



67th Legislative Assembly Final Report

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A Note from the Majority Leader Pollert

As the 67th Legislative Session comes to a close, we can truly be proud of the work we've done for the people of North Dakota. When we arrived in January, we were faced with a number of challenges and uncertainties, not the least of which being a global pandemic. However, through the dedication of each member, we were able to rise to the occasion and achieve a number of historic accomplishments.

This session we utilized our state's Legacy Fund in a number of important ways. When the Fund was established in 2010, we made the promise to utilize it for the benefit of all North Dakotans. This session, we took significant steps to make good on that promise. We passed legislation directing the State Investment Board to consider investing at least 20% of our Legacy Fund principal right here in North Dakota. In addition, we passed a historic \$680 million dollar bonding package which will be used to finance infrastructure projects around the state. From highways and bridges in the west, to flood control projects in the east, this legislation will have an impact on every North Dakotan. By using the Legacy Fund to finance these bonds, these infrastructure projects will be completed at no cost to the taxpayers.

One of our top priorities coming into this session was ensuring our state was in the best possible position to move beyond the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Early on, we passed legislation to protect businesses and hospitals from liability relating to the spread of the coronavirus. North Dakota businesses and healthcare providers operated to the highest standards during a time of crisis and protecting these heroes now and in the future is an accomplishment we can be proud of.

Additionally, this Assembly continued to invest in North Dakota's tradition of energy excellence. We passed legislation to enhance the production of our state's existing energy resources while also developing 21st century technologies which will produce less emissions and reduce our environmental footprint. Moreover, we passed a 5-year holiday for our state's coal conversion tax. As the coal industry continues to face unprecedented challenges, it is our hope this tax relief will serve as an opportunity to take these challenges on while protecting thousands of North Dakota jobs.

The Assembly also remained committed to addressing the needs of North Dakota veterans. We increased our existing property tax credit for disabled veterans to \$8,000. We also passed legislation creating a first of its kind veteran's court docket. This specialized docket will be tailored to address the needs of our veterans who may be struggling with mental and behavioral health issues related to their military service. Finally, we expanded the eligibility for family members of deceased or disabled veterans to attend our state's colleges and universities at no cost.

As always, we took steps to invest in our state's most valuable asset: our young people. We passed legislation to increase funding for mental health and suicide prevention resources in our schools. It is our hope these resources will better allow schools across the state to address the mental and behavioral health issues faced by many students. We also enacted legislation creating alternative educational opportunities for high school students which may take place outside of the classroom. These alternative opportunities will allow students to receive class credits while getting real world, hands-on experience by participating in community programs and internships.

Finally, during the pandemic, North Dakota saw lockdowns and closings for nursing facilities across the state. Undoubtedly, steps had to be taken to protect our elderly population from the spread of COVID-19. However, the impact of isolation for many residents of nursing facilities had

unintended but serious health implications. We addressed this is by passing legislation which is designed to develop a protocol to allow for in-person visitation during a declared emergency or disaster. This protocol allows for residents of long term care facilities to appoint one or more “essential caregivers,” such as family members, to provide in-person physical, emotional, or spiritual support regardless of any executive orders or proclamations. It is our hope that in the future this legislation will protect our most vulnerable citizens while also preventing the tragic isolation we witnessed over the last 13 months.

As Republicans, we have a lot to be proud of this session. We can leave Bismarck knowing we balanced our budget, funded many of our top priorities, and avoided any form of tax increases. We entered this session with high expectations, and I truly believed our work over the last four and a half months has exceeded those expectations. It has been an honor to work alongside all of you this session for the betterment of North Dakota.

Budget

Budget Forecast

The budget forecast in March had a more positive outlook than the January forecast. While there is much still unknown about the recovery of the global and national economy, the outlook is much better than previously forecasted

- 2021-23 Tax Revenue Biennium Forecast
 - Sales and use tax = \$1.791 Billion
 - Motor Vehicle Excise Tax = \$261 Million
 - Individual & Corporate Income tax = \$1.00 Billion
 - Oil and gas tax collections = \$400 Million
- 2021-23 Oil Price and Production Forecasts
 - Average oil price remaining at \$50 per barrel (North Dakota price)
 - Production decreasing from 1.1 to 1.0 million barrels

