



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen Appoints Three Individuals to Commission on Indigent Legal Services

PIERRE, S.D.—South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen has appointed three individuals to the Commission on Indigent Legal Services. They are:

- Dean Neil Fulton, USD Knudson School of Law: four-year term
- Betsy Doyle, Minnehaha County Public Defender's Office: three-year term
- Judge Bobbi Rank, Sixth Judicial Circuit: two-year term

HB 1057 creating the Commission on Indigent Legal Services and Office of Indigent Legal Services was signed into law by Gov. Kristi Noem on March 18, 2024.

The Commission on Indigent Legal Services will oversee indigent representation services to ensure the effective assistance of counsel in South Dakota's court system where there is a right to counsel under state or federal law. The Commission will also oversee the new Office of Indigent Legal Services to provide statewide indigent representation services in direct appeals in criminal cases, habeas corpus appeals, and abuse or neglect of a child appeal cases.

"Ensuring the right to counsel for every person accused of a crime is fundamental to upholding the right of due process—that is the right to be heard and present a defense to a charge by the government," Chief Justice Jensen said. "Just as we have come to expect that the government has experienced and effective counsel to present its case to the courts, the Constitution provides the right of every accused to counsel in order to ensure a fair trial."

The Commission will be comprised of a total of nine people: three people appointed by the Governor, three appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, one appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one appointed by the speaker of the House, and one appointed by the executive director of the South Dakota Association of County Commissioners.

Read HB 1057: <https://sdlegislature.gov/Session/Bill/24943>

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About South Dakota Courts: The Unified Judicial System (UJS) consists of the Supreme Court, Circuit Courts and State Court Administrator's Office. The Supreme Court is the state's highest court and final decision maker on South Dakota law. The Circuit Courts are the state's trial courts where criminal proceedings and civil litigation are handled. The State Court Administrator's Office provides centralized administrative assistance and support services for the South Dakota judiciary. Learn more at <https://ujs.sd.gov>.

