

The Council

Special Session: Already Gone!

By executive order of the Governor, the Legislative Assembly convened on January 21, 2026, for a special session. The Legislative Assembly concluded its work on January 23, 2026, using no more than the minimum 3 days required to pass a bill through both chambers. The primary purpose of the special session was to appropriate to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) the federal funds awarded to the state under the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) and to enact proposed legislation referenced in the state's application for funds which bolstered the amount of funding ultimately awarded.



Rural Health Transformation Program

Approved by Congress in 2025, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Section 71401 of Public Law No. 119-21) authorized the RHTP to provide grant funding to improve health care access, quality, and outcomes in rural areas. Of the bills introduced during the special session, 1 bill provided the appropriation for the funds awarded to the state under the RHTP, and 4 bills served to enact the proposed legislation referenced in the state's application for funds.

Appropriation

House Bill No. 1623 appropriates \$397,873,940 to DHHS for the 1st and 2nd year of the RHTP, ensuring North Dakota's efficient implementation of the RHTP funding when received.

Related Legislation

House Bill No. 1621 requires each public and nonpublic elementary, middle, and high school to include participation in the presidential physical fitness test in its physical education instruction. The bill also allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish criteria for, and exceptions to, participation in the test which align with federal guidance. The bill becomes effective August 1, 2027.

Special Session Statistics

9 Bills and **1** Resolution Enrolled
2 Bills Failed

Upcoming Meetings

January

27 Legislative Management

February

11 Human Services

23 Child Custody Review Task Force

25 Emergency Response Services

March

26 Water Topics Overview

31 Agriculture and Water Management

House Bill No. 1622 provides for adoption of the Physician Assistant Licensure Compact to allow a physician assistant authorized by the compact, who resides in another state that has joined the compact, to practice in this state under a compact privilege.

Senate Bill No. 2401 requires physicians to complete a minimum of 1 hour of continuing education on nutrition and metabolic health each renewal cycle. The bill also requires the Bureau of Criminal Investigation to provide a statewide or nationwide criminal history record check upon the request of the Board of Occupational Therapy Practice for applicants for licensure, licensees, or investigations.

Senate Bill No. 2402 authorizes a pharmacist to independently prescribe certain drugs, drug categories, and devices, provided various requirements are met, including implementing a patient follow-up care plan, providing notice to a patient's primary care provider, and maintaining adequate records. The bill also allows a pharmacist to substitute certain drugs for a therapeutical equivalent as established by clinical publications comparing dosages of drugs in a therapeutic class, subject to certain limitations.

Additional Legislation

The Legislative Assembly considered seven measures not directly related to the RHTP. Two bills related to funding for school meals failed, and five additional measures were approved.

House Bill No. 1625 relates to the Ray Richards Golf Course property, which is owned and operated by the University of North Dakota. The bill removes the requirement for a percentage of sale proceeds to be transferred to an endowment and allows any proceeds to be used either for improvements to the golf course or for the direct benefit of the university's varsity golf programs. The appropriation of \$4 million of other funds is effective from January 23, 2026, through June 30, 2027.



House Bill No. 1626 requires the 5 percent discount for early payment of property tax to be applied before the Primary Residence Credit is applied to provide the maximum financial benefit to North Dakota's qualified residents. The bill is effective for tax years beginning after December 31, 2025.

Senate Bill No. 2403 creates a Medical Facility Emergency Operating Loan Program. The bill transfers \$5 million from the General Fund into the Medical Facility Infrastructure Loan Fund and authorizes emergency operating loans, not to exceed \$5 million, to local nonprofit hospitals located in cities with a population of fewer than 2,500 residents. The loan programs are effective from January 23, 2026, through June 30, 2037.

Senate Bill No. 2404 appropriates funds from the General Fund to the Information Technology Department and the Public Service Commission. The bill appropriates \$1.5 million to the Information Technology Department to update state-controlled websites and digital content to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act digital accessibility requirements. The bill also appropriates \$325,000 to the Public Service Commission for federal lawsuit intervention efforts. Both appropriations are one-time funding items effective from January 23, 2026, through June 30, 2027.

House Concurrent Resolution No. 3038 congratulates and expresses appreciation to the YMCA for 175 years of service to the United States. The resolution further acknowledges the YMCA's 140 years of service in North Dakota, with the present-day efforts of over 2,200 staff members and nearly 1,800 volunteers resulting in statewide impact.