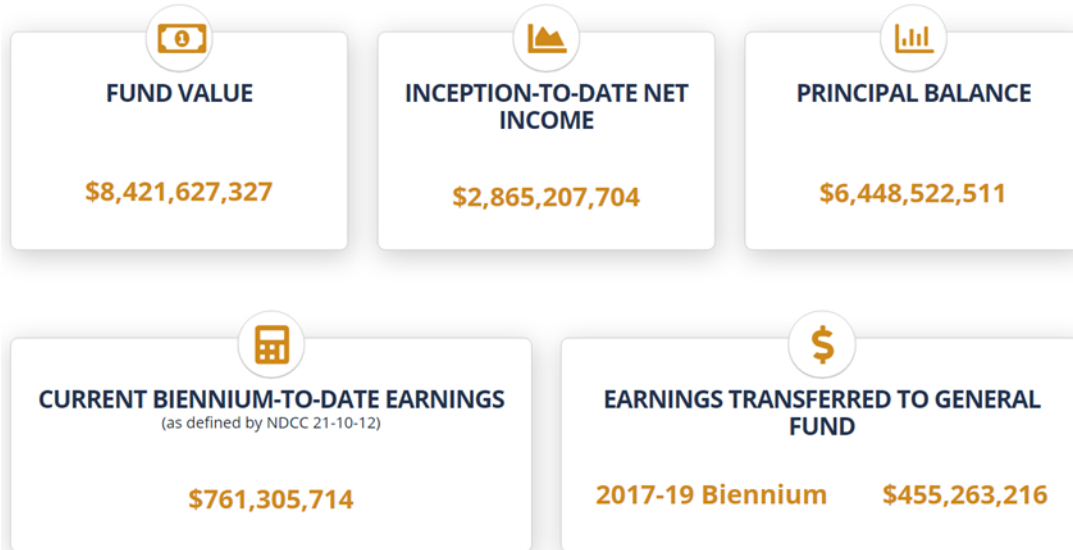
Budget by the numbers

- SIIF
 - \$532.4 Million
- Budget Stabilization Fund (15% of General Fund)
 - \$753.4 Million
- Foundation Aid Stabilization Fund
 - \$149.9 Million
- Tax Relief Fund
 - \$200.1 Million
- Disaster Relief Fund
 - \$17.9 Million
- Bank of North Dakota profits
 - \$192.5 Million
- Legacy Fund Value
 - \$8.421 Billion
- Legacy Fund Earnings
 - \$636 Million Decided by Budget Forecast
 - Earnings will be over \$750 million by the end of the biennium

Legacy Fund

Current Legacy Fund Outlook:

Balances listed below as of March 31, 2021.



HB 1431: Legacy Bonding Bill.

- This bill allows bonds to be issued for major infrastructure projects around the state. The bonds would be funded using Legacy Fund earnings and will help move much-needed infrastructure projects forward.
 - Because this bill utilizes legacy fund earnings, the citizens will see no tax increases to pay for the infrastructure projects. This will take the pressure off of local property taxes and avoid a property tax increase.
 - The Bond is for all of North Dakota. The benefits of this bill will reach infrastructure projects on each side of the state. Western North Dakota will benefit from updated infrastructure to support the oil and gas industry. Eastern North Dakota will benefit from updated flood protection infrastructure.
- Breakdown of \$680-million-dollar package:
 - \$510 million for two major flood control projects, including \$435.5 million for the Fargo-Moorhead Area Diversion Project and \$74.5 million for Minot area flood control.
 - Bonding for the FM Diversion will relieve \$66.5M per biennium from the resources trust fund for other projects

- \$35 million for state bridge repair and \$35 million for the North Dakota Department of Transportation to leverage federal dollars to invest in North Dakota projects.
- \$50 million for an infrastructure revolving loan fund to support cities and counties.
- \$50 million to replace Harris Hall at North Dakota State University with an agricultural products development center.

HB 1425: The Legacy Investment Bill:

- This bill advises the State Investment Board to ensure that a portion of up to 20% of Legacy Fund investments is invested right here in North Dakota. Currently, the SIB hires and oversees fund managers to invest Legacy Fund dollars. A vast majority of Legacy Fund investments are placed in other states or internationally. This bill seeks to bring a portion of those investments right back into North Dakota's economy. The SIB will be required to give preference to qualified investment firms within the state.
 - An analysis prepared for the Committee indicated ND would see an annual increase in \$322M in economic output, a \$101M increase in personal income, and \$79M in wages and salaries. The analysis also indicated this legislation would create 3,859 new jobs.
 - The Legacy Fund was created to benefit the citizens of ND. However, a vast portion of investments are sent out of state or even internationally. By bringing these investments back to ND, we can support businesses, create jobs, and diversify our economy.

