

SOUTH DAKOTA UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM



2024

STATE of the JUDICIARY



JUSTICE FOR ALL



South Dakota Supreme Court

- Justice Patricia J. DeVaney, Pierre, Third District
- Justice Janine M. Kern, Rapid City, First District
- Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen, Dakota Dunes, Fourth District
- Justice Mark E. Salter, Sioux Falls, Second District
- Justice Scott P. Myren, Mound City, Fifth District

2024 STATE OF THE JUDICIARY

South Dakota Courts



Steven R. Jensen
Chief Justice

Introduction

Governor Noem, Lieutenant Governor Rhoden, members of the Legislature, constitutional officers, my fellow justices, judges, Unified Judicial System (UJS) employees, and all South Dakotans, I am honored to join you here today to deliver my 2024 State of the Judiciary message.

Each one of us has a story. So does the court system in South Dakota—a history that explains how we got where we are today. Granted the power and responsibility in 1889 to resolve disputes, determine guilt and innocence, protect the rights of all, and interpret the law and Constitution, something significant was “planted.” These core functions of the South Dakota court system have provided stability, security, and protection for its citizens for nearly a century and a half. Warren Buffett once said, “Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.” Buffett’s statement is as true in leadership, life, and government as it is in the investment world. As we look today at the current projects and initiatives of the judiciary that will continue to provide shade, we must do so with an eye for the future as well as an appreciation for the foresight of those who served before us.

It has been another busy year for the South Dakota court system. During the last fiscal year, the courts heard thousands of disputed cases, held more than 2,600 jury and court trials, and collected more than \$27 million in fines, victim restitution, and other court-related fees. South Dakota judges traveled more than 166,000 miles to decide cases in every corner of our state. In addition to the thousands of civil cases filed during the past fiscal year, more than 12,000 felony criminal cases and 100,000 misdemeanor cases were filed in state courts in South Dakota.

The court system is better able to execute its core functions and resolve the volume of cases that arise in the courts because of the electronic case filing and management system we have in place today. South Dakota acted quickly and boldly, more than a decade ago, to move our court system from paper to digital copy, thanks to the leadership of then Chief Justice David Gilbertson and retired Justice Glen Severson, who spearheaded the implementation of these critical technological innovations. I must recognize, too, former Chief Justice Robert Miller, who had the foresight years ago to see the coming technological revolution. During his term, he set up a separate IT department for the court system to manage its future technology needs. The court system's ability to innovate, even as we speak, can be directly attributed to Chief Justice Miller's foresight.

Today's technological innovations also allow us to provide individuals with better access to the courts. Many of these cases filed in South Dakota courts directly impact individuals and families, such as divorce cases, custody and child support disputes; juvenile delinquency and abuse cases; protection orders; and mental illness cases, as well as criminal cases.

Unfortunately, these cases affecting South Dakota families increasingly implicate, directly or indirectly, many of the larger societal problems that exist today. Issues such as addiction, drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, domestic abuse, and adverse social and childhood experiences are thrust upon the courts through the cases filed daily across the state. The courts provide a forum for the fair resolution of these cases, and our process for consistently resolving them through the even-handed application of the rule of law can never vary. But many times, the larger complexities that arise in these cases are not addressed by simply deciding the case.

For some cases, the courts are uniquely positioned and empowered to intervene in these issues, that impact families and communities. Judges routinely do more than just decide a child custody arrangement following a divorce. They often include directives addressing drug and alcohol abuse and mental health issues in their custody orders. We have also implemented mandatory parental education for parents involved in custody disputes. Parenting coordinator programs improve communication and reduce the disputes that often arise after a custody order is in place. Additionally, we have developed more robust mediation opportunities to lower tensions and provide greater parental involvement in the resolution of their cases. We continue to explore ways to address the issues that inevitably develop as courts resolve the myriad of cases that come before them.

The societal problems are also laid bare in the criminal cases that come before the courts. Through UJS probation services and problem-solving courts, the judiciary is often on the frontlines of helping individuals address these all too familiar issues. South Dakota law requires UJS to provide probation supervision to juveniles and adult felony offenders who are not remanded to the custody or supervision of the Department of Corrections. The 120 UJS court services officers, or CSOs, provide supervision and case monitoring services at an average daily cost of about \$5 per probationer. We are all well aware that this is a significant savings as compared to the cost of incarceration in the penitentiary system or local county jails. CSOs are dedicated to working with probationers toward the goal of successful rehabilitation to reduce recidivism and keep our communities safe. While drug and alcohol abuse and mental health are often addressed in the context of standard probation, there are some probationers who need a higher level of supervision and longer-term treatment through our state problem-solving courts.

