

## Breaking down South Dakota's 2024 ballot measures

By Stu Whitney  
South Dakota News Watch

What started as a cavalcade of petition campaigns for South Dakota's November 2024 ballot has become more manageable for voters to follow.

Of the eight citizen-led ballot questions approved for circulation, three will definitely meet the signature threshold to make the ballot, according to *News Watch* analysis and interviews with political leaders and ballot sponsors.

Those three measures are the constitutional amendment to legalize abortion, the constitutional amendment to establish open primaries and the initiated measure to eliminate South Dakota's sales tax on groceries. That comes with the caveat that legal challenges could still occur, particularly with the abortion bid.

The latest effort to legalize recreational marijuana in South Dakota is making a late surge in signature gathering and also has a chance to qualify for the 2024 ballot, according to *News Watch* analysis of all the petition campaigns.

"People are discovering how hard it is to actually get something on the ballot," said South Dakota Open Primaries chairman Joe Kirby, a Sioux Falls businessman and government reform advocate. "Getting tens of thousands of signatures, especially given South Dakota weather, is not an easy task."

The citizen-led measures will be joined by one legislative resolution from the 2023 session, a proposal to change outdated male-only references to South Dakota's governor and other officials in the state constitution and statutes.

Legislators also passed Senate Joint Resolution 501 during the current session, an effort to amend the constitution to impose work requirements for Medicaid eligibility.

That means five or six ballot questions will be put to voters in the general election on Nov. 5. That's on par with the average number (5.6) qualifying for on-cycle South Dakota ballots since 2000. The highest numbers of certified ballot measures during that period were 11 in 2006 and 10 in 2016.

The number of verified signatures needed to qualify initiated measures for the ballot is 17,508, which represents five percent of the total vote for governor in the last gubernatorial election. Constitutional amendments require 35,017, which is 10 percent.

Here's a look at the status of this year's citizen-led ballot efforts likely headed for 2024 ballot:

### Open primaries

The campaign to establish "top-two" primaries for governor, Congress and state legislative and county races is well-funded and largely non-partisan, guided by political veterans representing Republicans, Democrats and Independents.

It's also staying under the radar as the proposed abortion amendment draws most of the headlines and counter-messaging.

"It's nice to have more controversial issues out there," said Kirby. "But, I think what's really happened for us is that the stars have aligned. Republican leadership in South Dakota sees this as a solution to some of their problems."

The theory is that open primaries, rather than incentivizing candidates from taking extreme po-

sitions to win a partisan primary, will help lower the volume to produce officeholders more reflective of the general electorate.

This comes at a time when ultra-conservative factions such as the South Dakota Freedom Caucus have gained more traction within the Republican ranks.

"South Dakota Open Primaries has collected about 42,000 signatures as of March 1 and expects to meet its goal of 50,000," said Kirby. The group has several dozen volunteers but gets the "vast majority" of its signatures using paid circulators.

### Abortion amendment

There has been plenty of political friction surrounding this effort to reverse the state's near-total abortion ban and enshrine access to abortion in the South Dakota Constitution.

Opposition has come from expected places, such as a "Decline to Sign" campaign from anti-abortion group Life Defense Fund and

### S.D. Ballot Measures (continued on back page)

### WEATHER

Robert Cole - Official  
Weather Observer

	HI	LO	PR
March 5 .....	47	20	T
March 6 .....	57	19	0
March 7 .....	40	12	0
March 8 .....	48	11	0
March 9 .....	50	16	0
March 10 .....	63	21	0
March 11 .....	69	42	0
2024 precipitation to date	0.63"		
2023 precipitation to date	1.81"		



Left: Travis Thiex, a business advisor for South Dakota Manufacturing and Technology Solutions, shows students a Collaborative Robot (Cobot). Clark High School Senior Nevaeh Rusher, above, hosted Thiex and many other businesses or individuals as part of her senior project.

Submitted photos

## Rusher holds career workshop for senior project

By Carolynn Olson

Clark High School senior Nevaeh Rusher hosted a career workshop as her senior project last Thursday, March 7 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Clark High School.

Rusher called her project Positive Alternative Day, which consisted of different career workshops set up at the high school for the students to explore and visit. Cassi Kottke acted as Rusher's mentor for the project.

Animal science and aviation booths were set up in Tammy Sprouse's classroom. ATY Aviation, Inc. from Watertown, Great Plains Zoo of Sioux Falls, Dr. Nicole Nelson, DVM from Cross Country Vets in Clark and Jed Hanson from Hanger 8 Spray Service were set

up to talk with students that were interested in these types of careers.

Culinary booths were in Tammie Paulson's classroom, which included Krysta Peterson of Mystic Sweets and Boss' Pizza from Sioux Falls.

Financial services, technology and entrepreneurship booths were set up in Jerome Nesheim's classroom. Talking to students were Eric Stevens of Vitality Golf, Travis Thiex from South Dakota Manufacturing and Technology Solutions, Brandon Herr from Dacotah Bank and CJ Beving of CK Seeds.

Medical booths were located in Mikel Seefeldt's classroom. Sara McHenry, Kelsey Woolley, Rachel Morehouse and Alex Meier were all there to share about their careers in the medical field with the students.

Building trades representatives were set up in David Severson's classroom, including Muth Electric, Bill Boss of Boss Construction, Woodring Plumbing and Active Heating, Inc.

Public service booths were set up in Andrea Begeman's classroom. States Attorney Chad Fjelland, Chris Fischer, City of Clark Police Officer Nate Nickeson and Clark County Deputy Lindsay Stiefel talked about their careers.

Rusher surveyed her peers to decide the career types that she would include in the workshop. The survey asked which types of careers they'd like to know more about. From the

Career Workshop  
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## Historic building demolished in Clark

By the time one reads this, the building that was once located at 125 First Avenue East in Clark should be completely demolished. The building was built between 1900 and 1909 and has housed many a business since. Most recently, Farm Bureau Financial Services and McHenry Insurance were housed there.

However, one of the most memorable establishments that called the building home was Clark Liquors, owned and run by former Clark mayor and self-proclaimed bull\$#!&@\* Les Solberg, right. He ran his business for 14 years in the building.

It's unfortunate to see such an old building being demolished, but it had become very unstable. Brent

Forest of Forest Excavating is pictured above during the demolition process early Tuesday morning. The crew began prepping the area Monday afternoon and took down a few bricks by Monday evening.

Jim Zeck is the current owner of the building and the neighboring building that housed Heather's Bistro & More. He bought the buildings from Heather Johansen.

The *Clark County Courier* crew hopes to have a story on the history of the building in next week's edition.

Photos by Carolynn Olson and Karli Paulson



If your non-profit has a project needing funds, apply for a grant by contacting any board member.

Members: Gayle Wookey, Tom LaBrie, Chad Fjelland, Susan Fjelland, Diane Varilek, Greg Furness, David Warkentien, Nicole Nelson and student members Conner Mudgett, Nevaeh Rusher, Raigan Flatten and Lauren Luvaas.