Economic Development

HB 1425: Legacy Investments Bill

- An analysis prepared for the Committee indicated ND would see an annual increase in \$322M in economic output;
- a \$101M increase in personal income;
- \$79M in wages and salaries.
- The analysis also indicated this legislation would create 3,859 new jobs.

HB 1475: Relating to the creation of an Agriculture Diversification and Development Fund.

- The fund will consist of money allocated by the Legislative Assembly, and the BND will appropriate the fund. The money in the fund will be issued through a grant program to projects around the State which are designed to develop new agriculture technology, innovate our agriculture market, and grow our State's economy.
 - This bill will both grow and diversify our state's economy.

- It will provide our ag industry with a competitive grant program for research and technology development.
- It will create jobs as the grants are awarded and projects are established.

HB 1380: Legacy Streams Bill.

- Creates a blueprint to distribute Legacy Fund Earnings each biennium
- Creates a process called “Percent of Market Value” to allow for a smoother allocation of earnings
- Allows greater transparency for the general public to see where their Legacy Fund is being put to work

HB 1141: Innovation Loan Fund to Support Technology Advancement.

- This legislation appropriates \$15 million for LIFT:
 - Lift was enacted in the last legislative session and is designed to help North Dakota companies commercialize a product that they have developed.
 - This isn’t research funding, but will help North Dakota businesses by giving them the small boost in capital they need to move their product across the finish line by providing small, low interest loans from the Bank of North Dakota profits.
 - These loans will spur companies to develop and build their products here in the state and provide high-paying jobs in diversification sectors such as agricultural technology, energy, and health care.

Energy

HB 1452: Clean Sustainable Energy Act.

- This legislation establishes a Clean Sustainable Energy Authority. The establishment of this program is funded with a \$25 million appropriation from the Legacy Streams Bill. This Authority will establish and develop a Clean Sustainable Energy Program, which will work to enhance our State’s existing energy technology while also bringing new energy sources and technology to North Dakota. The Authority will recommend the NDIC for grant awards and loan approvals, and propose comprehensive environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policy to the North Dakota Legislative Assembly.
 - The Clean Sustainable Energy Authority will ensure that research and development of 21st Century technologies will be used to advance low emissions and maintain minimal footprint energy production in North Dakota.
 - We know that North Dakota has vast oil, gas, and coal resources. This new

Authority will help us ensure that North Dakota is a leading producer of energy from these resources, as we remain responsible stewards of our landscape.

HB 1452: Low Emission Technology Initiative.

- Along with creating the Clean Sustainable Energy Authority, this bill also adopts the Low Emission Technology Initiative. This program replaces the previous 25x25 initiative which focused solely on renewable resources. This new initiative instead embraces all low emission technologies, including renewables and traditional fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas.
 - This new initiative is superior to the 25x25 initiative because it utilizes our already existing energy while developing technology to lessen our carbon footprint.
 - Projects such as carbon capture will be the key to utilizing resources such as coal in the future while ensuring we protect our environment.

HB 1412: Relating to a Coal Conversion Tax Holiday: (See also “Taxes”)

- This bill will give coal producers a 5-year holiday from the state coal conversion tax. Under the current tax rate, the State receives 85% of the coal conversion tax while the other 15% goes to the political subdivisions. This bill exempts coal producers from the State’s 85% but does not impact funds for counties, cities, or research.
 - Currently, the coal industry is facing many challenges, including the new Presidential administration. This bill will allow the coal industry in our state to take these challenges on without also having to feel the monetary pressures of the coal conversion tax.
 - Providing tax relief to the coal industry will allow coal companies to spend those additional dollars innovating and finding cleaner ways to continue utilizing coal for the future.
 - This bill helps protect the thousands of North Dakotans employed in the coal industry.

HB 1455 - Relating to ten-year plans and the closing of electric conversion facilities:

- This bill would add requirements for utilities to include the potential closing of electric conversion facilities in their ten-year plan submitted to the PSC. Currently, each utility is required to submit a ten-year plan to the PSC if they are building or operating an electric conversion facility, which must be updated every two years; there is no requirement to notify the PSC of a potential facility closing. This bill would require utilities to notify the PSC as soon as there is consideration of closing a facility.
 - This bill essentially a reaction to the unexpected announcement from Great

River about the closing of Coal Creek. It would require a notification to the PSC, which arguably would give the state extra time to consider alternatives to the closing.

