

The Council

Legislative Council

Emergency Response Services Committee

The interim Emergency Response Services Committee fired up its interim work on August 20. At the meeting, the committee received testimony on its study of volunteer emergency responder recruitment and retention. The committee received testimony from the State Fire Marshal, the Department of Health and Human Services, members of ambulance services, the North Dakota Fire Chief's Association, the Sheriff and Emergency Management Director from Dickey County, Badlands Search and Rescue, the North Dakota Hospital Association, and the North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association. Testimony emphasized the importance of volunteer emergency responders in the state, along with the necessity of increasing the number of first responder volunteers. The testimony provided the committee with suggestions for increasing volunteer recruitment and retention in the state.

The next meeting of the committee is tentatively scheduled for late October, at which the committee will receive additional information on the study of volunteer emergency responder recruitment and retention as well as testimony relating to the studies of the evolving fire service operational and response needs of the state and feasibility and desirability of establishing a delinquent billing reimbursement grant system for ambulance service providers.

Judiciary Committee

The interim Judiciary Committee held its first committee meeting on August 26. The committee received testimony regarding the committee's studies on court fines and fees, pretrial service programs, and expanding access to criminal record sealing. The committee heard from representatives from the Supreme Court, Bureau of Criminal Investigation, North Dakota Sheriff's and Deputies Association, North Dakota Commission on Legal Counsel for Indigents, Parole and Probation, and the Burleigh Morton Detention Facility.

The committee discussed key points regarding the positive effects pretrial service programs have on the judicial system, offenders participating in the program, and admissions to county jails. The committee discussed the purpose, use, and collection of court fines and fees regarding travel permits, presentence investigations, electronic monitoring, alcohol monitoring, and the 24/7 sobriety program. The committee also discussed automated criminal record sealing in North Dakota and the development and use of automated record sealing in other states.

Higher Education Funding Review Committee

On August 27, the interim Higher Education Funding Review Committee held its first meeting of the interim to receive information regarding funding methods for higher education in the state, including the higher education funding formula, the university system capital building fund, and other funding appropriated to institutions and entities under the control of the State Board of Higher Education.

The committee received information from the Legislative Council regarding the higher education funding formula, including the history of the funding formula and how it is calculated. The higher education funding formula was enacted by the 2013 Legislative Assembly and is performance based, in that appropriations are based on weighted credits successfully completed by students.

The committee also received information from representatives of the University System regarding state funding appropriated for higher education and from the Bank of North Dakota regarding student financial assistance programs administered by the Bank. The committee was informed University System institutions received approximately 27 percent of their total funding during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, from general fund appropriations. Representatives of the Bank of North Dakota reported the Bank has approximately 37,500 student loan borrowers with a total active loan balance of \$984.4 million. The committee was informed the Bank was issuing student loans at a 6.65 percent fixed interest rate or 5.82 percent variable interest rate, as of July 1, 2025.

Upcoming Meetings

September

- 2 Administrative Rules
- 3 Advanced Nuclear Energy
Special Education Funding
- 4 Human Services
- 11 Agriculture and Water Management
- 18 Water Topics Overview
- 23 Tax Reform and Relief Advisory
Legislative Procedure and Arrangements
- 24 Child Custody Review Task Force
- 25 Government Finance
- 30 Protection and Victim Services

October

- 30 Employee Benefits Programs



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Higher Education Institutions Committee

On August 21 and 22, the interim Higher Education Institutions Committee held its first meeting of the interim on the campuses of Dickinson State University and Williston State College. In addition to receiving multiple reports from the North Dakota University System, the committee is tasked with studying the institutions of higher education under the control of the State Board of Higher Education, including methods to promote efficiency and collaboration among state institutions and consideration of the potential to consolidate certain institutions.

The committee received information from representatives of Dickinson State University and Williston State College regarding enrollment, new and expanding academic programs, and institution partnerships with other campuses, industry, and the community. The committee was informed Dickinson State University has added multiple programs since 2021, including degrees and certificates relating to cybersecurity, diesel technology, commercial driver's license, and meat processing. Representatives of Williston State College reported the institution is collaborating with universities under the control of the State Board of Higher Education to offer baccalaureate degree programs in Williston relating to business, teacher education, addiction studies, and engineering.

The committee also received information from a representative of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact regarding national and regional trends in higher education, including enrollment trends and institution consolidations. Testimony indicated the population of traditional college-aged individuals is declining nationally and regionally, with high school graduates projected to decrease by 15 percent in the Midwest between 2022 and 2041; however, the number of high school graduates in North Dakota is anticipated to increase 4 percent over that time frame. The committee was informed multiple states have consolidated institutions, including:

- Minnesota merged 5 individual colleges into Minnesota North College in 2022;
- Wisconsin merged its thirteen 2-year colleges with nearby 4-year institutions from 2017 to 2018; and
- Connecticut merged 12 community colleges into a singly accredited multicampus institution with 22 sites in 2023.

Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee

The interim Legislative Procedure and Arrangements Committee met on August 13, to discuss various procedural arrangements and consider draft legislation relating to veto matters. The committee reviewed and approved the guidelines for the use of legislative chambers and displays in the Legislative Assembly Hall and Memorial Hall and the guidelines for the use of legislative committee rooms in the Capitol. The committee also discussed continuation of the legislative intern program for legal interns, which has been in place since the 1969 legislative session. The committee approved the continuation of the program and the selection of a minimum of 10 legal interns for the 2027 legislative session.

The committee also addressed the directive issued by the Legislative Management for the committee to provide recommendations by October 9 for any legislation the committee may wish to see introduced regarding the recent veto markup error. The committee reviewed and approved for recommendation a bill draft that clarified delivery and markup procedures for vetoes. The committee reviewed a second bill draft relating to procedures for reconvening for a regularly occurring veto override session but expressed interest in reviewing at the committee's next meeting an alternative draft proposal in relation to reconvening. Lastly, the committee discussed the recent tragedy in Minnesota and potential items to follow up on at a future meeting in relation to legislator security. The committee's next meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 23.

Legislative Task Force on Government Efficiency

The interim Legislative Task Force on Government Efficiency held its second meeting of the interim on August 26. The task force received information regarding Department of Health and Human Services programs and funding sources, recent federal medical assistance percentage data for Medicaid expenditures, and Medicaid eligibility comparisons to surrounding states. According to the testimony, as of April 2025, North Dakota's Medicaid and children's health insurance program enrollment as a percentage of total state population was 13 percent, compared to 20 percent in Minnesota, 19 percent in Montana, 17 percent in Nebraska, 15 percent in South Dakota, and 11 percent in Wyoming.

The task force received information from the Department of Commerce regarding the state's workforce system. The task force was informed the department is working with the Governor's office to assess the statewide workforce system, including more than 80 workforce programs in various state agencies, to establish a unified state workforce vision, create a single entry point for job seekers, increase awareness of workforce programs, promote data sharing among agencies, and better track and measure program outcomes. A representative of the department indicated the Governor's office has established subcabinet groups among cabinet-level agencies to collaborate on addressing workforce challenges.

The third agency from which the task force is seeking information is the Information Technology Department. A representative of that department reported that to better address state agency needs and find cost-savings, the department has reviewed applications in state government that should be either retained, reviewed, refreshed, or retired. The department provided information on efficiencies gained as a result of the recent information technology unification initiative and informed the task force that efforts are being made to have Information Technology Department staff be embedded in physical locations of other executive branch agencies to promote better working relationships and provide better service.

The next meeting is tentatively planned for early October, and will focus on receiving followup information from the agencies that testified during this meeting and receiving information from the State Auditor on evaluating state agency operations.