

Looking Towards Election Day 2026

South Dakota's General Election will be held on Tuesday, November 3rd, 2026.

The **gubernatorial race** features Republican Governor Larry Rhoden, running with Lt. Governor Tony Venhuizen, and Democrat Dan Ahlers, running with Steven McCleerey.

Republican Marty Jackley (currently serving as SD Attorney General) and Democrat Nikki Gronli will be on the ballot to serve in the US House. Incumbent Republican Senator Mike Rounds is running against Independent Brian Bengs for a seat in the US Senate.

All 105 seats in the State Legislature are up for election this year. A handful of districts face uncontested legislative races, but many will elect new legislative members to serve for the upcoming term.

Other statewide offices on the ballot include:

- **Attorney General:** Lance Russell (R)
- **Secretary of State:** Heather Baxter (R), Terrence Davis (D), and Tamara J. Lesnar (L)
- **State Treasurer:** Melissa Hull (R) and Margaret Kuipers (D)
- **State Auditor:** Catherine Barranco (R) and Tom Cool (D)
- **Commissioner of School and Public Lands:** Brock Greenfield (R) and Raeann Mettler (D)
- **Public Utilities Commissioner:** Don Haggard (R) and Frank Kloucek (D)

Voters will consider the following questions on the General Election ballot, each addressing a different area of state policy:

1. **Amendment I – Medicaid Expansion:** This amendment would end the constitutional requirement for expanded Medicaid if the federal medical assistance percentage falls below 90%.
2. **Amendment J – Voting Eligibility:** This amendment would clarify language in the SD Constitution that non-U.S. citizens are not eligible to vote in South Dakota, reinforcing current law.
3. **Amendment K – Unclaimed Property:** This amendment would create a trust for unclaimed funds held by the state, changing how the state manages these funds but not how owners claim their property.
4. **Amendment L – Constitutional Amendment Threshold:** This amendment would require 60% voter approval for future constitutional amendments, rather than a simple majority, making it generally more difficult to change the Constitution.

Absentee Voting Begins: September 18, 2026
Voter Registration Deadline: October 19, 2026

More info on these ballot items & specific candidate listings for each district are available [here](#).

AHLA News: "General Services Administration Raises FY2027 Per Diem Rates"

"WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 4, 2026) – American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) President & CEO Rosanna Maietta released the following statement after the General Services Administration (GSA) announced its fiscal year 2027 per diem rates for federal workers. GSA's per diem guidelines govern reimbursement for federal employees' lodging and meals expenses for official government travel.

'We applaud the GSA for raising its FY2027 per diem rates. Fair, market-based federal per diem rates that reflect current operating costs are essential to sustaining hotels, supporting local jobs, and generating community investment. Government travel is a critical economic driver, making it imperative that per diem rates keep pace with increased costs. A strong economy requires a thriving hospitality sector and this increase will help achieve that goal.'

Starting October 1, 2026, the standard daily lodging allowance for most of the continental United States will increase by \$3.00 to \$113.00 per day. The standard meals and incidental expenses allowance will remain \$68.00 per day.

Each year, the GSA sets per diem rates to reimburse federal employees' lodging and meals expenses for official travel within the continental United States. Typically, the rates are calculated based on the average daily rate for lodging and meals from a trailing 12-month period, minus 5%. AHLA works closely with the GSA to ensure per diem rates are fair to both hoteliers and the government."

[Read the full article on AHLA website](#)

Proof of Government Exemption for Hotels

The South Dakota Department of Revenue has worked with SDHLA and designed a form for hotels and lodging establishments to keep on record. This is the Proof of Government Exemption for Hotels for Sales tax. You must have this form if you are audited.

Please use this reference: <https://sddor.seamlessdocs.com/f/2015>

The SD Department of Revenue has also released a new Fact Tax Information for Hotels, Motels, and Campgrounds. Please use it as a great reference.

<https://dor.sd.gov/media/jrql35rj/hotels-motels-and-campgrounds.pdf>

You can also find the link here, along with the proof of exemption form within the PDF:

<https://sddor.seamlessdocs.com/sc/publications-tax-facts/>

Travel South Dakota's *Insider Sessions* for Sept. 2026

Travel South Dakota's Insider Sessions (formerly called the Webinar Series) offer helpful informational sessions for professionals within the tourism industry.