I want to spend to some time talking about some of the steps we are taking to strengthen and improve outcomes in these cases. I want to start by addressing indigent defense.

Indigent Legal Defense

When we refer to indigent defense, we are talking about the constitutional right of every person charged with a crime, who is facing the possibility of incarceration and is unable to afford an attorney, to be appointed counsel at the expense of the state. Our predecessors long ago recognized the priority of indigent defense when the Dakota Territory Legislature in 1868 passed a law providing that “[i]f it appears to the court before which such arraignment is had, that the defendant is unable to procure counsel to conduct his defense, it shall be the duty of the court to assign to said defendant any member of the Bar in said cause.” The law went on to provide that the county where the charge originated was responsible for payment of counsel. Since statehood, South Dakota leaders have continued to uphold the importance of indigent defense through a county-funded system. The county-run system worked well in South Dakota for the first century. More recently, however, the unavailability of counsel in locations throughout the state, as well as a lack of uniformity in case assignment, handling, billing, training, and other inefficiencies, have created a significant need for change in our indigent defense system.

We began looking at the issue of indigent defense two years ago. Last session, the Legislature passed HB 1064, creating a task force to study indigent legal defense in South Dakota and to consider improvements to the current system. The task force consisted of 13 members that included legislators, circuit judges, county commissioners, prosecutors, public defenders, and attorneys in private practice. I want to thank the task force members for their time and expertise offered to this project. Judge Mike Day from Belle Fourche and Dean Neil Fulton from the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law co-chaired the task force, and their leadership was invaluable. Additionally, I want to thank Senator Jim Mehlhaff and Representative Will Mortenson who served on the task force and offered their insights on legislation and fiscal considerations.

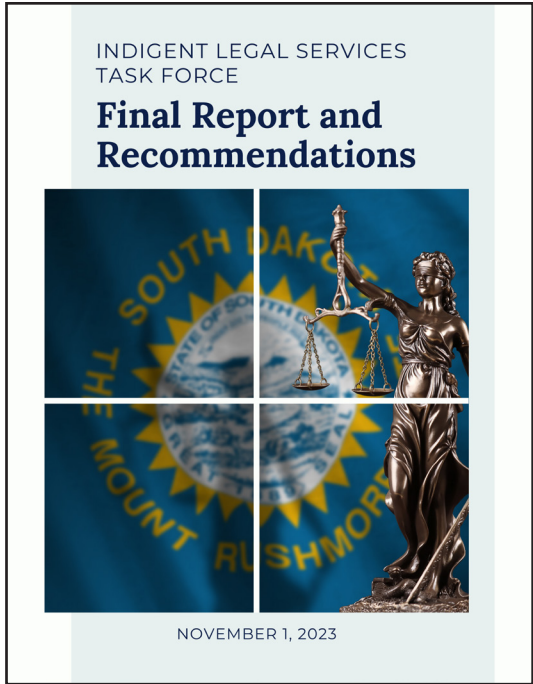
The task force began their work by gathering data and considering models from other states. The task force also held 10 listening sessions across the state and conducted surveys of judges, lawyers, county officials, and citizens related to indigent defense. Their work was focused primarily on building an efficient and effective system in South Dakota and less on the source of funding. Their work is the focus of my discussion today.

The report issued by the task force in October recommends the creation of a statewide indigent defense commission and a state public defender office. The indigent defense commission will oversee the strategic work of ensuring effective statewide criminal defense representation for those unable to afford an attorney. The commission will also be responsible for future development of an enhanced and coordinated indigent defense model across South Dakota. This

new commission will be independent from the three branches of government and consist of nine members appointed by various appointing authorities, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government.

The initial caseload of the state public defender office will include criminal appeals, juvenile abuse and neglect cases, and post-conviction habeas appeals from counties statewide. The report recommends expanding the work of the state public defender office to include felony trial level work through a combination of staff attorneys and contract lawyers. The public defender office, as overseen by the commission, will also be responsible for training, supporting, and mentoring court-appointed counsel who are interested in, or currently providing, indigent legal defense services.

We will be offering legislation this session that is designed to implement the recommendations of the task force. The projected cost for initial creation of the state public defender office is \$1.4 million. This includes seven FTEs to be used to hire an executive director/chief public defender, three attorneys for criminal case



direct appeal and habeas representation, one attorney for abuse and neglect representation, and two FTEs for support staff, as well as operating expenses to staff the new office.