- The closing of a single facility could cost hundreds if not thousands of jobs. The State has a significant interest in looking into alternatives to prevent those job losses. This bill affords the State that opportunity.

SB 2313: Relating to Electric Power Reliability and Transparency.

- This bill is designed to study current and new energy transmission and production options and identify public and private investment opportunities to increase North Dakota's electric grid reliability. Specifically, this bill would require the Transmission Authority to deliver a written report on our State's electric grid's status to the Industrial Commission. Such report will discuss the resilience and adequacy of our electric grid to ensure we can continue meeting the electricity needs of our State.
 - This bill addresses issues that arose from an unexpected announcement from Great River about the closing of Coal Creek. It would require a notification to the PSC, which arguably would give the state extra time to consider alternatives to the closing.
 - The closing of a single facility could cost hundreds if not thousands of jobs. The State has a significant interest in looking into alternatives to prevent those job losses. This bill affords the State that opportunity.

SCR 4012 - Relating to the reliability of the electric grid and to incentivize carbon capture utilization:

- This Resolution works to establish state policy to support the reliability and resiliency of the electric grid. Directs the Public Service Commission to coordinate with regional transmission operators such MISO and SPP to accomplish this goal. It also directs the ND Transmission Authority to develop a comprehensive report annually, developing a plan to expand transmission in our State. Finally, the resolution encourages the development of carbon capture technology within the State.
 - This last winter, we saw rolling blackouts and brownouts across the country. These incidents highlight the importance of ensuring our State has adequate baseload energy to keep our lights on.
 - With our vast resources, including oil, coal, gas, and wind, our State is in the unique position to be self-sufficient in our energy production. There is no reason our State should ever face an energy shortage, and this bill ensures that.

Taxes

HB 1412: Coal Conversion Tax Holiday.

- This bill will give coal producers a 5-year holiday from the state coal conversion tax. Under the current tax rate, the State receives 85% of the coal conversion tax while the other 15% goes to the political subdivisions. This bill exempts coal producers from the State's 85% but does not impact funds for counties, cities, or research.

HB 1405: Income tax credit for the employment of individuals with developmental disabilities.

- This bill creates an income tax credit for employers who choose to hire and employ individuals with developmental disabilities and severe mental illness. The tax credit could be up to 25% of \$6,000 in wages paid annually by the taxpayer for each employee with a developmental disability.
 - This tax credit will help both businesses and developmentally disabled individuals by encouraging their employment through a tax credit.

SB 2328: Tax credit for well site flaring mitigation.

- This legislation provides for a tax credit for all oil produced using flaring mitigation technology and tactics. The tax credit would be equal to seventy-five cents per one million BTUs of flare mitigation resulting from flaring mitigation technology.
 - This legislation promotes reducing well flaring through currently available technology and incentivizes the creation of new anti-flaring technology. It also will help reduce the release of methane, a greenhouse gas.

SB 2213: Property tax credit for disabled veterans.

- This bill increases the property tax credit for disabled veterans in North Dakota from the current \$6,750 to \$8,000 for qualified homesteads. The tax credit is available to veterans with a service-related disability of 50% or greater or who have an unemployment rate of 100% as determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, the unmarried spouse of a deceased disabled veterans is eligible for a tax credit that is equal to the disability compensation rating.

HB 1212: Charitable Gaming Tax

- This bill represents an opportunity to correct an oversight in tax policy enacted when electronic pull tabs were legalized. It puts more money into the pockets of charities so that they can better fulfill their charitable purposes. It provides the Attorney General's Office with needed funds to achieve their mission of regulating this growing industry in North Dakota.
 - This bill corrects an oversight that split gaming tax revenues between charities and the State's general fund. These revenues were never intended to benefit the State, only the charities. This bill makes that happen.

Human Services

HB 1247: Merging the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services.

- House Bill 1247, directs the state Department of Health and Department of Human Services to unite into the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services. This unification is for several reasons. First, both Departments provide many of the same services and are responsible for many similar duties. Second, merging these Departments will streamline efficiency and ensure the most proficient delivery of services for the people of North Dakota.

HB 1065 - Relating to Long-Term Care Operations Costs, Moratorium on the expansion of long-term care bed capacity.

