

**Administration Report for SDSHS Trustees Meeting**  
**20 March 2026**  
**Ben Jones**

**101<sup>st</sup> Legislative Session**

For this year's legislative session, the Society had one bill to run. HB 1018 sought to extend the spending authority of the special appropriation which passed in 2022 so that we could use donated funds to purchase the services and materials from Split Rock Studios for the new museum exhibits. The bill was broadly supported in both appropriation committees of the House and Senate and by the members on the floor. The Governor signed it on March 3. The next bill, SB 102, of interest was introduced by legislators from Deadwood that will change the Gaming Commission's funding formula for the gaming revenue. This is the formula that directs \$100,000 be placed in the Deadwood Grant account that you, as Trustees use to award statewide preservation grants. The current version of the bill has left that \$100,000 unchanged. Next it moves to the House Commerce and Energy Committee for their review and or action. Lastly, SB 3 sought to make it easier for homeowners to modify and improve their property. It was amended to recognize the authorities in SDCL 1-19A and we believe this will help maintain historic preservation. While the budget remains under debate, there is no talk of cutting the Historical Society's ongoing budget. Assuming the Governor's recommended Division of History budget (part of the Department of Education's budget) passes, that would keep us level at \$7,440,976 in state general funds, federal funds, and other funds. For a broad budget illustration see, [FY 2027 budget](#) at the link on pages 12-9 and 12-10.

**Conference Plans**

We continue to prepare for the June Conference. The dates are 2 – 3 June with a potential for an additional day for teachers on 1 June. We have a good line up of interesting speakers and topics. If you know of someone who might like to sponsor the conference, please get in touch with me or Catherine. I hope you can come to the Awards Luncheon on June 3. The speaker will be Brad Birzer who will be discussing his new book on the Declaration of Independence. We will also be awarding our annual prizes, which now will include a \$1000 cash award to the History Teacher of the Year. The funds were donated by members of the state's Board of Education Standards who wished to name the award after General William H. H. Beadle.

## **An event list for the South Dakota's America 250**

- During the Legislative Session we marked the occasion with a Thomas Jefferson re-enactor and the ringing of the state's Liberty Bell. Also, we raised the new America 250 South Dakota flag in Lennox, Tyndall, Madison and Spearfish. The response was very strong and attendance at these events exceeded our expectations.
- America 250 South Dakota Ceremonial Flag raisings have occurred so far in Lennox, Tyndall, Madison, and Spearfish. More are in the works for Philip and Rapid City. I expect there will be more between now and Memorial Day.
- "Of Thee I Sing" at the National Music Museum, A special exhibit starting on March 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Liberty Tree Planting: On 22 May, we will plant a tree on the hill just to the north of the CHC. David has worked with the land scape association for a donated tree and marker.
- 1 – 3 June is the annual History Conference in Fort Pierre and Pierre.
- Theater 605 at the Black Hills Playhouse, June, July and August performances of "The Complete History of America," "1776," "Come From Away," and "What the Constitution Means to Me."
- Museum openings: On 1 July we plan on having a ribbon cutting of Galleries A and B and the new temporary gallery.
- Mount Rushmore: On 3 July, the state will host its main celebratory event at Mount Rushmore. Details about tickets will be available via raffle at Rec.gov in early April.
- July 4<sup>th</sup> in numerous local community celebrations around the state.
- America's Potluck: On Sunday, 5 July, Utah's 250 Commission is organizing the ability for people to organize, locate, and participate in a neighborhood potluck. The South Dakota Retailers Association is supporting this effort with details to be determined.
- Sharing the Spirit of America, a national reading of the Declaration of Independence. An initiative that comes from Hawaii to simultaneously read the Declaration of Independence in every community across the country. We're encouraging people to gather and read it and are organizing the official state reading with the SD Teacher of the Year, the Governor, Supreme Court Chief Justice and many others.
- The Sioux Falls Air Show July 18-19, There will be opportunities for America 250 themed events.
- Various events at the State Fair in Huron, 2 – 7 September

- At different state parks, we will be installing 4 to 5 state time capsules this fall.

### **Renovations and Museum**

As David also shares in his report, the museum exhibit building and construction is underway. We expect Split Rock Studios to be in the building more and more in the coming months. On 1 July we are opening up two permanent exhibits, Area A, or our “Welcome” area and Area B, which is called, “What is History,” as well as the temporary gallery that will have an exhibit, “Grit and Glory” as part of the state’s 250<sup>th</sup> events. The remainder of the museum is on track to be open before the end of the year.

### **A general observation on staff and personnel**

When I started in this position in December of 2020, several people were in the process of or would soon retire. We also had several people in their first professional position who have subsequently taken other opportunities, usually closer to their family. Five years later, the historical society staff is more than 50% different from those I started with. Initially we struggled to attract applications but did succeed in finding high quality people. In the last two years, our openings have attracted significant interest and high-quality people from around the country. In an organization of 41 people, it has become normal to have at least one position vacant, which is the case now.

We are very fortunate to have such high-quality professionals who serve South Dakota and its history so well.