SDFB Legislative Update – Week 1

The 2021 South Dakota Legislative Session kicked off this week and activities are beginning. Covid-19 has caused numerous changes in the conduct of legislators and lobbyists with people trying to be aware of concerns because of the virus.

As we’ve done in the past, this newsletter will come out weekly on Friday so if there is a legislative item that you’d like to contact your legislators about, you’re able to do so over the weekend when they are back home and it is easier for that contact to happen. The strength of SD Farm Bureau’s legislative program is the grassroots process of members talking to their legislators.

State of the State
On Tuesday, Governor Noem addressed a joint session of the bodies to give her State of the State address. Noem touted the management of the state during the pandemic and the fact that businesses stayed open and continued to operate. The unemployment numbers today are better than almost every other state in the country. Sales tax revenues are running ahead of budget estimates that were established. For December, revenues were above the projection by 2.3%; and for the first 6 months of the fiscal year revenues collected exceed budget numbers by 5.4%.

In other good news, 23 new ag related projects were started in the state in 2020, providing for 320 additional jobs – all during a nationwide pandemic.

The Governor has proposed investing $100M in the expansion of broadband to farms, ranches, and rural communities with a goal of reaching an additional 135,000 citizens in the state. Additionally, the proposed fiscal year 2022 budget will invest $50M state funds in a needs-based scholarship program. Those dollars will be matched by $150M from donations to increase the opportunities for education after high school. Recipients will need to work in the state for three years after graduation, or the scholarship will be a loan and need to be repaid back into the fund.

State of the Judiciary
On Wednesday, newly elected SD Supreme Court Chief Justice, Steven Jensen, asked the legislature for additional dollars to increase the pay schedule for the state’s court system. He stated it is difficult to recruit attorneys to the bench and also difficult to match judge’s salaries in neighboring states.

SDFB Bill Tracker
The SDFB bill tracking list is up and running. Check it out on the SDFB website. As in past years, it gives you a quick look at the bills we are supporting, opposing or just watching.

Here are six on the list that SDFB is supporting:
**HB 1040:** An act to provide $5M to the SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources to be used for grants to increase the capacity of our small meat processing facilities.

**HB 1042:** An act to update the stream and lake buffer bill to extend the contract term to 10 years and to increase the property tax credit for participation.

**HB 1046:** An act to provide some liability protection from a lawsuit by an employee or visitor/customer regarding Covid-19.

**HB 1053:** An act to assess an annual fee for some electric vehicles for their contribution to road funding.

**SB 34:** An act to invest $100M of state funds, to be supplemented by federal and industry funds to expand broadband in rural South Dakota.

**SB 52:** An act to change the CAFO permit from 5 years in length to 10 years.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me.

Michael Held  
SDFB Lobbyist  
605-350-0739  
mheld@sdfbf.org

**Helpful Links:**

View the SDFB bill-tracker list here:  
https://www.sdfbf.org/Policy-Advocacy/State-Legislative

View the details on any bill by clicking this link and typing in the bill number:  
https://sdlegislature.gov/Session/Bills/44

Find contact information for the Legislators here:  
https://sdlegislature.gov/Legislators/Contacts/44