

The Council

Special Session Executive Order

On December 29, 2025, Governor Kelly Armstrong issued [Executive Order 2025-09](#) to call the Legislative Assembly back for a special legislative session for purposes of allowing the state to accept and appropriate federal funding related to the Rural Health Transformation Program. The special session shall commence on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. The Executive Order encourages the Legislative Assembly to complete its work by Friday, January 23, 2026.



Legislative Council Annual Update

With a break in interim committee meetings over the holidays, the Council newsletter has had less content. After years of writing the family holiday letter, I thought why not do the same for the Council. It has been a busy year for us. After the adjournment of the 2025 session, we began the process of filling 25 new positions authorized by the Legislative Assembly - an exciting, but exhausting task we hope to have completed soon.

The majority of the new positions will be policy analysts and program evaluators. We began by hiring a director for the new Policy and Program Evaluation Division, Shannon Fleischer. Shannon began interviewing candidates for policy analyst positions on her first day on the job, with an apparent job qualification of which we were not aware - if you want the job, your first name needs to begin with a "J". As of today, we have 6 analysts: Jess, Janet, Joe, Jared, Jason, and Justine. We expect 3 more to begin by early March. Because their names do not begin with a "J", we are giving them some time to apply for legal name changes.

Upcoming Meetings

January

8 Legislative Procedure and Arrangements

13-14 Rural Health Transformation

14 Higher Education Funding Review
Legislative Management

15 Higher Education Institutions

February

23 Child Custody Review Task Force

March

26 Water Topics Overview





Celebrating a Successful 2025 United Way Campaign

The Legislative Council staff wrapped up an outstanding 2025 United Way Campaign, raising \$11,733 from November 4 through the end of December, to support the Missouri Slope Areawide (MSA) United Way. Serving a 10-county region in central North Dakota, the MSA United Way supports and delivers programs and services that strengthen local communities.

Driven by an incredibly ambitious and dedicated campaign committee, staff took part in a wide range of fundraising efforts, including jeans days, costume and office decorating contests, office flamingo visits, champurrado hot chocolate sales, and a Capitol-wide raffle featuring an impressive prize package. Staff also engaged in service activities, including participating in a walk to support homelessness and delivering United Way Giving Tree presents to children who otherwise might go without during the holidays.

Thank you to everyone who supported the campaign, whether by participating in events, volunteering time, spreading the word, or offering encouragement!

Legislative Council Annual Update Continued

The Legal Division, also referred to as the "legislature's vindictive lawyers" by a certain columnist, continues to operate under the leadership of Emily Thompson, whose idea of fun is creating "how to" manuals for everything. The division is fully staffed with 10 attorneys, 6 of whom were former legislative session interns. Although I question their sanity for seeking a job with us after going through a session, I appreciate their desire to do so and their dedication to protecting the interests of the most co-equal branch of government. The division also includes the library and records management staff, Kylah and Melissa, who can dig up the most obscure information almost instantaneously.

Allen Knudson, with almost 4 decades of experience with the Council, has led the Fiscal Division for nearly 20 years. Like Allen, the fiscal analysts have a great deal of experience and bring a sense of stability to the office. When someone describes a group as bringing stability, you may conclude that means they are very serious. However, our fiscal analysts have a good time - during a recent Fiscal Division meeting in the conference room next to my office, I heard loud laughter from the group. Apparently, Adam had told an uproariously funny joke about spreadsheets!



Cody Malloy leads the Information Technology Division, another group of professionals known for being hip and funny. Truth is, they are actually really funny and really good at their jobs (I'm not just saying that because I know how miserable they could make my life if they were mad at me). During our recent charity fundraiser in which someone could pay to have a flock of plastic and inflatable flamingos descend on another staff member's office, they sent a digital flock to another IT staffer who was not in the office. Every 10 minutes, that person received a flamingo email. Knowing that he would set a rule to block the emails, they were one step ahead of him not allowing him to set the rule. Nothing like good old fashioned IT humor!





Legislative Council Annual Update Continued

The Administration and Operations Division is led by Jason Steckler whose Arrrrmy training (80's movie reference. If you get it, we can be friends) is useful in dealing with all the logistical aspects of keeping the office running smoothly. The Admin staff will be moving, along with the Policy and Program Evaluation staff to the 15th floor when the remodel of that floor is complete. Imagine the urgency the contractors are feeling with Jason keeping tabs on their progress! Most of the Admin staff currently are located in the beautiful wood paneled room east of the Prairie Room. Thus, the group is affectionately referred to as the "woodies" - we are really creative with office nicknames. As they move to 15, we will have to work on a new group nickname, maybe something that really reflects how excellent they are at their jobs.

In addition to our various divisions, we have a couple of staff members who I lovingly call orphans, Lori and Natalie. Natalie, who handles a variety of tasks including travel-related activities and meeting room preparations, is being adopted by Jason and will be moving to Admin. Lori, who will focus more on the HR responsibilities and the legislative branch budget, will continue to report to me. Soon, we will be hiring someone to work with Lori so we no longer will have to worry about Lori being sick on pay day.

As I enter my 38th year at the Council, I frequently am asked when I am going to retire. I suspect that is wishful thinking on the part of some people. My general response is "I am day to day" - but aren't we all? I am reminded of the words of the musician, Warren Zevon, who when suffering from terminal cancer gave the advice to "enjoy every sandwich". Although the job can be frustrating, I have a great job and will enjoy it every day while it lasts.



I look forward to the Council celebrating its 80th anniversary. Five years ago, we had big plans to celebrate our 75th year of providing service to the Legislative Assembly. I was especially excited about having a big cake with buttercream frosting - I have a rule that no whipped cream frosting is allowed as long as I am director. However, like many celebrations around that time, our plans were ruined by a strange virus. I don't want to jinx things, but let's plan on having cake sometime later this year. If I have anything to do with it, it will have buttercream frosting. However, following the advice of Mr. Zevon, I vow to enjoy every piece of cake even if it does not have buttercream frosting.

Wishing you the best for the New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Steckler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct "J" at the beginning.

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