Counties are currently funding nearly 100% of the cost of indigent defense in South Dakota. Significantly, this initial expenditure by the state is estimated to reduce the financial burden on counties by \$2.1 million and save approximately \$600,000 in overall indigent defense costs across the state. As the state office develops further, it will be necessary to consider funding responsibilities between the state and the counties to ensure an adequately-funded indigent defense system into the future. This first step is a big one, but the next step in the process will bring about the most broad-based improvements to a system that lacks much needed oversight. I would like to thank Governor Noem for supporting this first step in the process and including these dollars in her budget.

As we move toward a statewide indigent defense system in the trial courts, the UJS began working this past fall with a consultant to conduct a thorough review of one representative county in each judicial circuit. They will assess existing statutes and rules governing indigent defense in South Dakota, identify key cost drivers, study county data collection and analysis, and review defense contracts from the seven representative counties. This work will be completed later this year and will be an important guide in developing a well-organized and cost-effective system for indigent defense at the trial court level.

So other than perhaps saving money, why does it matter whether we improve our indigent defense system in South Dakota? Let me talk first about the practical reasons. Judges in South Dakota continue to have difficulty finding attorneys able to provide indigent representation, particularly in rural areas. Some counties struggle to pay indigent defense contracts and lack experienced attorneys who can handle serious felony cases. There are six counties in South Dakota that have no attorneys and 23 counties that have three or fewer lawyers. The lack of structure, oversight, and inefficiencies in our current indigent defense system has created legal deserts across the state. Minnehaha, Pennington, and Lawrence counties have public defender offices that may serve as indigent defense models, but there is much work to do to create an indigent defense system statewide. Prior to this year, South Dakota was one of only two states

in the nation that relied solely upon counties to provide indigent defense at all levels. This past fall, the other state, Pennsylvania, authorized state funding and oversight for indigent defense for the first time.

While the practical need for change is evident, I cannot conclude my discussion of indigent defense without talking about the most important reason we must provide for the adequate representation of everyone regardless of their resources. 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. 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. Before Chief Justice John Roberts joined the United States Supreme Court, he left the Department of Justice to pursue a career in private practice. After entering private practice, he discussed how he came to “fully [appreciate] the importance of the Supreme Court in our constitutional system. Here was the United States, the most powerful entity in the world, aligned against my clients, and yet all I had to do was convince the Court that I was right on the law, and the government was wrong, and all that power and might would recede in deference to the rule of law.” This is just as true in every courtroom in South Dakota.

The importance of our adversarial system of justice to ensure due process and fairly apply the law in every case cannot be overstated. Without the benefit of counsel for the accused, the rights that separate us from almost every other government in the world are meaningless. As Governor Noem so aptly said in discussing indigent defense in her recent budget address, “A strong criminal justice system supports our American way of life. It upholds the rights of our people.” If we fail in providing indigent defense, we risk so much more than not having an attorney available in the courtroom to represent a person accused of a crime.

UJS Budget

In addition to the indigent defense budget request, the UJS is also seeking funding in FY 2025 for an additional circuit court judge and a deputy clerk of court in Minnehaha and Lincoln counties, the counties which comprise the Second Circuit.

Over the past several years, Lincoln and Minnehaha counties have experienced remarkable population growth. This growth has significantly increased the workload for judges and clerks in the Second Circuit. For example, over a 10-year period from FY 2013 to FY 2023, the number of felony case filings nearly doubled from 2,267 to 4,441. The number of felony filings is expected to increase an additional 25% by FY 2026. The Second Circuit has also seen increases in the number of civil filings during this time. Despite the doubling of caseloads in the Second Circuit over the past 10 years, the number of circuit judges has only increased from 10 to 12 judges.

Second Circuit judges have also seen other demands on the amount of time they must spend on cases. This is due to a rise in violent and other serious crimes, an increasing number of participants in specialty courts, and increasing caseloads involving non-English speaking litigants and unrepresented litigants.

Our request for an additional deputy court clerk in Minnehaha County is also to address current and expected demands in the circuit. Along with serving a growing caseload, the time demands upon deputy court clerks in handling cases involving unrepresented litigants continues to increase. Court clerks are also on the frontline for scheduling and communicating with attorneys, law enforcement, judges, and the public.

Our judicial resources in the Second Circuit have simply not kept up with the increasing demands created by population growth and other changes in the circuit. These two additional FTEs are necessary to ensure that the courts continue to perform their core functions for Sioux Falls and the surrounding communities. I appreciate Governor Noem including these requests in her budget, and I look forward to working with the Appropriations Committee on our budget priorities this session.

