

THE SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



The SD Legislature Needs You

If you are a college student who has an interest in government and the legislative process, the South Dakota Legislative Internship Program is for you.

The South Dakota Legislature is currently in search of 19 college students to serve as interns during the upcoming 2012 South Dakota Legislative Session. Interns provide the legislators with the assistance they need to survive the rigors of a hectic legislative session. While in Pierre, interns can observe the lawmaking process in action, learn about the many issues confronting the state, and earn valuable college credit all at the same time.

Comments from former Interns

- "I feel that this has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my young adult life."
- "It was refreshing to get away and try something new while learning a great deal about the legislative process."
- "Absolutely! In fact, the networking connections I've made were well worth it; not to mention gaining a deeper understanding of the legislative processes and the issues involved."

Intern Qualifications

To qualify, you must be a student at an accredited college or university. No particular major is required; any major course of study is acceptable. In the selection process, preference may be given to SD residents or students who have completed a year or two of college coursework. However, all interested students are encouraged to apply.



If you apply to serve as a legislative intern, you are asked to state your political party preference. This, however, is not used to qualify or disqualify applicants. Interns are needed to serve members of both parties. The question is asked only to ensure that Republican interns are assigned to Republican legislators and Democratic interns are assigned to Democratic legislators. The number of interns selected from each party, however, is often not equal. It is reflective of the partisan composition of each house of the Legislature.

Application Process

Application forms are available from your campus intern coordinator or from the Legislative Research Council (LRC). You can write to us at 500 East Capitol, Pierre, SD 57501-5070, call us at (605) 773-3251, or print an application from our web site, <http://legis.state.sd.us>.

To apply, simply fill out the application form, and **attach to it a copy of your college transcript**. Send the application and your transcript to the LRC at the above address by **October 15, 2011**.



The application form asks you to submit the names of three references. **Please have those three individuals submit letters on your behalf to the Legislative Research Council as soon as possible.**

Interview Process

Soon after the application deadline has passed, members of the Legislative Research Council staff will interview applicants. The interviews are conducted via the Digital Dakota Network (DDN) or via telephone. If you are an in-state student you can usually participate from the DDN site right on the campus where you attend school.



In preparation for the interview, it is a good idea to refresh your memory on the legislative process in South Dakota. A good source of information about the SD Legislature is the [Guide to the Legislature](#). It is available at the LRC web site. Also, think about your particular areas of interest and where you might best serve in the legislative environment. For example, a student who is interested in becoming a teacher might like to work for a legislator who serves on the Senate Education Committee or the House Education Committee.

Selection Process



Applicants are selected for the intern program based upon academic competence, work experience, letters of recommendation, interest, and maturity. The selections are made in November and applicants are notified of the outcome shortly thereafter. **This year, the announcement is set for November 18, 2011.**

Intern Assignments

If selected as an intern, you are assigned to an individual legislator, a group of legislators, or a standing committee. The leaders of the respective political party caucuses in both houses make the assignments based on requests from legislators and, to the extent possible, the interests of individual interns.

Possible assignments include working for the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, or one of the caucus leaders in the Senate or House of Representatives. You may also be assigned to the chair of a particular committee like the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee or the House Health and Human Services Committee. Or, you might work for a pair of other members or be assigned to focus on a particular committee. Circumstances vary.

A Typical Day in the Life of an Intern



A typical day for an intern would likely involve attending committee meetings in the morning and a political party caucus just after lunch. Most of the afternoon is devoted to the daily sessions of the Senate and House of Representatives. Daily sessions usually begin at 2 p.m. on each legislative day. At that time, the members of both houses gather in their respective chambers to debate and vote on the many issues that are before them. In the beginning, the daily sessions are short in length, but they get much longer as time goes on. In fact, as adjournment draws near, it is not uncommon for the daily sessions to last well into the evening hours.

Responsibilities

Other duties you might perform during the day depend largely on the assignment you receive and the particular legislators for whom you work. Some of the most typical services provided by interns include **performing research, scheduling meetings, answering mail from constituents, and monitoring the progress of various pieces of legislation.** Many interns also assist with committee hearings and write bill summaries or newspaper articles on legislative activity.