- This bill will allow the following changes twice a year: delicensing nursing facility bed capacity, relicensing nursing facility bed capacity, converting licensed nursing bed capacity to basic care bed capacity, reverting licensed basic care bed capacity back to nursing facility bed capacity, or otherwise reconfigure nursing facility bed capacity. Prior to this bill, these facilities were allowed to make these changes once within a twelve-month period.
 - Long-term care facilities receive funding from the Department of Health depending on the percent occupancy of the facility. This change will allow more flexibility in changing the total occupancy of facilities to receive necessary funding without being penalized in events like the COVID-19 Pandemic.

HB 1090 - Relating to nursing home rates:

- This bill revamps the current funding formula for long-term care facilities to incentivize facilities to use funds as efficiently as possible while still providing excellent care. It allows the Department of Health to establish price limits on per diems and fair rental value payment mechanisms for long-term care facilities based on a market estimate of inflation.
 - In effect, the new system should save tax-payer dollars while allowing long-term care facilities to serve their residents as effectively as possible.

SB 2161: Relating to the creation of a mental health services registry.

- This bill has two key features. First, this legislation directs the Department of Human Services to create and maintain a registry of all mental health programs in our state. These programs will be required to annually to submit a report on their services to the DHS. Additionally, this bill also directs Legislative Management to consider studying the implementation of expanded behavioral health services in our state.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the importance of adequate mental and behavioral health services.
- This registry and the subsequent study will identify potential weaknesses and potential improvements for North Dakota’s mental health services.

HB 1416: relating to the four-year old program approval and the North Dakota early childhood council

- House Bill 1416 consolidates early childhood education programs in the Office of Early Learning under the Department of Human Services. Previously, these programs were spread across Department of Public Instruction. Duties within this office include overseeing the North Dakota Early Childhood Council and approving early childhood education programs. This bill also makes minor naming changes, changing the term for these programs from “early childhood education program” to “four-year old program,” to better describe the program purpose.

HB 1466: relating to establishing four-year old program grants

- House Bill 1466 establishes and funds a grant program for 4-year-old education programs. These grants will be awarded to qualified 4-year-old programs which prepare children for Kindergarten learning. The program will be funded through \$1.5 million which will be transferred from the Department of Commerce budget to the Department of Human Services, and an additional \$3.5 million from the Elementary Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) federal funding (COVID-19 relief) provided to the Department of Public Instruction. There is a sunset clause on this bill for 2025 which will allow the state to analyze the impact of the program and make future determinations about its funding.

SB 2145: Relating to long-term care visitation:

- Summary: This bill will allow residents of long term care facilities to appoint one or more Essential Caregivers, such as family members, to provide in-person physical, emotional, or spiritual support, including during a declared disaster. In essence, this bill will loosen the restrictions on long-term care visitation we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - During the pandemic, many difficult decisions had to be made regarding long term care. We understand the risks COVID poses to our elderly population. However, loneliness and inability to see friends and families can as dangerous.
 - This bill will open up our long-term care facilities to specified friends or family members who are designated as essential caregivers.

SB 2226: Relating to end-of-life facilities and care.

- The intent of the legislation is to provide more care options for patients facing end-of-

life situations in a less restrictive environment. A person utilizing an end-of-life facility would be able to choose the hospice provider they prefer and then receive round-the-clock care from registered nurses, CNAs and LPNs. Family members would be welcome to visit as often as they want or even move into the facility with their loved ones.

- At least one non-profit in the state plans to raise funds to create this type of facility in some of our major cities.
- Many families do not want to place a family member into an assisted-living facility or nursing home at this stage of their life. However, they do want options other than continued hospital confinement or homestay, which doesn't always work for many families.

Criminal Justice/Judiciary

HB 1035: The Uniform Juvenile Court Act.

- This bill brings much-needed improvements to our juvenile criminal justice system. The original Juvenile Court Act was passed in 1969 and this is the first full update since that time. This bill results from several years of study and work by an interim committee to identify and implement the necessary reforms needed in our State's criminal justice system. It promotes community treatment for juvenile offenders. Many children are better served by help and treatment as opposed to traditional punishment. It also clarifies that all juvenile defendants in North Dakota have the right to an attorney as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.
 - This bill intends to reform our juvenile justice system in a way that will provide our youth defendants the treatment they need so that they can become productive members of society as they mature.

SB 2246: Relating to the creation of a veteran's court docket.

