

Photo courtesy of ND Tourism



The Council

Advanced Nuclear Energy Committee

The Advanced Nuclear Energy Committee met on March 24 to continue its study of advanced nuclear energy, focusing on two major areas: economic impacts and financing and nuclear waste management.

To support its work on economic impacts and financing, the committee received an interim report from its consultant, Nucleon Energy, Inc., outlining findings related to economic impacts and private sector financing opportunities for advanced nuclear projects. Members also heard presentations from the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) on workforce considerations and the financing landscape, as well as from the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Energy Dominance Financing on federal financing programs available through DOE. In addition, the committee welcomed the Mayor of the City of Red Wing, Minnesota, who shared insights from the perspective of a community that hosts a nuclear facility.

On the topic of nuclear waste, the committee reviewed an interim report from its consultant which provided an assessment of nuclear waste storage. Testimony also was provided by representatives from NEI and the Energy Communities Alliance, who discussed the used nuclear fuel industry, considerations for high-level radioactive waste and used nuclear fuel storage, and the DOE's request for information for states interested in hosting Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses. The committee also received a presentation from an advanced reactor developer on emerging technologies for recycling used nuclear fuel.

Higher Education Funding Review Committee

The Higher Education Funding Review Committee met on March 25 to receive information regarding low-completion programs at North Dakota University System institutions and to discuss potential enhancements or alternatives to the higher education funding formula. The University System reported certain low-completion academic programs may be continued at an institution due to workforce demand or interdependency with other academic programs. The committee considered but made no recommendation regarding potential funding formulas based primarily on full-time equivalent student enrollment and degree completions.

This week's newsletter photos represent spring in North Dakota. Mother nature has been teasing all of us for weeks! The photo above was taken in the East Bay Recreation Area on Devils Lake.

Upcoming Meetings

March

- 31** Agriculture and Water Management
Legacy and Budget Stabilization
Fund Advisory Board

April

- 1** Education
Judiciary
- 8-9** Higher Education Institutions
- 13** Child Custody Review Task Force
Tribal and State Relations

21-22

- Advanced Nuclear Energy
- 22** Legislative Procedure and
Arrangements

May

- 7** Employee Benefits Programs
- 13** Protection and Victim Services
Tribal and State Relations

Primary Residence Credit Application Deadline

The deadline for homeowners to apply for their Primary Residence Credit is quickly approaching. The 69th Legislative Assembly increased the property tax credit to up to \$1,600 for a primary residence under House Bill No. 1176. Homeowners must apply by April 1, 2026, at www.tax.nd.gov/prc to receive the credit.

Information Technology Committee

The Information Technology Committee held its third meeting of the interim on March 26. The committee reviewed information on the enterprise resource planning system study, receiving presentations from the Information Technology Department (ITD), the Office of Management and Budget, and the University System regarding the potential benefits and efficiencies of acquiring a modern cloud-based enterprise resource planning system. The committee also received statutory reports and updates regarding major information technology projects from ITD, updates from the Department of Public Instruction regarding the K-12 student information system transition, and updates from ITD, Midcontinent Communications, and Dakota Carrier Network regarding the state network, fiber optic infrastructure, and data center development.

Legislative Audit and Fiscal Review Committee

The Legislative Audit and Fiscal Review Committee met on March 24. The committee received information from the State Auditor's office and independent public accounting firms regarding audits of state agencies and institutions. The committee also received information from the University System and higher education institutions regarding the status of systemwide bank reconciliation monitoring, presentations by the Department of Health and Human Services regarding child care programs and increasing health care costs, a presentation by the Department of Public Instruction regarding school meals, and presentations by the Department of Commerce regarding the North Dakota Wonder Fund and the Tourism Destination Development Grant Program.



Budding bushes at Chief Looking's Village overlooking the Missouri River in Bismarck.

Photo Courtesy of NDTourism

Legislative Task Force on Government Efficiency

The Legislative Task Force on Government Efficiency held its fifth meeting of the interim on March 25 and received information from the Legislative Council on the results of a survey sent to state agencies regarding potential statute revision proposals for the 2027 legislative session. There were 70 proposals submitted from 20 agencies.

The task force received information on statute revision proposals from the Office of Management and Budget, the University of North Dakota, the Department of Public Instruction, the Center for Distance Education, and the State Auditor's office. The proposals related to procurement of concessions, state purchasing practices, architect procurement procedures, engineer and land surveying services, publication of legal notices, publication of advertisement for bids, construction management, contracts limiting liability to the state, teacher and administrator credentials, public employee personnel records, and political subdivision audit report fees and requirements.

The task force approved motions to request the Legislative Council staff to collaborate with the Office of Management and Budget and the University of North Dakota to draft legislation to address statute revision proposals submitted by the agencies for consideration at a future meeting.

The task force also received information from the judicial branch regarding suggestions to improve agency services, increase agency operations and efficiencies, and realize any budget saving opportunities and information from the Governor's office regarding potential plans for state government information technology process changes and improvements.



Water Topics Overview Committee

On March 26, the Water Topics Overview Committee held its third meeting of the interim and held a joint meeting with the State Water Commission to receive draft reports from the Department of Water Resources and the department's consultant, Deloitte US, regarding recommendations from the commission's studies of regional water systems governance and finance and the State Water Commission's cost-share policy and financial planning.

The draft report of the regional water systems governance and finance study includes three optional recommendations for the Southwest Pipeline Project, three optional recommendations for the Northwest Area Water Supply Project, and three optional recommendations for the Red River Valley water supply project. The recommendations relate to each water system's planning processes, financial plans, ownership of assets, performance monitoring, establishment of long-term business plans, implementation of performance metrics, and project operations and maintenance. A final report is expected to be available by the end of May 2026.

The draft report of the State Water Commission's cost-share policy and financial planning study included seven recommendations, including recommendations related to adjusting the cost-share percentage for water replacement projects, adjusting other cost-share percentages to align with the commission's project prioritization guidance, establishing a maximum amount of state funding available for the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection Project and Red River Valley water supply project, using the Legacy Fund to issue bonds for water projects, delaying moderate- and low-priority water projects, fully obligating the line of credit available to the department, and delaying transfers from the Resources Trust Fund to the Water Infrastructure Revolving Loan Fund. A final report is expected to be available by the end of March 2026.

The committee also received information from Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources regarding the committee's study of watershed management, and reports from the City of Bismarck, All Seasons Water Users District, and South Central Regional Water District regarding anticipated requests for cost-share funding that may exceed \$10 million.

Budding Pasqueflower Photo Courtesy of NDTourism