



# The Council

## Child Custody Review Task Force

The Child Custody Review Task Force met on February 23 to discuss legislative proposals related to task force directives. Task force members discussed proposals for potential legislation addressing the continued study and possible establishment of a family court; education initiatives for attorneys, judges, and parents; expedited timelines or clear deadlines requiring courts to promptly address allegations of interference with parenting time; law enforcement involvement in parenting time disputes; the establishment of parenting time expeditors; and the adoption of specific procedural and court rules for certain domestic relations matters. The task force requested the Legislative Council staff to prepare five bill drafts on these topics for consideration at its next meeting, tentatively scheduled for late April.



## Upcoming Meetings

### March

- 4 Special Education Funding
- 12 Administrative Rules
- 17 Tax Reform and Relief Advisory
- 18 Budget Section  
(including divisions)
- 19 Government Finance  
(including subcommittees)
- 24 Legislative Audit and  
Fiscal Review  
Advanced Nuclear Energy
- 25 Legislative Task Force on  
Government Efficiency
- 26 Water Topics Overview
- 31 Agriculture and  
Water Management

### April

- 1 Education  
Judiciary
- 8-9 Higher Education Institutions
- 13 Child Custody Review Task Force
- 29 Protection and Victim Services

### May

- 7 Employee Benefits Programs



## Obi

Obi is a goldendoodle and a program evaluation jedi.

He brings balance to the force via constant vigilance for fetching tennis balls (data collection) and guarding against dropped snacks.

Can you guess my human?

*Jason Kovacevich, Senior Program Evaluator*



## Energy Development and Transmission

On February 26, the Energy Development and Transmission Committee held its third meeting of the interim in Center, North Dakota. The committee continued its study of a comprehensive state energy policy and received testimony from wind and solar industry leaders regarding key issues, including project development, public outreach, and consideration of landowner rights. Representatives from the North Dakota Farmers Union, Department of Agriculture, Grid United, ONEOK, Inc., and Basin Electric Power Cooperative highlighted the importance of landowner relations when developing energy projects.

The committee also heard testimony from representatives of the Energy and Environmental Research Center, University of North Dakota, and Geothermal Rising regarding the feasibility of developing geothermal energy in the state.



## Employee Spotlight

### Leah Costik

Leah Costik joined the Legislative Council as Policy Analyst in the Policy and Program Evaluation Division. She grew up in northwest Pennsylvania and recently graduated with a doctorate degree in political science from the University of Minnesota. She received her master's degree in international affairs from Marquette University. She has spent time studying, working, and living both in Asia and Africa. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, trying to make kombucha, and going to dance classes.



## LC receives Live United Award

The Missouri Slope Areawide United Way held its annual luncheon on February 26. The luncheon celebrated those who have made an impact in their communities through their support of the United Way. The Legislative Council's commitment to supporting the United Way was recognized through the Council's receipt of the *Live United Award*, which is awarded to organizations that go over and above for the community and exemplify the definition of Living United. In addition to highly successful fundraising efforts in 2025, the Legislative Council staff donated gifts to the holiday giving tree and delivered hundreds of gifts to schools.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in these giving opportunities, and a special thanks to the volunteer committee (Kayla, Kylah, Keith, Katie, Jason F., Lori, and Patrick)!

## Emergency Response Services

At the fourth meeting of the Emergency Response Services Committee on February 25, the committee received testimony on its study of volunteer recruitment and retention from representatives of the Montana Public Employee Retirement Administration, Workforce Safety and Insurance, the Oakes Fire Department, the State Fire Marshal's office, and the Arnegard Fire Department. The testimony addressed the Montana Volunteer Firefighters' Compensation Act, insurance benefits for volunteer emergency responders, the requirements and challenges faced by small fire departments, the duties of the State Fire Marshal's office, and ideas for volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention.

The committee also received testimony from the Department of Health and Human Services regarding the committee's study of grant funding for emergency services and public safety which addressed the existing funding and grants available to emergency services. With respect to the study of delinquent billing reimbursement grants for ambulance service providers, the committee heard a presentation of a consultant report from PWW Advisory Group. The presentation included a discussion of a survey of ambulance service providers. The committee received an update from the Governor's subcabinet on public safety related to the committee's study of a fire service regional response model. The committee also considered a proposal submitted by Matrix Consulting Group in response to a request for proposal related to the fire service regional response model.

The committee discussed four bill drafts related to a volunteer first responder retirement plan, special vehicle license plates for volunteer emergency responders, designating service areas for emergency medical services, and the definition of the term "volunteer".

## Reminder: April 1, 2026, Deadline for Submission of Proposals

The Employee Benefits Programs Committee has established Wednesday, April 1, 2026, as the deadline for submitting proposals relating to a public employees retirement program, health insurance program, or retiree health insurance program. Please direct any questions relating to this deadline or the submission of proposals to the Legislative Council.

**CONTACT** [ndlegis.gov](http://ndlegis.gov)

600 East Boulevard Avenue  
Bismarck, ND 58505

701-328-2916  
[lcouncil@ndlegis.gov](mailto:lcouncil@ndlegis.gov)

