

The Council

Upcoming Meetings

October

- 13** Emergency Response Services
- 20** Artificial Intelligence and Data Center
- 28** Employee Benefits Programs
Legacy and Budget Stabilization Fund
Advisory Board

November

- 12-13** Legislative Management

Energy Development and Transmission Committee

The Energy Development and Transmission Committee held its final meeting on October 7 and 8 at the Rough Rider Center in Watford City to receive information relating to the committee's studies on developing a comprehensive statewide energy policy that supports the long-term development of the state's energy resources and the development of each facet of the energy industry.

Committee members participated in tours of a Chord Energy oil well drilling site and drilling rig, the Bakken Area Skills Center, ONEOK, Inc.'s Lonesome Creek Station natural gas processing plant, and a McKenzie Electric Cooperative electrical substation.

The committee received information from representatives of McKenzie Electric Cooperative regarding the cooperative's operations, Dakota Gasification Company regarding carbon dioxide sequestration and enhanced oil recovery, and Minnkota Power Cooperative and Reliant Carbon Capture and Storage regarding an update on Project Tundra 2.0.

The committee received information from representatives of the North Dakota Petroleum Council regarding the oil and natural gas industry in North Dakota and from representatives of the Department of Mineral Resources regarding oil and natural gas regulation, production, and operations in the state. The committee also received information from the Department of Environmental Quality regarding air quality regulations and potential natural gas industrial projects.

The committee received information from representatives of the Energy and Environmental Research Center regarding enhanced oil recovery in North Dakota and from NESET Consulting Service Inc., regarding hydraulic fracturing and the geology of the Bakken region.

Higher Education Funding Review Committee

The Higher Education Funding Review Committee held its final meeting on October 6 to receive information regarding funding for dual credit and the results of a compliance investigation at Dickinson State University and to discuss potential enhancements or alternatives to the higher education funding formula. The North Dakota University System reported significant work has been undertaken to strengthen financial management and oversight at Dickinson State University, and the institution is operating from a strong position. The committee was informed the Higher Education Institutions Committee recommended the Legislative Assembly implement a flat rate to determine state aid for "subsidized dual credit" student credits completed. Subsidized dual credit includes courses taught in a high school by a teacher employed by the high school, whereas unsubsidized dual credit includes courses taught by an employee of the college or university.

The committee considered but made no recommendation regarding a bill draft to enact a new funding formula based primarily on full-time equivalent student enrollment, degree completions, and research expenditures. The committee reviewed and recommended various higher education funding concepts for the Legislative Assembly to consider, including the use of fall census-date full-time equivalent enrollment for the determination of state aid, the provision of incentive funding for degree completions and research expenditures, and the establishment of separate funding mechanisms or rates for the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, the University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University, and the nine remaining institutions under the control of the State Board of Higher Education.

Health Care Committee

The Health Care Committee held its final meeting on October 6. The committee received information from the Insurance Department regarding state health care mandates and federal developments, as well as a report from the Department of Health and Human Services regarding deaths in the state caused by or related to fentanyl consumption.

The committee also received presentations from a health care provider, the Board of Pharmacy, the Attorney General's office, and other interested stakeholders regarding its study of prescription drug transparency reporting. As part of its study of unmet dental and oral health care needs, the committee approved three bill drafts for recommendation to the Legislative Management. The bill drafts relate to the Dentists' Loan Repayment Program, oral health workforce and access initiatives, and the establishment of a fluoride varnish program.



A member of Legislative Council's Legal Division, Dustin Richard, presented information on primaries, endorsements, and ballot access in North Dakota at last week's National Conference of State Legislatures Election Staff Network meeting in Boise, Idaho.

Employee Spotlight



Ashten Davis recently joined the Legislative Council as a Legislative Administrative Assistant. She earned an associate degree in applied management from Central Texas College before earning a bachelor's degree in accounting and in business administration from Dickinson State University. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in entrepreneurship and in business administration from Dickinson State University.

Outside of work, Ashten enjoys camping, going on motorcycle rides with her husband, and watching her kids participate in sports and activities, including soccer, hockey, gymnastics, dance, and cheer.



Kirsten Tuntland recently joined the Legislative Council as Counsel in the Legal Division. She previously worked at the Attorney General's office and Pearce Durick PLLC in Bismarck and served as a law clerk for the North Dakota Supreme Court and the United States District Court for the District of North Dakota.

Kirsten grew up in Mandan and earned her law degree from the University of Montana. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her family, including her two daughters.



Luz Villa-Villa recently joined the Legislative Council as a Legislative Administrative Specialist I in the Administration and Operations Division. She grew up in Elko, Nevada, and graduated from Elko High School. She has lived in the Bismarck area for 7 years.

When not at work, she enjoys hockey and creating diamond art. She describes herself as a foodie, and her favorite dish to cook is pozole, a traditional Mexican soup.

Artificial Intelligence and Data Center Committee

The Artificial Intelligence and Data Center Committee met on October 6 at the Grand Farm Innovation Campus in Wheatland. The meeting focused on relevant state and local interests in the siting of data centers in North Dakota, including impacts relating to water and electricity consumption.

The meeting included an overview of AI commercialization opportunities presented by Legislative Council staff, followed by discussions on the significant infrastructure needs of data centers. Presenters addressed water-related issues, including the application process and water consumption of hyperscale facilities, as well as the state's regulatory and developmental role in supporting data center operations.

The committee received information regarding telecommunications and energy infrastructure. Representatives from Dakota Carrier Network, Montana-Dakota Utilities Company, and Minnkota Power Cooperative discussed providing network and electrical services to large-scale data centers and the impacts of growing demand on existing customers and rural utilities. The committee also heard from a county commissioner regarding the economic benefits and potential challenges of data center development for local communities.