



Policy Update

May 8, 2026

Game, Fish, & Parks Increases Number of Elk Tags

The Legislative Rules Review Committee recently approved an increase in the number of elk tags available to South Dakotans. The new rules allow for an unlimited elk hunting season east of the Missouri River and an increase in the limit of antlerless elk hunting licenses for Custer State Park from 20 to 100. The rationale for the increase east of the Missouri River is primarily about crop protection. In recent years, the elk population has grown on the prairie, where their presence can result in severe damage to crops and property. In Custer State Park, the elk herd has increased and needs to be maintained.

For the past several years, Farm Bureau members have adopted grassroots policy to provide more tools to landowners for elk management. Expanding elk tag opportunities is an important step toward reducing crop and property damage while maintaining responsible wildlife management in South Dakota.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the rules.

2026 Primary Election Early Voting Begins

Early voting for the 2026 primary election has started. In South Dakota, only Republicans can vote in the Republican primary. Democrats and Independents can vote in the Democrat primary. The official primary election day is June 2, 2026 and the deadline register to vote in the primary is **MAY 18, 2026**.

SDFB encourages members to vote in the primary election. In 2024, unfortunately, the statewide voter turnout for the primary was only 17%. In some counties, the percentage was less than 10%! The primary will determine who will be on each respective party's ticket for the general election in November.

Click [here](#) for information on the 2026 primary election. Click [here](#) to check your voter registration.

Attorney General Releases Draft Explanation on proposed Constitutional Amendment

Last year, the 2025 South Dakota Legislature passed a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the state constitution and submitting it to the voters for approval at the 2026 general election. If approved, HJR 5001 would repeal expanded Medicaid coverage if federal funding for the expansion drops below 90 percent.

As required by state law, the South Dakota Attorney General's Office has drafted an explanation for the Constitutional Amendment proposed by the Legislature and filed it with the Secretary of State's Office. The explanation was filed April 30, 2026. By law, the public has 10 days to provide written comment on

it. The deadline for comments on this explanation is May 10, 2026, at the close of business in Pierre, South Dakota. The final explanation is due to the Secretary of State on May 19, 2026.

If approved, this explanation will accompany the proposal on the ballot for the 2026 general election, which is Nov. 3. Click [here](#) to read the draft explanation and full ballot measure.

Groups Fail to Submit Signatures for Ballot Measures by Deadline

For the first time in 50 years, South Dakota's general election ballot will not include any citizen-petitioned ballot measures. Four ballot measures were being circulated for signatures to appear on the 2026 general election ballot. The deadline to submit signatures to the Secretary of State's Office was May 5, and no signatures were submitted. As a result, the only measures expected to appear on the ballot are those placed there by the Legislature, along with the potential referral of Senate Bill 245, which passed during the 2026 Legislative Session. SB 245 dedicated 100% of the upcoming sales tax increase to property tax relief, as well as taking some reserve funds to offset local property taxes before the sales tax goes back up to 4.5%.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the ballot measures.

Contact for Questions

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