

## Republican incumbents, one challenger announce ND Public Service Commission campaigns

By Jeff Beach/North Dakota Monitor

At least three candidates plan to run for two seats on the North Dakota Public Service Commission in the 2026 election, with both incumbents announcing campaigns this month.

Commissioner Sheri Haugen-Hoffart announced earlier this month that she will seek reelection to a six-year term.

Haugen-Hoffart was appointed to the PSC in February 2022 and won the election for the seat the same year.

There also is a two-year term on the ballot. Julie Fedorchak was elected to a six-year term in 2022 but she gave up the seat when she was elected to Congress in 2024.

Jill Kringstad, who was appointed in January 2025 to fill Fedorchak's seat, announced last week that she will run for the two-year portion remaining on that term.

Deven Styczynski of Enderlin says he also intends to run, but has not yet decided which term he would run for.

Styczynski and other potential candidates must declare which seat they are running for when they file for candidacy with the North Dakota Secretary of State's Office. The filing deadline is April 6.

Haugen-Hoffart, Kringstad and Styczynski are all Republicans.

Neither Haugen-Hoffart nor Kringstad committed to seeking the nomination at the North Dakota GOP convention. Without a party nomination, candidates must gather petition signatures to get on the ballot.

Styczynski said he would seek the party nomination for the

seat he decides to file for.

Other candidates could emerge before the April 6 deadline.

In 2024, Tracey Wilkie announced her candidacy at the Democratic-NPL state convention. She lost to incumbent Republican Randy Christmann, receiving about 30% of the vote.

Wilkie told the North Dakota Monitor that she has not considered running this year and encouraged other candidates to come forward.

The three-person commission oversees rates for-profit electric utilities, issues permits for infrastructure such as pipelines, powerlines and wind turbines, and manages the state's coal mine reclamation program, among other responsibilities.

Styczynski said he's running for the PSC in part due to concerns about rate increases from power companies.

He called a compromise plan to allow Xcel Energy to increase electric rates by 10% for North Dakota customers "ludicrous."

Haugen-Hoffart defended the pending rate increase, saying it was the first request to raise rates in four years and electric rates.

Kringstad said abundant, reliable and affordable energy is a top priority.

Haugen-Hoffart and Kringstad both pointed to federal reporting that says North Dakota has the lowest electricity rates in the country.



From left, Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, Jill Kringstad and Deven Styczynski are candidates for North Dakota Public Service Commission in 2026. (Photos courtesy of the candidates)

## Mothers Against Drunk Driving and North Dakota Parks & Recreation team up to help keep snowmobile riders safe

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) volunteers and staff are teaming up with the North Dakota Parks & Recreation to promote a safe snowmobile season and to educate the public about the dangers of operating a snowmobile while impaired by alcohol and/or other drugs.

"Impaired snowmobile crashes devastate families the same way impaired crashes on our roads do," said Lauren Johnson, regional executive director for Mothers Against Drunk Driving. "The difference is that too often, snowmobiling doesn't carry the same expectation of sober operation and that mindset has deadly consequences."

Snowmobiling is a great way to get out and enjoy the outdoors during the winter months. We have amazing places across the state to explore from your sled," said Anton Hillig, Recreation Division Chief at North Dakota Parks & Recreation. "There's one hard truth: drinking alcohol and/or consuming drugs and riding just don't mix and puts not just you, but others in danger.

"Snowmobiling may look and feel different than driving a car, but the risks are just as real," Johnson said. "If alcohol is part of the plan, wait until you're done riding and off the trails for the day, and make sure you have a non-drinking driver

or a safe way to get home."

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and North Dakota Parks & Recreation want to share these safety tips to make snowmobiling a great experience with all recreation explorers:

• **Don't drive impaired:** Alcohol and drugs have a negative effect on the driver's vision, balance, coordination, and reaction time. Don't ride with people who drink and ride!

• **Stay on the trail unless otherwise designated:** Know the laws and regulations governing snowmobiling where you ride and where you travel to ride.

• **Watch the weather and check trail and ice conditions before riding:** Don't ride in adverse weather conditions. Plan your trip and check the trails you'll be riding prior to departure.

• **Never ride alone:** Always ride with a friend on another snowmobile. This way if one machine is disabled, you have another to get help.

• **Dress for safety and survival:** Always wear a quality DOT helmet and facemask. Wear layers of clothing to keep warm and dry. Snowmobile suits, bibs, jackets, gloves, and mittens should cut the wind, repel water,

and keep you ventilated.

• **Slow down:** Excessive speed is a major factor in many accidents, especially at night. To help avoid accidents, keep your nighttime speed under 40 MPH.

• **Stay to the right:** Almost every trail is a two-way trail. So, stay to the far right of the trail, especially on hills and corners. Obey all trail signs and cross roadways with extreme caution.

• **Riding on ice - lakes and rivers:** It is safest to avoid riding on lakes and rivers. If you must ride on ice, wear a life jacket over your outer clothing. Stay on the marked trail and stay off ice that has moving water (current) near or under it - ice in these areas may be thin and weak.

• **Take a snowmobile safety training course:** North Dakota offers resident snowmobilers the ability to take a snowmobile safety course online through Fresh Air Educators. North Dakota law requires youth ages 10 and older who do not have a valid driver's license or permit to take a safety certification class. North Dakota Parks & Recreation strongly encourages all snowmobilers to take the online course, or an in-person course to learn how to operate a snowmobile safely.