- This bill creates a new docket in our court system specifically designed to address the needs of our State's veterans. This bill was suggested by the North Dakota Supreme Court and combined judicial supervision with a treatment program that addresses the needs of veterans, including: behavioral health conditions, substance abuse disorders, mental health conditions, traumatic brain injuries and others. This is the first of its kind in our State.
 - We now better understand the long-term effects that military service can have. These effects include PTSD, mental and behavioral health issues, and substance use disorders. These issues, unfortunately can manifest through criminal behavior. Because of this, our State needs a docket that does not simply treat our veterans like ordinary offenders and instead recognizes their unique needs and situation.

SB 2166: Relating to the penalty for theft offenses.

- This bill enhances the penalty for shoplifting and theft offenses. Under current law, theft offenses under \$500 are treated as class B misdemeanors with minor fines and almost no chance of jail time. This bill enhances those penalties. Any person convicted of a second or third theft offense would be charged with a class A misdemeanor. Any person convicted of a fourth theft offense or more would be charged with a Class C felony carrying up to possibly five years in prison.
 - Testimony indicated a significant uptick in shoplifting and theft offenses in our State. For example, a hardware store in Bismarck reported a \$50,000 loss in 2020 due to extensive shoplifting. Additionally, a big-box retailer reported over half a million dollars in stolen merchandise since the start of 2020.
 - This law seeks to crack down on habitual shoplifters who continue their bad behavior because they know they will only face minor fines if they get caught.

SB 2109: Creating a statewide tracking system for sexual assault evidence collection kits.

- This legislation provides for the creation of a statewide sexual assault evidence tracking system. All medical providers, law enforcement, and forensic laboratories will participate in the system. This system will help track the location and status of all sexual assault kits in the State. This will, in essence, provide a comprehensive inventory to allow for the tracking of these kits throughout the criminal justice process.
 - This legislation highlights the Assembly's commitment to protecting those who have been victims of sexual assault. This tracking system will ensure all evidence kits are completed and safely stored.

SB 2233: Relating to the creation of an attorney recruitment program for rural North Dakota.

- This bill allows for creating a recruitment program designed to bring more attorneys to the rural areas in our State. Supporters of this legislation pointed out that North Dakota's rural cities and counties face a severe shortage of attorneys. For example, 87% of the attorneys in our State are located in just 7 counties, and there a number of counties with no attorneys at all. Attorneys in rural areas play a significant role in assisting with legal issues relating to agricultural law, tax law, family law, wills and probates, and more.

Agriculture**HB 1026 - Relating to grain buyers, grain brokers, grain processors, and warehouse workers.**

- This bill is the product of an interim study on some of the grain market issues in our State. First, this bill holds that when evaluating the size of a grain business, the focus is on value as opposed to volume. Under current law, the size of businesses is assessed based on the volume of grain the business can hold. Switching to a value-based assessment will help adequately bond the grain industry based on the actual business. This bill also identifies and licenses all grain buyers by combining federal grain warehouses with current state warehouses into one license and one section of the law. Finally, this bill closes a current loophole that has allowed insolvent grain brokers who have committed fraud to escape liability. This bill ensures we are able to set bonds for these types of businesses to set a level of protection for producers and the grain industry.

HB 1475: Relating to the creation of an Agriculture Diversification and Development Fund.

- This legislation creates an agriculture diversification and development as well as an agriculture and diversification grant program. The fund will consist of money allocated by the Legislative Assembly, and the BND will appropriate the fund. The money in the fund will be issued through a grant program to projects around the State which are designed to develop new agriculture technology, innovate our agriculture market, and grow our State's economy.
 - Agriculture is the backbone of the North Dakota economy. This legislation will enhance and grow our agriculture sector and will benefit farmers, ranchers, processors, sellers, and consumers around the State.
 - This legislation will also create jobs as the money is allocated to new projects. The diversification and development of new projects will both grow and diversify our economy now and in the future.

Education

HB 1478: Relating to alternative educational opportunities for students.

- This bill aims to create alternative educational opportunities which take place outside the classroom for grades 6-12. These alternative educational opportunities will count toward class credit and will provide students with hands-on experience. Such opportunities could include pre-apprenticeships, internships, and community programs.
 - This legislation provides for opportunities for real-world experience outside the classroom for high school students. This experience can be invaluable for young students whose career path is still being paved.

HB 1125: Relating to the definition of a dependent to determine the eligibility of certain dependents of veterans to receive free tuition in institutions of higher education

in the State.