Work Hours



The legislative session opens on **January 10, 2012**, and runs through **March 2, 2012**, after which there is a break before the final legislative day. Interns are expected to be available throughout that time and report to work on each legislative day. Again, the hours depend on your assignment. In the beginning, you will likely work fairly routine hours, but your workday is apt to lengthen as the session progresses. In the final weeks, it is not uncommon for interns to begin their work early in the morning and conclude it late at night. **Monday, March 19**, has been set aside as the last legislative day -- the day the Legislature addresses any vetoes made by the Governor. Intern attendance on the last legislative day is optional.

Intern Orientation

If selected to serve, you must attend a one-day orientation seminar. Members of the LRC staff conduct the seminar on the day prior to the start of the legislative session. At that time, the staff members provide you with an overview of the structure of state

government and most importantly, the Legislature. They instruct you on how to use a variety of legal reference materials and familiarize you with the legislative information available on the LRC web site. They can also answer any specific questions you may have about the program at that time. **The next orientation seminar is scheduled for Monday, January 9, 2012.**

Compensation



As an intern, you will receive a salary of \$110 for each day that the Legislature is in session. Since the Legislature meets for 35 days in 2012, this amounts to \$3,850.

Accommodations

You must arrange for your own housing for the duration of your internship in Pierre. The LRC, however, can provide you with a list of possible housing alternatives. It generally includes rooms, apartments, and homes available for rent. Motels in the area offer special rates during the legislative session, and they are listed as well. You are not likely to have trouble finding suitable accommodations in Pierre during that time of the year.



South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship Recipients

Any student who is a South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship recipient, and who wishes to participate in the Legislative Internship Program, may seek a persistence waiver to exempt them from the scholarship's credit hour threshold requirements. If a student's participation in the Internship Program will adversely affect his/her ability to meet the credit hour thresholds (30 credits by the 3rd term, 60 credits by the 5th term, or 90 credit hours by the 7th term of eligibility) necessary to maintain ongoing eligibility requirements, then they can request that the executive director place their scholarship eligibility on hold during the Spring term. Recipients would then receive funding once they return to their participating institution. Students whose credit hour thresholds will not be affected do not need to submit a waiver request. It is the student's responsibility to seek the exemption from scholarship requirements. A student may request an exemption in writing by sending a brief letter or email to summarize his or her request. Letters requesting an exemption may be sent to:

Office of the Executive Director
South Dakota Board of Regents
306 E. Capitol, Suite 200
Pierre, SD 57501-2545

Email requests should be routed to Dr. Paul Turman at paul.turman@sdbor.edu.

Educational Opportunities



In addition to learning about government and the legislative process while you work, the LRC staff holds weekly conferences for the interns. Invited guests such as key members of the Legislature, lobbyists, reporters, and government officials will offer insight on a variety of topics.

Colleges generally offer academic credit for participation in this program, and the LRC strongly recommends that you pursue academic credit. The amount of credit available differs among campuses. Check with your local campus intern coordinator for the details.

Also, Statewide Educational Services of the University of South Dakota offers a three credit-hour course in Pierre during the legislative session. The course, ***State Legislative Issues***, is offered in the evening so it does not conflict with your duties as an intern. For information, contact:

**Statewide Educational Services
University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD 57069
(605) 677-5281**

Further Information



If you need further information about the Legislative Internship Program, you may call the LRC office in Pierre at (605) 773-3251. Locally, you can visit with your campus intern coordinator or a legislator in your area. Or, for some first hand information, get in touch with a student who has recently served as a legislative intern.

Schedule for 2012 Legislative Internship Program

Application Deadline	October 15, 2011
Interviews via DDN or telephone	October 26-November 4, 2011
Announcement of Selections	November 18, 2011
Orientation Seminar in Pierre	January 9, 2012
Legislative Session	January 10 to March 2, 2012, inclusive, and March 19, 2012, designated as veto day