UPCOMING SESSIONS:

Topic: Audience & Creative Insights from Peak 2026 Campaign

Date and Time: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 @ 11 a.m. CT/10 a.m. MT

Presenters: BreAnne Sahleen, Kate Young and Camille Cedeño, Love Communications

[Register for the Sept. 22 Session Here](#)

Topic: Meet Our Marketing Agencies

Date and Time: Tuesday, September 29, 2026 @ 11 a.m. CT/10 a.m. MT

Presenters: Lou Hammond Group, Lawrence & Schiller, and Miles Partnership

[Register for the Sept. 29 Session Here](#)

See more info, previous sessions, and more upcoming sessions at sdvisit.com

SAVE THE DATE: 2027 SDHLA Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendars for the

2027 SD Hotel & Lodging Association's next annual meeting:

Tuesday, January 19, 2027, in Pierre/Ft. Pierre.

Stay tuned for further location details coming soon.



*Need to contact us? Send an email to info@sdhla.com
or send us a message directly through our website.*



SDHLA Employee Award Nominations 2026

Nominations are open for the 2026 SDHLA Employee Service Awards!

If you have an employee who regularly goes above and beyond and provides great customer service, review the award criteria and consider nominating them to recognize their hard work.

Both management and non-management employees at current SDHLA member properties can be nominated, and you can submit as many nominations as you like.

Access the form at sdhla.com, where you can find nomination deadlines and other details.

Allied Member Spotlight: *Aberdeen Area Convention & Visitors Bureau*



Casey Weismantel
605-225-2414

The Aberdeen Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) is the tourism marketing agency for the City of Aberdeen. Our mission is to enhance the economic well-being of the Aberdeen region by increasing the amount of visitor and meeting activity that occurs in the area. The CVB is the only organization dedicated to tourism marketing for the City. We sell our City and our Region as a great visitor destination for leisure travel, conventions, meetings, sporting events and outdoor activities. Our goals are to increase the number of visitors to Aberdeen with an emphasis on overnight visitors, to promote the image of Aberdeen, to act as a resource to support the Aberdeen area's facilities, attractions, activities and events, to promote rural tourism in northeast South Dakota, and to assist in the promotion of special events in the Aberdeen region.

SDHLA Destination Report from STR

Current Month - July 2026 vs July 2025												
	Occ %		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from July 2025					
	2026	2025	2026	2025	2026	2025	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold
United States	69.7	68.1	171.74	162.46	119.77	110.71	2.3	5.7	8.2	8.6	0.4	2.8
West North Central	67.0	65.6	134.31	127.99	90.05	83.99	2.2	4.9	7.2	7.0	-0.2	1.9
South Dakota	72.8	72.8	152.10	145.45	110.67	105.94	-0.1	4.6	4.5	3.4	-1.0	-1.1

Year to Date - July 2026 vs July 2025												Participation			
Occ %		ADR		RevPAR		Percent Change from YTD 2025						Properties		Rooms	
2026	2025	2026	2025	2026	2025	Occ	ADR	RevPAR	Room Rev	Room Avail	Room Sold	Census	Sample	Census	Sample
64.0	63.1	166.94	160.74	106.85	101.39	1.5	3.9	5.4	5.9	0.5	1.9	64414	39042	5713554	4418160
56.3	55.7	124.86	119.63	70.29	66.60	1.1	4.4	5.5	5.4	-0.2	0.9	5126	3079	384124	294732
55.1	54.4	125.32	119.95	69.11	65.26	1.4	4.5	5.9	5.5	-0.4	1.0	454	253	26885	19807

This report is provided by STR. For detailed lodging performance data for your area, contact STR at (615) 824-8664 ext 3504 or info@str.com. SDHLA is working with STR, the leader in premium, global data benchmarking, analytics and marketplace insights, to make sure that important statistics like Occupancy, ADR and RevPAR are accurately reported for our state, to ensure you're receiving the most reliable information. We need your help to make this happen. SDHLA and STR have made the commitment to come together to try and increase the number of hotels providing data from South Dakota. Our hope is to increase the number of data providers to (i) provide a clearer picture of our state's performance, and (ii) break down the larger markets into more-defined (and relevant) submarkets, once there is sufficient participation. As a data provider, you will receive a FREE monthly Occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR report for your property, along with a comparative report for your entire market. In addition, you'll also be given 3 months free when you upgrade to the dSTAR subscription, which allows hotels the ability to benchmark performance against a select group of hotels of your choosing.

Important to note:

- STR never shares individual client data.
- Quick & Easy! All you have to do is send two data points: number of room nights sold & revenue generated.
- Training & Support: Stephanie Siegel, Business Development Associate, ssiegel@str.com - (615) 348-2295 x3007

Click on [this link](#) to register and start receiving your free customized reports, detailing your property's performance against your local market.