- This bill seeks to change certain requirements regarding deceased or disabled Veteran's family members being eligible for free tuition at North Dakota Higher Education Institutions.
Currently, only the child or stepchild of a veteran who died in combat or is deemed to have a total disability are eligible for free tuition. This bill would extend the tuition waiver to also include the spouse, widow, or widower of a deceased or disabled veteran. Additionally, the bill reduces the amount of time that a veteran must have been a resident from ten years to five years to be eligible for the family member.
 - Undoubtedly, veterans sacrifice so much for our country. This bill reminds us that the family members of veterans also sacrifice on behalf of our country.
 - This bill honors the legacy of deceased and disabled veterans by ensuring that family members (child, stepchild, spouse, widow, or widower) are eligible for free tuition at colleges in North Dakota.

SB 2311: Relating to mental health awareness and suicide prevention in grades 7-12.

- This legislation holds that mental health awareness and suicide prevention resources must be provided to the mental health behavior coordinator at all public and private schools in our State. During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have worked tirelessly to address related mental and behavioral health issues amongst students. The resources provided under this bill will better allow schools to better address students' behavioral and mental health needs across our State.
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have worked tirelessly to address related mental and behavioral health issues amongst student.
 - The resources provided under this bill will better allow schools to better address students' behavioral and mental health needs across our State.

SB 2304: Requiring Native American history as part of the public and non-public school's curriculum.

- This legislation holds that schools in North Dakota must include Native American history in their social studies curriculum. This curriculum provides for an emphasis on the federally recognized tribes in located in North Dakota.
 - North Dakota Tribes have played an integral role in shaping our State's history. Requiring Native American history in our schools recognizes this role.

Election Laws**HB 1256: Prohibition of using nonpublic funds for elections operations.**

- This bill is fairly straightforward and only adds one sentence to the Century Code: "The state and political subdivisions may not solicit, accept, or use any grants or donations from private persons for elections operations or administration." In essence, this bill will prohibit cities and counties in North Dakota from accepting grants or donations from private persons for groups to use the funds to help administer local, state, or federal elections.
 - During the Committee hearing on this bill, the Secretary of State's Office acknowledged the although not illegal under current law, it is inappropriate for subdivisions to accept private money for election operations. This bill ensures that in future elections accepting such donations would be a violation of the law.
 - This bill stands up for individual voters and makes sure that big corporations and wealthy private entities cannot attempt to interfere with the voice of the people.

HB 1078: Uniform Faithful Presidential Electors Act

- In North Dakota, there are six presidential electors selected: 3 selected by Republicans; 3 selected by Democrats. However, only the 3 presidential electors who were selected by the Party whose Presidential nominee won our state's primary will actually cast a vote. This bill ensures that presidential electors in the state of North Dakota vote for presidential candidate who wins our state's primary by making it mandatory by law.

Water

Republicans took a strategic approach to finance water projects across the state for this biennium and in the future. As opposed to past sessions where the Water Commission Budget is the sole appropriation for projects, the Legislature tapped the Legacy fund for the first time ever.

Water Commission Budget:

The Water commission budget is funded solely by oil extraction taxes, capital repayments, and federal funds. There were no general fund dollars appropriated to this budget.

- Capital Assets: \$148,467,437
 - NAWS and SAWS
- Project Carryover: \$0
- Water Supply Grants: \$125,000,000
- Rural Water Supply grants: \$59,600,000
- Flood Control Projects: \$48,000,000
- General Water – Grants: \$14,227,275
- Basinwide Plan Implementation: \$1,100,000
- Total Special Funds: \$460,299,129

- Full-time equivalent employees: 90.00

HB 1431: The Bonding Bill:

The most considerable portion of the bonding bill is \$435.5 million for the Fargo Diversion. The Fargo diversion has a total estimated cost of over \$2.75 billion when it is completed. The \$435.5 million covers the rest of the state's portion of the funding liability. \$74.5 million will pay off Western Area Water Supply's debt to the resources trust fund and be diverted to the Mouse River flood control project. These projects are large expenses to the state and have taken much of the revenue from the Resources Trust Fund.

The Resources Trust Fund has funded the state portion of these projects. This fund is filled by oil tax revenue from western North Dakota. Because of the large water projects currently being financed by the trust fund, there has been little revenue to dispense to other state resource projects. With the passage of House Bill 1431, the Fargo Diversion has been completely removed from the trust fund, and Mouse River flood control has been released for several biennia. This will allow for other important projects around the state to be completed in a much timelier manner.

