

LEGISLATIVE FUN FACTS & TRIVIA

The youngest person to be elected to the South Dakota Legislature is Justin Davis. Representative Davis was elected to the House of Representatives in 2002; he was 24 years old.

The longest serving members of the South Dakota Legislature served for thirty years. Those reaching thirty years were: C.S. Amsden, James B. "Jim" Dunn, David Pulford, and Alfred D. Roesler,

The first woman elected to the SD Legislature was Gladys Pyle. She began serving in the House of Representatives in 1923. In 1991-1992, there were 26 women serving in both houses. That was the most women ever to serve at one time.

In both 1997 and 1999, members of the House of Representatives were given the difficult task of seating a member of the House of Representatives from legislative district 12. At two elections in a row, votes cast for Hal Wick and John McIntyre from Sioux Falls were so evenly split that the decision fell to the House to pick a winner. Hal Wick was seated in 1997, and John McIntyre was seated in 1999.

Article III, Section 11 of the South Dakota Constitution gives legislators privilege from arrest during a session of the Legislature and also during their travel to and from the session. This privilege, however, is not extended to them if they commit "treason, felony, or breach of the peace".

South Dakota was the first state to adopt the "initiative and referendum" process on a statewide level. Members of the Populist Party in the SD Legislature at the time submitted an amendment calling for the "initiative and referendum", and the voters gave it final approval in November of 1898. The voters of the state approved the state's first initiated measure in 1912, but they did not approve another one for more than sixty years.

Initiatives are when the citizens, collecting signatures on a petition, place advisory questions, memorials, statutes or constitutional amendments on the ballot for the citizens to adopt or reject. The referendum process gives citizens the ability to reject laws or amendments proposed by the state legislature.

The "hoghouse" procedure is unique to the South Dakota Legislature. It is an amending process that allows the entire contents of a bill to be changed even long after the bill introduction deadline has passed. The term originated in 1921 when the procedure was used to authorize an expense allowance for legislators as a substitute for the construction of a hoghouse at State College, which is now SD State University.

A “call of the house” is a procedure established in the Legislature’s Joint Rules. It allows one-sixth of the members of either house to compel the attendance of those members absent. In those instances, the doors to the legislative chambers are closed, and members in attendance must remain unless they get permission to leave from the presiding officer. At the same time, the sergeants at arms leave the chambers to go in search of the absent members and to bring them back to the chambers. Legislators do not utilize this procedure very often so when they do, it is quite memorable.

Only certain people other than current legislators are allowed on the floors of the Senate and House during sessions. They include former members of the legislature, the current and former Governors and Lieutenant Governors, current and former members of Congress representing South Dakota, Supreme Court Justices, legislative employees, and news reporters. None of these people, however, may be on the floor if they are attempting to influence legislation.

DID YOU KNOW...

Prior to 1964, the Legislature only met in odd-numbered years for a period of sixty days.

According to the South Dakota Constitution, legislators are reimbursed only 5 cents a mile for one trip to and from their homes during a legislative session.

It takes only a simple majority of the members of each house to pass the bill that funds all of state government, but it takes a 2/3rds of the members to pass other smaller, specific spending measures.

Representatives use an electronic voting machine to cast their votes in the House Chambers, but the Senators still rely on the Secretary of the Senate to call the roll for each vote.

Democrats have only controlled the House of Representatives one time. That was in 1935. The Republicans have controlled it at all other times except in 1973, when the Democrats and Republicans had a tie with 35 members each.