

AMERICA'S 250TH SOUTH DAKOTA COMMISSION MINUTES

Jay Vogt Education Room, Cultural Heritage Center

Pierre, South Dakota

December 3, 2025

1. Call to Order:

A meeting of the South Dakota America's 250th Commission was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by Commission Chairman Benjamin Jones. A quorum was present.

Commissioners present in the Jay Vogt Education Room:

Benjamin F. Jones, David Grabitske

Commissioners present via TEAMS Conference Call:

Peggy Besch, Mike Derby, Doug Knust, Marshall Michels, Tyler Tordsen, Catherine Forsch, Tim Reed, George Seamon, Algin Young, Kevin Robling

Commissioners absent:

Julie Breu, Kurt Hackemer, James Hagen, Shane Penfield, Jeremiah Schneider

Others Present in the Jay Vogt Education Room:

Braeden Kluver (SDSHS), Nick Harrington

Others Present via TEAMS Conference Call:

SDPB, Kevin Larsen (SDSHS)

2. Adoption of the Agenda:

- **Besch made a motion to adopt the agenda. Grabitske seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Board Minutes:

- **Tordsen made a motion to approve the October 1, 2025, minutes. Reed seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment: (SDCL 1-25-1):

None.

5. Updates

- **The America 250 Capitol Exhibit**
 - Chairman Jones noted that, as part of the 250th celebration, the White House and various state commissions have created print-on-demand museum exhibits. The Capitol is interested in installing some panels and has approached the commission to help supplement the cost. After discussion, **Derby made a motion to approve the spending of up to \$2,000 for the printing and installation of the print-on-demand museum exhibits. Tordsen seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.
- **SD-10 Rifle flyer**

- Flyers were printed off to advertise the raffle of the SD-10 rifle. **Reed made a motion to approve the spending of \$184.10 for the printing costs of the rifle flyers. Robling seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.
- **Community Guide Handbook printing**
 - **Seamon made a motion to approve the spending of \$314.70 for the printing of community guides. Michels seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.
- **National Updates**
 - Jones updated the commission on a variety of national & federal initiatives.
 1. Celebrations will begin on New Year's Day with the lighting of the Washington Monument.
 2. The Department of Transportation will be celebrating with a Freedom Train and has also unveiled six mobile museums called Freedom Trucks.
 3. A national K-12 civics contest will begin in January, with the contest culminating in a final held in Washington, D.C. The grand prize is a \$125,000 scholarship.
 4. Education Secretary McMahon will be visiting all 50 states in the order they entered the union to do activities in schools.
 5. Our American Story oral history project is ongoing.
 6. America Gives community service project is ready to be rolled out
 7. America's Field Trip is open for submissions again. South Dakota has had students submit projects. The deadline for submissions is March 30th.
 8. Flag Sojourn 250 campaign is being led by the National Flag Foundation. The flag has already been flown in all 26 U.S. military cemeteries overseas and territories in the Pacific and Atlantic. The goal is for the flag to fly in every state before it is presented to the America 250th Committee in July of 2026.
 9. No updates on the Great American State Fair, but South Dakota plans on having a presence. Chairman Jones asked that if commissioners were interested in attending, let him know.
- **Thomas Jefferson and the Legislature**
 - Commissioner Reed gave an update on the funds raised to support bringing a Thomas Jefferson reenactor to South Dakota. \$3,600 had been raised, with the goal being \$5,000. The commission also discussed procuring donation poster boards & copies of the Declaration of Independence to have the legislature sign.
- **Liberty Bell**
 - Commissioners were asked to think of an appropriate day to ring South Dakota's Liberty Bell.
- **Read 250**
 - Commissioner Seamon informed the commission that 97 people were participating in visiting Carnegie Libraries, 115 people have visited the National Archives Declaration 250 website, 57 people have participated in the Read 250 challenge, 193 people are participating in the Read 1776 minutes

challenge, 116 people have read a book about a South Dakota historical figure, 113 people have visited at least two historic sites, and 61 people have read one of the State of the State addresses.

- Seamon announced more challenges to follow in January, including elder/community member interviews, exploration of indigenous cultures, attending history-related events, and more.

- **Walk 250**

- Nick Harrington gave an update on Walk 250. There have been 105 participants with 1323 submissions. Battleship SD leads with 137 submissions. Game, Fish, and Parks are exciting to focus on 250 in the coming year.

- **Tourism Conference**

- 250 will have a presence at the Tourism Conference. Kevin Larsen will be at a table passing out community guides.

- **Merchandising Agreement**

- The Commission has had two companies participating in the merchandising agreement- Platt Creek Brewing and Maximum Promotions.

- **Media Engagement**

- Dakota News Now and KOTA Territory News have contacted Chairman Jones about doing content around 250th history. Any recommendations are welcome.

- **Additional comments:**

- Commissioner Derby updated the commission on Rapid City's celebration plans, including an Air Force Academy Band concert on July 1st; B1 fly-over, parade, and drone show on July 2nd; setting a Guinness World Record & Mount Rushmore firework watch party on July 3rd; finally, a chuckwagon cook off, car show, Rapid City Municipal Band concert, and firework show on July 4th.

- **Liberty Tree**

- Chairman Jones and Commissioner Grabitske narrowed down the Liberty Tree to two locations. After discussion, it was decided to plant two Liberty Trees, one in each of the suggested locations.

6. Next Meeting:

- The next meeting will be held on February 4th at 3:00 pm Central Time in the Jay Vogt Education Room.

7. Adjournment:

- **Michels made a motion to Adjourn. Fink seconded the motion.** The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

I, Benjamin F. Jones, Director of the South Dakota State Historical Society, declare that these minutes are a true and accurate reflection of the business conducted at the December 3, 2025, meeting of the America's 250th South Dakota Commission.

Benjamin F. Jones, Ph.D.

State Historian and Director

South Dakota State Historical Society

Braeden Kluver

Assistant to the State Historian

South Dakota State Historical Society

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