## State of North Dakota collaborates with U.S. Army Partnership for Your Success to connect soldiers with workforce opportunities

The state of North Dakota, in its role as an employer, signed a U.S. Army Partnership for Your Success (PaYS) Program agreement with the North Dakota Army National Guard on Jan. 14 at the state Capitol connecting soldiers to civilian workforce opportunities.

The PaYS Program brings together the U.S. Army and a diverse network of private industry, academic institutions, and state and local public organizations. Through the program, soldiers are offered job interviews and potential employment opportunities upon completion of their initial entry training to help them prepare for their futures.

"We value what our soldiers bring to the table and the perspectives they share," Gov. Armstrong said.

"Their military training prepares them with skills that often take years to develop in the workforce. We're already proud to work alongside many current soldiers and veterans on Team ND, and we look forward to welcoming even more through the PaYS program."

Armstrong added that North Dakota remains dedicated to becoming the most military-friendly state in the country, and this collaboration exemplifies the state's effort to fulfill that mission.

"The Army Partnership for Your Success program connects men and women who serve their nation to civilian employers who need a dedicated and reliable workforce," said U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Mitchell Johnson, North Dakota National

Guard adjutant general. "This is a testament to the unwavering support North Dakota provides to its military and is a shining example of smart, effective collaboration."

The PaYS program is part of a long-term U.S. Army effort to help soldiers forge professional relationships with businesses and encourage business owners to look to the Army as a plentiful and reliable recruiting source.

Since PaYS began in 2000, more than 1,275 employers have partnered with the program, and more than 100,000 interviews have occurred. Soldiers interested in the program can register at [www.armypays.com](http://www.armypays.com) and can view state careers at [www.nd.gov/careers](http://www.nd.gov/careers).

### 'FAITH' CON'T FROM PAGE 1

Many are concerned that the actions have become indiscriminate, with agents targeting not only undocumented migrants, but also those with legal immigration status or valid visas, as well as U.S. citizens and some Native American tribal citizens.

Armed and masked agents have stopped residents demanding proof of citizenship, and appeared at churches, mosques, daycares and schools.

All of this has led to growing fear and concern within those communities, they said.

"I just want people who are scared right now to know they are not alone," said Carrie Lauber, a Unitarian Universalist elder in the Fargo-Moorhead area. "I want people who are so fearful to know that there are people out there who are trying their best to do what we can do, and that we are fighting for them."

The loose coalition of pastors, priests and other faith leaders has been actively holding meetings, engaging in training and seminars, as well as planning for what they hope are large rallies during the upcoming Lenten season.

The main one is "Palm Sunday Path" to be held from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, Mar. 29 on the Capitol Grounds in Bismarck.

Ross Keys, vice chair of the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition,

said the three pillars of the Palm Sunday event are "healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and welcoming the stranger," and that events will be held across the Midwest. Faith groups in Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Nebraska are also organizing their own rallies.

Currently, only the Bismarck event is officially set for North Dakota, but a Fargo-Moorhead one will also likely be held, he said.

"I think a lot of people are concerned," said Sylvia Bull, associate pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Bismarck. "Many people in North Dakota have close ties to Minnesota, so I think a lot of people have a more personal connection to this than maybe some of the other things happening in the news."

Bull, and other faith leaders, hope those who also believe in their message of "welcoming the stranger" can join together. They say that people should raise the issue if they are not hearing discussion about it in their own congregations across the state.

Bull said it can be hard for clergy to know what their congregations think about something if they don't bring it to their attention.

"Having people say that this is something we care about right now and that this is something we want to work on together, that can be really helpful in providing direction," Bull said.



Jamie Norstag, pastor at Moorhead Presbyterian Church, said that his parishioners from both sides of the border are having conversations about what they can do as a church to ensure everyone in the community feels safe.

The enforcement actions are "definitely causing some uneasiness and fear," Norstag said, adding that some of those conversations in his congregation are with people who are legal citizens worried they may be targeted too.

"I think speaking out is very important," Norstag said. "I think that using our voice right now is so important. We encourage people to use their voice and encourage people to check on their neighbors who are immigrants, refugees or people of color who are all being targeted."

Cynthia Shabb, program director at Global Friends Coalition in Grand Forks, said an increasing number of people are reaching out to her and other groups about how to get food to families who are afraid to leave their homes or help give kids rides to school.

"What we are hearing from our (immigrant) families is that they are very worried," Shaab said.

Rev. Karen Van Fossan of West Fargo said the loose collection of



Protestors hold up homemade signs along the Veterans Memorial Bridge in Fargo on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, during a protest of ICE and the US involvement in Venezuela. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

groups is discussing ways people can provide mutual aid to their neighbors if they are concerned about going out, helping with rides and groceries and other daily tasks.

"As people of faith and conviction, we understand that every human being is sacred, and that's not negotiable," Van Fossan said. "We believe that the vast majority of people are in solidarity and are actively engaged or searching for ways to be actively engaged."

Global Refuge North Dakota field director Dan Hannaher said the faith groups and other organizations have become more focused on mutual aid due to the fact that some people are afraid to leave their homes.

Many also say this is starting to impact businesses in the region that have immigrants in their workforce. An increasing number are afraid to go to work or frequent

their usual third places, impacting those businesses as well.

"I'm hoping at some point in time the employers will stand up and question what is happening, because the targeting has been so inherently indiscriminate," Hannaher said.

"The folks we serve came to the U.S. under a legal, approved status of the government, and we hate to see them under threat at all," he said. "They are valuable parts of the community, providing resources for employers and consumers of products and services provided here."

The American Civil Liberties Union of North Dakota has developed a family safety guide for families that can be accessed on its website. The guide details their rights and what family and friends can do if they are arrested or deported.