Barriers for Emerging Adults

Last year, this Legislature passed HB 1063, which created an emerging adult task force to begin examining barriers to services for adults age 18 to 25 involved in the justice system. The purpose of the task force was to explore opportunities to improve services and reduce recidivism. The task force brought together legislators, prosecutors, defense lawyers, judges, and service providers who met several times during the year. In April, the task force sponsored a first-ever summit in South Dakota, focused on young adults in the justice system. Attendees gave very positive feedback, and there is a strong desire for similar future trainings. The task force concluded the year by submitting a report of its efforts, making two big-picture recommendations: 1) enhance supervision practices, and 2) establish policies for diversion programs tailored to individuals aged 18 to 25.



Supporting Emerging Adults in the Justice System Summit was held April 25-26, 2023.

For non-violent, youthful offenders, our goal is to develop targeted policies and services that will help them reach critical milestones, improving individual outcomes and public safety. This includes offering diversion opportunities, individualized responsive case planning, and building support networks. The task force also considered the need for additional services such as mentoring, housing, education and employment assistance, and cognitive behavior treatment.

The First Circuit court is piloting an emerging adult probation caseload project in Mitchell, with plans to expand to Yankton. Basic life skills classes are not typically offered to adults on standard probation but will be through this pilot program. The First Circuit is also exploring providing emerging adults with a life coach/mentor to provide a stable influence in their daily life.

One example of a successful diversion program is the Pennington County Diversion Program, which has experienced positive outcomes over the last five years. Of the more than 1,000 young adults the program has served, 51% have satisfied the current requirements for expungement, meaning completion of their diversion agreement with no new charges for 18 months. Every Pennington County case is reviewed and is eligible for diversion programming offered by the state's attorney if the person pleads guilty to the charges and the victim consents.

The diversion program in Pennington County serves as a model for other counties, but many counties lack the necessary funding and staff to implement such services. Currently, the UJS does not have legal authority to provide pretrial supervision or diversion services for young adults before they have been sentenced. There are research-based community supervision practices that can support emerging adults' needs, ensure community safety, hold young people more accountable, and reduce recidivism. Implementing effective supervision practices across probation, which can be enforced with policies and standards, can impact more young people who are not eligible for diversion programs. I believe there are some tremendous opportunities down the road to improve our efforts at rehabilitating young adult offenders. We will continue to develop strategies to accomplish these goals. In doing so, we contribute to a society that values the potential for growth and redemption for individuals who truly wish to change.

Problem-Solving Courts

Another way in which the court system is addressing serious societal issues is through our problem-solving courts. For offenders struggling with substance use and mental health disorders, our state's problem-solving courts provide an intervention that can help lead people out of the criminal justice system and into lives of recovery and stability. We have some other great non-governmental programs in this state, such as Teen Challenge, but today I want to highlight the work of South Dakota's problem-solving courts.

Problem-solving courts include drug court, DUI court, veterans court, and mental health court. South Dakota's problem-solving courts began as a drug court pilot program in 2007 and expanded over the next 10 years thanks to the vision and leadership of former Chief Justice Gilbertson. Since inception, South Dakota's problem-solving courts have served a total of 2,489 people, with 1,120 people successfully completing the program. There are currently 17 problem-solving courts operating in South Dakota.

The target population of problem-solving courts are high-risk, high-need individuals facing the likelihood of prison because there are inadequate supervisory services in the community. The "high-risk" designation implies a greater likelihood of relapse into problematic behaviors or criminal activities. Meanwhile, "high-need" underscores



the complex set of hurdles these individuals face, spanning from addiction and mental health issues to a lack of housing, employment, and social support. Problem-solving courts provide an opportunity for long-term treatment for those struggling with a substance abuse and mental and behavioral health issues. Without these specialty courts, most of these individuals would end up in the penitentiary at a much higher economic cost and with little chance of rehabilitation.

In problem-solving courts, treatment providers ensure that each person receives an individualized, evidence-based treatment plan, while probation officers ensure close community supervision. Working as a team, law enforcement, defense, prosecution, and the judge hold participants accountable and provide ongoing services and support. South Dakota problem-solving courts save lives, reunite families, make communities safer, and save money.

