

NOV 2025

SENATOR NELSON'S

# NEWSLETTER

## Property Tax Update - It's on Everyone's Mind

Property taxes are an ongoing topic of discussion. Most say they are too high and unpredictable, and I agree! The Comprehensive Property Tax Taskforce, convened by the legislature after the 2025 session, continues to meet, and many ideas are being discussed.

There is still much to develop and consider on this complex subject. However, you can be certain of three things from me.

- First, I will not support new taxes or the shifting of taxes. Instead, Pierre needs to cut spending.
- Second, Introducing a tax to "reduce" property taxes is not an option. Over time, the tax reduction will rise again, along with the new tax, resulting in taxpayers paying double.
- Third, I cannot support any ideas that give Pierre complete control over our counties and/or schools' funding. Pierre is not doing an exemplary job with money now; how would they be any different with additional funds from local entities?

The task force's next and final meeting is on October 22, 2025, in Pierre. My fellow District 18 legislator, Rep. Julie Auch, serves on this committee.



Our state needs to shift from expensive spending to smart investing. Our priority should be getting youth back on track early, before they end up in adult prisons, which cost **YOU** about \$35,000 a year per inmate. Two areas I'm particularly interested in are diversion and mentoring programs. Both show tremendous success. I'm working towards a collaborative effort in Pierre this winter to pass legislation that will help reduce pressure on our schools and provide meaningful support for struggling youth.

## Interim Committee Success

The Community Support Providers (CSPs) Interim Committee held its final meeting. CSPs assist individuals with developmental disabilities lead productive, fulfilling lives. Locally, we have two CSPs: Ability Building Services (ABS) in Yankton and Southeast South Dakota Activity Center (Sesdac) in Vermillion.

For years, the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) has consistently failed to provide timely and appropriate oversight of CSPs. This has resulted in taxpayer waste and, more importantly, has left many vulnerable South Dakotans without proper programming, which prevents them from successfully living and working in their communities.

In our final report, the committee proposed cost-saving measures and approved a draft bill to establish a legislative oversight committee. This group will monitor and evaluate the DDD's activities to ensure accountability and implementation of our recommendations. As District 18 Senator, I will routinely check with local providers for their feedback on the DDD's current activities.

It was my honor to serve on this committee. I met many outstanding support providers, administrators, and caregivers across the state.



Sen Lauren Nelson & Rep Julie Auch at the 2025 Yankton Achievement Days

## Juvenile Justice and Schools

I received an email from a South Dakota superintendent. He said, "Our school leaders are feeling that they are the only real discipline for the justice system at times." He is not alone in this thinking. After talking with many school administrators this summer, the juvenile justice system needs immediate attention and reform to improve support for our schools.

## Governor Rhoden Calls Special Session for Prison

On September 23rd, the governor called legislators from both Houses for a special session. Our task was to decide the fate of the new \$650M prison, the same prison proposed at \$825M during the 2025 legislative session, but halted by the House.

In the Senate, we were one vote short of blocking this project. Despite intense pressure, I stood with ten senators (2/3 is required for spending bills) and voted 'no'.

My opposition was threefold.

First, only one CMAR (Contract Manager At Risk) bid was accepted when state law requires three. Second, \$145M is still needed for this project, and upwards of \$50M additional annual dollars will be necessary once it's built for maintenance. How can we "find" and "absorb" this into a very tight budget? Finally, the Department of Corrections is in chaos. Giving them \$650M without demonstrating improvement or ensuring changes in policies and procedures shows the state's irresponsible handling of your money.

A vote "no" did not kick the can down the road or jeopardize public safety. Instead, it was wise and prudent, balancing fiscal responsibility and public safety by taking time to hire a new secretary, gather more bids, and begin the clean-up of the DOC.



2025 Tabor Czech Days Parade in Tabor, SD

## Summer Parade Time

I enjoyed participating in the lively parades during summer festivities and homecomings. It was wonderful to see how the citizens of Gayville, Wakonda, Irene, Menno, Viborg, and Yankton warmly welcomed everyone and enthusiastically shared in the celebrations. **My last parade is Mount Marty's Homecoming on Saturday, October 25th.**

## The Enclosed Self-Addressed Envelope

The 2026 election is approaching, and once again, I'm counting on the support of District 18.

Your contributions of \$25, \$50, or \$100 made the difference last time—and they will again. With your help, I'll continue to be a voice in Pierre that puts you first.

Please consider using the enclosed envelope to contribute.

-Thank you, Lauren.

## Highlights from 2025 legislative session

Passed **HB 1052** - prohibit the exercise of eminent domain for a pipeline that carries carbon oxide. This bill followed the referred law RL 21. A statewide effort, "No on RL 21" was successful on the Nov 5, 2024 ballot.

Stopped **SB 177** - provide a sales and use tax refund for goods and services related to data center operations. This bill would have given a \$20 million sales tax refund on a \$500 million data center project built by an out of state corporation.

Stopped **HR 1261** - provide the board of commissioners with authority over certain intra-county land uses and construction projects. (Intra-county = townships)

## Mark Your Calendars ✓

The annual Yankton County Lincoln Day Dinner will be held on **Saturday, November 1st**, in Gayville at the Community Center. The social starts at 5:30 p.m., with the dinner and program following at 6:30 p.m. For tickets, Contact Laura Kotalik at (605) 760-3717.

## Keep Informed

Receive a daily update and weekly newsletter via email during the 2026 Legislative Session. Scan the QR code or email [lauren.nelson@sdlegislature.gov](mailto:lauren.nelson@sdlegislature.gov).

You can also follow me on Facebook at:  
*Lauren Nelson for Senate—District 18.*

