

**Capitol briefs**

Ann Estvold, NDNA Legislative Intern



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nuclear reactors. As now written, the study would have \$300,000 available for consulting fees. Members of the study committee would include two members representing the energy industry; individual members appointed by the Public Service Commission, the Industrial Commission, and the Department of Water Resources; three state House members; and three senators.

**Honoring fallen veterans and peace officers**

SB 2277 would designate State Highway 200 from the Minnesota border to the Montana border as the North Dakota Fallen Peace Officers' Memorial Highway. Each mile of the highway would memorialize an individual peace officer, law enforcement officer or canine officer. North Dakota has had 62 law officers die in the line of duty. SB 2277 received a Do Pass Recommendation in its committee hearing on March 6.

"This bill serves as a tribute to the peace officers, law enforcement officers and canine officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty to protect and serve our communities," said Sen. Keith Boehm, R-Mandan, who sponsored the bill.

**Skipping class to vote**

Under HB1178, every school district would be required to adopt a policy to allow students who are eligible to vote to leave school to vote in a general, special or primary election. The policy could include a time window for voting and to limit a student's time away. HB1178 was approved by the House 86-1 in January and is now being considered by the Senate Education Committee.

**Nuclear Energy Study**

HB1025 would require an interim legislative study that would study the feasibility, siting and deployment of advanced nuclear power plants in N.D. The study would include an evaluation of suitable locations, an assessment of the ability of the electrical grid to transport nuclear plants' electric power, land use considerations, economic impacts, and the feasibility of constructing and operating small

HB1426 would designate a bridge on State Highway 6 as the Army Cpl. Raymond Porter Korea Bridge. Porter was killed on Oct. 10, 1951, while fighting enemy forces near Imokchong, Korea. Before he was mortally wounded, Porter placed himself in an exposed position and used a machine gun and automatic rifle to kill entrenched enemy soldiers and help members of his unit advance on a strategic hill.

**Resolution to increase minimum wage fails on House floor**

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A Fargo legislator believes the best way to raise N.D.'s minimum wage by \$2 an hour is to amend the state Constitution and link the new wage to increases in consumer prices. The Resolution failed on the House floor 11-79-3 on March 7.

Rep. LaurieBeth Hager (D-Fargo) was the sponsor of HCR3032, which would have increased the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$9.25 an hour and require subsequent increases each January in line with the percentage rise in the consumer price index, with a minimum increase of 5 cents per hour. The proposed amendment would not have allowed any decrease in the minimum wage.

The federal minimum wage is also \$7.25 an hour. Neither N.D.'s minimum nor the federal minimum wage

has risen since 2009. N.D. is one of 20 states that has a \$7.25 minimum wage; other states have higher rates, including South Dakota (\$11.50), Minnesota (\$11.13), and Montana (\$10.55).

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, a \$7.25 hourly wage in July 2009 would need to be \$10.69 an hour today to have the same purchasing power.

Hager said the current minimum wage puts employees below the federal poverty level. Raising it would offer a needed pay increase for North Dakotans in minimum wage jobs, stimulate the economy, give employees an incentive to stay in N.D., and attract more workers to lower-level jobs, Hager and supporters of the increase say. Opponents of the idea said the in-

crease was unnecessary, because most employers already pay their staff more than \$7.25 hourly for entry-level positions. Mike Rud, president of the North Dakota Retail Association, said employers are already having difficulty meeting the wage requirements it takes to hire employees for entry-level jobs. That can be \$16 to \$20 an hour, he said.

Arik Spencer, president of the Greater North Dakota Chamber, which represents business interests, said that N.D.'s tight labor market - the state's unemployment rate is about 2 percent - is already driving up wages well beyond the minimum.

Because it is a constitutional amendment, the resolution would have needed to be approved by N.D. voters to take effect.

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If you have questions, contact Rachel Lundquist at [rachel.lundquist@1stcarehc.com](mailto:rachel.lundquist@1stcarehc.com) or 701-284-4502.

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**UR :**

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**Application Requirements**

Applicant must:

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- Complete the application in full
- Prepare a 500-700 word essay to the question: "What field or major do you intend on studying and how does it impact rural health in your community?"
- Electronically submit your essay and cover sheet at: [www.firstcarehc.com/community-involvement/scholarships](http://www.firstcarehc.com/community-involvement/scholarships)
- Alternatively, applications can be mailed to: First Care Health Center Attn: Scholarship Committee PO Box 1 Park River, ND 58270

**First Care HEALTH CENTER**

Application Deadline: Friday, April 18, 2025 at 11:59PM CST

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