To give you a vivid picture of the good work of problem-solving courts, I want to tell the stories of a few of the graduates. The first story is about Kaitlin, who at age 20 was struggling with significant substance use, homelessness, and family issues when she pled guilty to felony possession of controlled substances. She was sentenced to drug court on July 16, 2014. Kaitlin had a long history of family, social, and emotional issues. She began smoking, drinking alcohol, and using marijuana at age 12. Kaitlin completed her education at an alternative school, but lacking structure and accountability, she soon spiraled downward. Opiate use led to methamphetamine use and stealing to support her drug use. She was in and out of jail and put on probation. When Kaitlin was sentenced to drug court, she faced the potential of several years in prison.

Despite her struggles, Kaitlin successfully completed drug court on March 17, 2016. She has frequently shared with others that the real test was not making it through drug court; it began the day she graduated. Today, Kaitlin is assistant general manager of hospitality at a large event center. She is married and has two children. She and her husband are first-time homeowners. Kaitlyn is a recovery support mentor and meets with new clients of drug court, talking to them about the program and telling them about her journey. She openly speaks about her addiction, was part of a documentary about drug use, and participates on a housing grant steering committee in her community.

Another drug court graduate is John, who was born with significant health issues, was abandoned by his mother, and suffered other severe traumas as a child. Things spiraled out of control, and at the age of 12 John was sent to a therapeutic working ranch. At 13, he began using marijuana and drinking until he blacked out. He had multiple run-ins with the law, but continued with drinking and drug use, including methamphetamine, which completely took over his life. He committed multiple felonies and was sentenced to prison in North Dakota for 10 years. When released, he moved to South Dakota where he continued to be arrested for drug and alcohol-related offenses. He was sent to prison in South Dakota for five years. After serving his sentence, John returned to substance abuse and was on a multi-day binge using meth when he was once again pulled over by law enforcement. Facing yet another felony drug charge and more time in prison, John was sentenced to drug court.

John began drug court on Oct. 13, 2020. While the program was not easy, he put his all into it and did what was asked of him. He was honest with himself and was honest with his drug court team. He asked for help when he needed it. John graduated from drug court on May 26, 2022, and today has more than three years of sobriety. John has a full-time job, a home, and his family back in his life. He started his own sobriety AA meeting that helps other drug court participants get connected in the recovery community.

My last story is about Shane, a participant in one of our veterans courts. Shane served in the U.S. Army from 1997 to 2005. Shane entered the Army during a volatile time when the United States was deep in the Iraq War. He was deployed multiple times to Iraq and Kuwait, where he earned numerous decorations, medals, and ribbons.

Following his service to our country, however, Shane turned to alcohol and eventually pled guilty to two felony DUIs. He was facing 17 years in prison when he was accepted into veterans court. Despite serious health issues, Shane excelled through veterans court, going above and beyond to help other participants while also focusing on his own sobriety. Since graduating from the program this past October, Shane continues to be actively involved in veterans court as a volunteer. He is now nearing two years in recovery.



Gov. Kristi Noem spoke during a Sixth Circuit Problem-Solving Court graduation ceremony on Nov. 22, 2023.

There are over a thousand stories of other individuals who have graduated from problem-solving courts in South Dakota. Many have continued on the path of sobriety. Problem-solving courts play a pivotal role in reshaping the narrative around the intersection of criminal justice and treatment by providing intensive, long-term supervision and treatment. These courts have the immediate impact of reducing the cost of incarceration and increasing the likelihood of rehabilitation, but their broader impact lies in the profound transformation of individuals and the positive influence on their families, their employers, their communities, and the burden on taxpayers. Recognizing the importance of recovery in problem-solving courts is essential for fostering a justice system that holds individuals accountable for their actions but also supports them on their journey toward lasting change.

Bar Admissions Study

As I discussed last year, the Supreme Court appointed a steering committee to study the bar admissions process in South Dakota after considering existing challenges and increasing interest and discussion about bar admission. That group engaged in a collaborative process over the last year with active participation from the judiciary, State Bar, Board of Bar Examiners, and the University of South Dakota Knudson School of Law.

Last month, the steering committee issued its report and recommendations to the Supreme Court. Those recommendations include the formation of a public interest pathway to bar admission that would create an initial pilot program to allow for a cohort of students interested in public service an opportunity for admission to the Bar without examination. This recommended public interest pathway would include an experiential-based law school curriculum and a separate showing of minimum professional competence as determined by the Board of Bar Examiners through established criteria. Students in the program would be required to practice in a public service position, or in an underserved rural area for two years. This pathway creates the potential to incentivize new lawyers to begin practicing in public service employment and ensure professional competence.