Second Amendment

HB 1498: Relating to ND's stand your ground laws

- This legislation strengthens our State's current stand your ground law. Under the current law, a person has a duty to attempt to retreat before using deadly force against an intruder illegally entering private property. This legislation removes that duty to first retreat.
 - This bill protects and enhances a person's right to defend their life and property from intruders and criminals.
 - There should be no stipulation that a person attempts to retreat when their life and property are in danger. Instead, that person should have the ability to stand their ground immediately.

SB 2344: Relating to government limitations on shooting ranges and firearms services and sales

- This bill holds that no government entity in our State can limit the hours of operation of any government-owned or privately owned shooting range. Additionally, the legislation provides a government entity that cannot limit the hours of operation of a

business that sells or services firearms, unless such limitations apply to all businesses equally. Finally, unless already required by law, the State cannot require registration of firearms, accessories, or other weapons based on a declared state of emergency.

- Firearms businesses should be treated as being on an equal playing field with all other lawful businesses in our State. This bill ensures that will be the case in the future.
- Additionally, this bill encourages responsible firearm use in licensed ranges by allowing them to manage their hours of operation.

HB 1396: Relating to civil liability for firearms manufacturers and dealers.

- This legislation provides that firearm manufacturers and dealers cannot be held civilly liable for the acts of another person. In essence, it provides for immunity from civil liability for manufacturers and dealers so long as a third party committed the actions giving rise to a suit.
 - As Republicans we believe in freedom and personal responsibility. When a firearm is lawfully purchased, the way it is handled and used is solely the responsibility of the purchaser, not the manufacturer or dealer.

HB 1383: Relating to enforcing federal firearms laws.

- This bill holds that all state and local law enforcement officers may not assist the federal government or federal officers from enforcing federal gun regulations which are stricter than our current state law.
 - North Dakota has among the lowest gun crime rates in the country. It is clear that our current firearms laws are working adequately. We believe that by not enforcing federal laws that are stricter than our own, we can protect public safety and protect our second amendment.

HB 1248: Relating to the Authority of political subdivisions regarding firearms.

- This legislation updates existing law regarding the Authority of political subdivision to enact ordinances regarding firearms. Under current law cities and counties cannot enact ordinances regarding firearms that are stricter than the current state standards. This legislation updates this law also to hold that cities and counties cannot attempt to implement zoning laws regarding firearms which is more restrictive than current state law.
 - This legislation closes a loophole which allows cities and counties to enact stricter firearm than our current state law. We believe our state laws are tailored to both protect public safety and our second amendment.

HCR 3006: Urging President Biden to protect the Second Amendment.

- Summary: This resolution is the Assembly's request to President Biden that he take action to protect our 2nd amendment.

COVID-19

HB 1175: COVID-19 liability protection for businesses.

- This legislation is aimed at protecting North Dakota businesses and hospitals from lawsuits related the transmission of COVID-19. First, this bill provides that in-state businesses are immune from civil liability resulting from an individual's exposure to COVID-19. Second, this bill protects hospitals and healthcare providers from civil liability resulting from all COVID-19 related incidents.
 - Undoubtedly, North Dakota businesses have been relentless in serving our State during the last year. This bill ensures they are not penalized for their efforts.
 - During the pandemic, our hospitals and healthcare employees had to adjust rapidly to an ever-changing pandemic. This bill makes certain they are shielded from lawsuits that could arise from spreading a virus beyond their control.

SB 2278: COVID-19 liability protection for school districts.

- This bill provides COVID-19 liability protections for school districts and school district employees in our State. In essence, this legislation holds that if a person were to contract COVID-19 while on school property, the school and its employees would be immune from any potential lawsuit as a result. This bill would not protect against a lawsuit resulting from malicious conduct or gross negligence by a school district or its employees causing the spread of COVID-19.
 - Earlier this session, we passed similar protections for employers, businesses, and hospitals. This bill extends those protections to school districts, school administrators, teachers, and other school employees.
 - Our educators have done an incredible job keeping our classrooms and students safe during this pandemic. It would be improper to allow teachers to face lawsuits over simply doing their job.

HB 1326: Relating to COVID-19 stimulus funds and Medicaid eligibility.

- This legislation passed both chambers by unanimous votes. The bill ensures that any coronavirus stimulus money received is not considered countable income for elderly individuals on Medicaid. If these payments were to be counted as income, it may put some Medicaid recipients over the asset limit for the program.
 - COVID-19 stimulus funds were meant to provide financial relief for many who have struggled during the pandemic. If these funds were to be counted as

income, it would potentially impact the pandemic far worse for Medicaid recipients.