South Dakota Tourism News

All articles are from Travel South Dakota and can be found on their [website](#).

FORT PIERRE AND YANKTON/VERMILLION MISSOURI RIVER WATER TRAIL SELECTED FOR TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA'S DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

"Travel South Dakota is proud to announce that Fort Pierre and the Yankton/Vermillion Missouri River Water Trail have been selected to participate in the second year of the Destination Development Program.

The initiative is designed to strengthen and expand tourism opportunities in rural South Dakota communities through strategic, community-driven planning.

'Developing and supporting tourism opportunities, especially in rural areas, remains an important part of our strategic plan, so we are very excited to begin working with Fort Pierre and the Yankton/Vermillion Missouri River Water Trail,' said James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism. 'Both projects impressed us with their strong community integrations, thoughtful visions, and commitment to creating high-quality visitor experiences.'

The program works in partnership with George Washington University's International Institute of Tourism Studies and Crosscurrent Collective to provide communities with strategic planning assistance, access to subject-matter experts, professional development and grant opportunities. These resources help communities create welcoming environments, develop authentic visitor experiences, and pursue sustainable tourism growth that benefits residents, visitors and local economies. 'We're honored to have Yankton selected for the Destination Development Program,' said Brittany Wagner, Tourism Director at Visit Yankton.

'This program presents an exciting opportunity to collaborate with local and state partners as we continue to strengthen the regional visitor experience and build on the incredible assets that make our community a destination.'

Through the program, Fort Pierre and the Yankton/Vermillion Missouri River Water Trail will build on their existing assets and work alongside local and state partners to identify priorities and develop strategies that support their long-term tourism goals.

'Fort Pierre Tourism is incredibly honored to be a part of this visionary program,' said Jasmin Fosheim, Fort Pierre Tourism. 'We know destination development is going to be invaluable as we seek to continue enriching our visitors' experiences while maintaining our authenticity and individuality as a community.'

Travel South Dakota received 11 applications for the program's second year. Fort Pierre and the Yankton/Vermillion Missouri River Water Trail stood out for their community support, collaborative approaches, and visions for sustainable tourism development that will positively impact residents and visitors alike.

More information about Travel South Dakota's Destination Development Program can be found at SDVisit.com/Destination-Development."

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TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA PARTNERS WITH STRAVA, CANYON, BIKEFLIGHTS, AND ENDURA TO LAUNCH "CYCLE THE 605" CAMPAIGN

"Travel South Dakota is inviting adventurers everywhere to discover the spirit of movement and exploration with the launch of 'Cycle the 605,' a campaign inspired by South Dakota's wide-open landscapes, endless opportunities for outdoor recreation, and the freedom to explore.

Adventurers everywhere are encouraged to get outside and participate in the official [Cycle the 605 Strava Challenge](#) by completing 605 minutes of activity, a number inspired by South Dakota's statewide 605 area code. Celebrating movement in all its forms, the challenge runs through September 4, 2026. Participants are encouraged to log any combination of activities including cycling, running, hiking, walking and swimming, on the Strava app.

Those who complete the Cycle the 605 Strava Challenge can then enter the [Cycle the 605 Sweepstakes](#) for a chance to win a South Dakota cycling getaway for two, featuring two Canyon Grizl bikes, lodging, Endura gift cards, Bikeflights credit and more.

'South Dakota offers diverse terrain and the kind of wide-open spaces that are increasingly rare and more sought after than ever by travelers,' said James Hagen, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Tourism. 'From rural gravel roads to iconic rides through our state and national parks, there are endless opportunities to explore. We're excited to partner with Strava, Canyon and Endura to inspire more people to discover just how much room there is to roam.'

The campaign builds on a May 2026 content-creation experience that brought cyclists, athletes, and brand ambassadors to South Dakota to explore the state's diverse terrain and cycling culture. The resulting photo and video assets now power the Cycle the 605 campaign across digital and social platforms for Travel South Dakota and each of the brand partners.

As interest in cycling tourism continues to grow, Cycle the 605 positions South Dakota as a destination where riders can experience world-class gravel riding, mountain biking, and road cycling across the state's expansive network of open roads and trails. The initiative also expands awareness of South Dakota among Strava's global community and the dedicated audiences of Canyon, Bikeflights, and Endura."

Need to contact us?

Send an email to info@sdhla.com or send us a message directly through our website.



South Dakota
HOTEL & LODGING
ASSOCIATION

www.sdhla.com

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