The Supreme Court will receive public comment on these recommendations before considering potential rules changes later this year.

Courthouse and Judicial Security

I have talked the past couple of years about our efforts to enhance security at courthouses across South Dakota. The grant funding appropriated by the Legislature in 2021 has been a crucial part of this effort. This past year, more than \$1 million in courthouse security improvements were approved for courthouses in Brookings, Hughes, Butte, Clay, Custer, and Roberts counties. The improvements included security camera systems, panic alarms, security doors, and the construction of security screening areas, secured entrances, and workspaces for judges, court staff, and jurors. I would like to thank my colleagues, Justice Janine Kern and Justice Patty DeVaney, for their continued leadership of the statewide security committee and grant review board.

We have also begun focusing on security risks to judicial staff outside the doors of the courthouse. Judges play a pivotal role as impartial arbiters of justice. Their decisions shape the course of law, our communities, and society as a whole, making their role indispensable to the functioning of a fair and just system. However, the very nature of their duties often exposes them to a higher risk of threats than the community at large.



Upgrades were made to the court security deputy's screening area at the Brookings County Courthouse.

This past October, Maryland State Circuit Court Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson was shot and killed outside his home by a litigant whose child custody dispute the judge heard earlier in the day. In 2022, retired Wisconsin Circuit Court Judge John Roemer was killed in his home by a defendant he had sentenced to prison. Within the last two months, a man was arrested in Nevada and charged with solicitation to murder two state court judges. In the last several years, there have been near-fatal attacks on judges in Texas and Ohio, along with more recent attacks on or threats against state court judges in several other states. Much closer to home, in the past year 40 threats or incidents were reported by our UJS judges and employees. In particular, credible threats were made upon the lives of two South Dakota judges. In one of these incidents, the assailant was in possession of a cache of weapons. In the other event, the assailant knew where the judge lived and places the judge frequented.



A security station was created at the Hughes County Courthouse in Pierre.

In 2022, the South Dakota Legislature passed a measure that prohibits any personally-identifiable information of a circuit court judge or Supreme Court justice filed with the South Dakota Secretary of State's Office from being open to public inspection. Despite these efforts, judges' addresses and personal information are still sometimes found on the Internet. UJS Court Security Coordinator Scott Sheldon has been working with the South Dakota judiciary and staff on issues of personal safety, including digital security and safeguarding their personal information on the Internet. Such services are available for an annual fee. Other potential measures to improve security include home security assessments, as well as home security and camera systems.

As a court system, we are developing plans to provide greater levels of security for our judiciary and court staff at work and at home. We will keep the Legislature updated on these efforts, including any needs for future funding for such efforts. Protecting our judges and court staff is not just about safeguarding individuals; it's also about upholding the integrity of the legal system.

Conclusion

These past three years as Chief Justice have literally flown by. Together, we have accomplished many good things, but our work is not done. I am grateful for my colleagues on the Court—Justices Janine Kern, Mark Salter, Patty DeVaney, and Scott Myren. In my humble opinion, we could not have a more hard-working, dedicated, and collegial group of people on the South Dakota Supreme Court. We do not always agree, but our respect for each other runs deep. Every member of the Court is devoted to ensuring justice, applying the rule of law, and leading a court system that effectively serves the people of South Dakota. As we go about our work, we are indebted to the 48 justices that came before us on the South Dakota Supreme Court, who applied and developed the rules of law that we rely upon so heavily today. As Sir Isaac Newton said so well, “if [we] have seen further than others, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

Many days, I have the privilege of driving into the parking lot of the State Capitol and seeing the historic building that has stood proudly for its citizens for more than 100 years. It is a beautiful, ornate building inside and out. Who could ever get tired of walking through the Rotunda to the Governor’s office, into the chambers of the Legislature, or inside the Supreme Court courtroom?

In the end, as magnificent as this Capitol and its rooms are, they are just symbols and reminders of the work that our predecessors did to establish the ideals, freedoms, and rights that we now enjoy. We can look back to see their accomplishments and their mistakes. But most importantly, they provide a reminder that each of us as leaders of this great state will leave a legacy for the future. As we approach this beautiful building each day, we must cultivate the plantings of our predecessors and take heed of Warren Buffett’s advice to plant the trees that will provide shade for future generations.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steven R. Jensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "S" and "J".

Steven R. Jensen
Chief Justice

South Dakota Supreme Court and Chief Justice Steven R. Jensen's portrait taken by Sleger's Studio in Highmore.



SOUTH DAKOTA SUPREME COURT

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