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Unofficial results 2026 North Dakota primary elections see Southwest North Dakota consistencies, defeats

By Gaylon Wm. Parker

bcpnews@gspublishing.net

Editor's note: All results remain unofficial until final canvassing is completed on June 22, 2026, when county boards meet to certify the election.

The June 9 primary elections contained a variety of contests across North Dakota, including school board, city and county commission, judicial, and ballot measure races. Residents of Billings and Stark counties, along with those in the rest of southwest North Dakota's rural counties and municipalities, closely followed the results as they were posted on the Secretary of State's election website.

In addition, Billings County recorded the highest voter turnout percentage among North Dakota counties, a circumstance that has become common in recent years and election cycles.

The unofficial results for the nonpartisan Billings County Commissioner at-Large race showed Rodney Syminow receiving more votes than Steven Klym. Syminow earned 221 votes, or 50.69% of the total, while Klym received 154 votes, or 35.32%. Kyle Shockley finished third with 61 votes, or 13.99%. No write-in votes were recorded.

Marcia Kessel defeated Patrick Rummel in the County Auditor/Treasurer race, receiving 251 votes (58.10%) to Rummel's 180 votes (41.67%), with one write-in vote cast. Juliana Hammerstrom won the County Recorder/Clerk of District Court race with 388 votes (99.23%) against three write-in votes.

Travis Collins received 342 votes (88.37%) in the race for County Sheriff, although 45 write-in ballots were also cast. The Billings County Pioneer was selected as the county's official newspaper, receiving all 402 votes cast in that contest.

City and school board races are decided during the primary election, while the top two candidates in county races advance to the November general election for a final decision.

As a result, Syminow and Klym will both appear on the general election ballot, as will Kessel and Rummel. John Tczap received 35 write-in votes, enough to qualify for the general election ballot against Collins in the sheriff's race.

The measure to increase the size of the Billings County Commission from three members to five passed with 227 votes (51.59%) in favor and 213 votes (48.41%) opposed.

The proposal requiring publication of Billings County School Board meeting minutes passed overwhelmingly, receiving 399 votes (91.94%) in support and 35 votes (8.06%) opposed.

The crowded Medora City Council race saw Jodi Johnson finish first with 41 votes (29.50%), followed by Derek Tester with 31 votes (23.02%). Tracy Sexton received 31 votes (22.30%), while Jaden O'Rourke received 13 votes (9.35%). There were also 22 write-in

votes cast. The top two finishers, incumbent Jodi Johnson and newcomer Derek Tester, will therefore serve on the city council.

In the Billings County School Board races, Rebecca Kasian won the at-large seat with 294 votes (75.19%). A total of 97 write-in votes were cast, of which Katie Oe received 93. In the District 1 race, Kinley Slauter received 355 votes (99.16%) against three write-in votes. In District 2, Jessica Evoniuk won with 377 votes (99.47%) against two write-in ballots.

Statewide, in the District 39 State Senate race, Republican Greg Kessel secured the nomination with 2,698 votes (98.83%) and 32 write-in votes. On the Democratic-NPL side, there were 40 write-in votes cast.

In the District 39 State Representative race, Republican Mike Schatz received 1,881 votes (37.16%), Keith Kempenich received 1,744 votes (34.45%), and Jason Dodge received 1,421 votes (28.07%), with 16 write-in votes recorded. Sandy Baertsch was the Democratic-NPL nominee, receiving 415 votes (98.34%) against seven write-in votes from Billings County precincts.

In the U.S. House race, Republican Julie Fedorchak received 275 votes (75.34%) in Billings County, while Alex Balazs received 90 votes (24.66%). Democratic-NPL candidate Trygve Hammer received 54 votes.

For Secretary of State, Michael Howe received 342 votes in Billings County on the Republican side, while Democratic-NPL candidate Ryan Braunberger received 52 votes. Both candidates ran unopposed within their respective parties.

Statewide, Fedorchak will face Hammer in the general election after earning 59,667 votes (72.76%) in the Republican primary. Hammer received 34,566 votes (99.8%) while running unopposed in the Democratic-NPL primary.

Howe and Braunberger will compete for Secretary of State in November. Republican Drew Wrigley will face Democratic-NPL candidate Tim Lamb. Republican Doug Goehring and Democratic-NPL candidate Vern Thompson will also meet in the general election after both ran unopposed in their respective primaries.

In the Public Service Commission race, Sheri Haugen-Hoffart defeated Deven Styczynski by a margin of 64.44% to 35.28% and will face Democrat John M. Pederson in the general election.

In the unexpired two-year Public Service Commission race, Republican Jill Kringstad won with 54.29% of the vote over Chris Olson's 45.51% and will face Democratic-NPL candidate Scot Kelsh in November.

For Tax Commissioner, Republican Brian Kroshus will face Democratic-NPL candidate Mark Nelson. In the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction, Levi Bachmeier won with 55.51% of the vote, ahead of Tracy Layne Foss at 29.85% and Charles Tuttle at 14.37%.

Jerod Tuft received 64.44% of the vote in the Supreme Court Justice race, defeating Ariston E. Johnson, who received 36.15%. In the unexpired eight-year Supreme Court Justice race, Douglas A. Bahr ran unopposed and received 99.48% of the vote.

Constitutional Measure No. 1, which requires constitutional amendments to address a single subject, was approved by 77,072 voters (66.43%), while 38,955 voters (33.57%) opposed the measure.

For complete election results from across North Dakota, visit the Secretary of State's election results website. These results remain unofficial until final canvassing is completed on June 22.



Hills come alive Burning Hills summer concert series takes the stage June 22

By Gaylon Wm. Parker

bcpnews@gspublishing.net

With a four-event calendar featuring regional, local, and national music acts, Medora's Burning Hills Live Summer Concert Series will officially hit the stage on June 22. Tickets are on sale now, and the multi-show lineup features one of North Dakota's favorite headliners, two highly popular tribute acts, and a high-energy group with multiple awards to its credit.

"On Mondays, when the Medora Musical show is dark, it's a good way to fill the amphitheater space, and it brings in some variety of entertainment, right?" Medora Foundation Marketing Director Brock White said. "It's another day to come to town, and when we do these kinds of things, we'll bring in an extra 1,000 to 2,000 people for a Monday concert, and that's going to help all the businesses in the area—all the restaurants in the area—and we're going to do pitchfork fondue on those nights as well, so that's an option too."

Hotel California: A Salute to the Eagles offers spot-on renditions of the famous band's greatest hits on June 22, as the Southern California tribute band kicks off the series with one of the most popular American groups in music history. Next on the list is another tribute act, ARRIVAL

from Sweden: The Music of ABBA, on July 20, whose performances are known for their faithful recreation of the decades-long hitmakers' sound.

Sawyer Brown will finish off the four-show series on Aug. 31, and fans of country music from the late 1980s onward will recognize lead singer Mark Miller's energetic stage presence and the band's classic country sound. Sawyer Brown is responsible for three No. 1 singles and won the TNN Music City News Country Award for Vocal Band of the Year from 1993-98 consecutively.

But many North Dakotans and music fans across the Upper Midwest will be anticipating Tigirlily Gold's return to the Medora stage on Aug. 10. Hazen's own sister duo, Kendra and Krista Slaubaugh, got their start in the 2010s and gained attention by uploading cover songs to the TikTok social media platform before moving to Nashville in 2017.

The sisters perform and tour extensively, and their appearances in the region continue to grow following the group's win for New Duo or Group of the Year at the 59th Academy of Country Music Awards in 2024.

"They've done the whole North Dakota State tourism thing—which is really cool—and it's going to be huge to have a really strong line-

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