LLC](#)