

ACCESS
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ance Department that would have stopped requiring insurance companies to publish some legal notices with newspapers. (I was a member of the North Dakota Newspaper Association board at the time and was among those who worked to oppose that bill.) Last week, Rep. Don Longmuir, a Republican from Stanley, was one of four lawmakers on the Legislature's interim Administrative Rules Committee who attempted to delay the upcoming change. Longmuir, who represents an oil-producing region, said he feared it would mean less transparency.

"Transparency is letting as many people know in as many ways as you can," Longmuir said in an interview this week.

A majority of lawmakers on the committee saw it differently, and Longmuir's motion failed. That means the rule change will take effect April 1.

Since this is Sunshine Week, a time when journalists and others shine a light on the importance of public records and open government, I was curious to learn more about why the Land Board supported this change.

The Land Board consists of Gov. Kelly Armstrong, Attorney General Drew Wrigley, Secretary of State Michael Howe, State Treasurer Thomas Beadle and Su-

perintendent of Public Instruction Levi Bachmeier. Four of the board members supported the rule change in December, while Wrigley was absent from the vote due to what he described as a "travel snafu" returning from Washington, D.C.

Through a spokesperson, Armstrong said he agreed with the staff assessment that online publication is the best way to reach potential bidders for oil and gas lease auctions, "saving taxpayer money and staff time while still providing public access to the notices."

Beadle told me he saw the rule change "as a way to streamline the process" and felt it accounted for the recent trend of newspapers closing, merging or shifting to fewer print editions.

Howe pointed to staff arguments that it would save agency time and money. He also said the target market for the notices is oil and gas companies, and people can receive notifications through the Trust Lands website, department emails and the vendor.

Trust Lands staff estimated the department spends between \$30,000 and \$40,000 annually on newspaper public notices, with about half spent on notices for oil and gas lease auctions, though that figure appeared to be an off-the-cuff estimate provided during a meeting. The North Dakota Newspaper Association, which handles public notices for newspapers statewide, said the department spent about \$17,000

annually in the last three years, though that would include all notices. The department will continue to publish notices of surface land auctions in newspapers.

Bachmeier did not get back to me before my deadline.

Wrigley said he couldn't speak to specifics since he missed that portion of the meeting, but said Land Board members consistently act with an eye toward ensuring public transparency and accountability.

"These are all folks who are committed to transparency, openness," Wrigley said.

Wrigley also said he's open to a continuing discussion about the rule change. That could happen, with the North Dakota Newspaper Association indicating this week it may pursue legislation requiring the public notices in the 2027 session.

The point of public notices is to inform the public, not industry. These lease notices include the name of the company nominating a tract for auction, information that members of the public deserve to have. If every state agency starts putting public notices on their websites, soon the public would have to hunt for that information instead of finding it in one place. That does not promote transparency.

The Land Board does deserve credit for making recordings of its meetings available to the public on the department's YouTube page, a practice that started last fall. Other state entities that don't

already post meeting recordings online should take note. (Ahem, State Investment Board.)

Improved transparency of task forces

Another topic I'm reflecting on this Sunshine Week is some improvement in the accessibility of legislative task forces that are working in the interim.

You may recall that in 2024, we reported on a school choice task force that held meetings without notifying the public. The task force included lawmakers and other education stakeholders, but their meetings were handled differently than interim legislative committees.

This interim, I've been pleased to see that task forces are publishing meeting notices. Their work can be a bit harder to track than traditional legislative committees, but you can subscribe to emails with task force meeting notices on the Secretary of State's website. One we're watching is the Boards and Commissions Task Force that is working to dissolve or merge some state boards.

We're still waiting on an answer to our August 2024 request for an attorney general's opinion about whether the school choice task force meetings violated the state's open meetings law. But after the Monitor and other media wrote about it, the task force began publishing meeting notices, and we were able to cover subsequent meetings.

The pay gap between women and men widened last year, analysis finds

BY: KEVIN HARDY
ND Monitor

The earnings gap between men and women slightly widened last year, according to a new analysis published Thursday.

The left-leaning Economic Policy Institute calculated women last year earned 18.6% less than men per hour on average. That's up slightly from 2024, when the wage gap narrowed slightly to 18%.

The wage analysis, which examines several federal data sets and independent research papers, controls for race, ethnicity, education, age, marital status and geography.

The findings were published ahead of Equal Pay Day on March 26, a symbolic date marking how far into 2026 women would have to work on top of their 2025 hours to match what men earned in 2025.

The new analysis found the wage gap is smallest among lower-wage workers, in part because minimum wages create a uniform wage floor. But women are paid less than men across all education levels — women with a graduate degree on average earn less than men with only a college degree, it said.

The analysis found the widest wage gap among Black and Hispanic women: Black women are paid only 68.3% of white men's median wages. That's a gap of \$9.87 per hour — translating to roughly \$20,500 lower annual earnings for a full-time worker.

The institute says women earn less because of occupational differences, societal norms and the devaluation of women's work.

The organization suggests states enact pay transparency laws, mandate employers provide paid family and medical leave, raise the minimum wage, fund universal child care and remove laws that make it harder to join labor unions. But conservative lawmakers and private employers argue that many of those policies would lead to reduced workforces or higher prices.

"Closing pay gaps by gender and by race and ethnicity will require policy solutions on multiple fronts," the report said. "Although attacks on gender and racial equity continue at the federal level, state lawmakers can and must take steps to address the gender wage gap."

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org.

AIHEC from page 1A

pose of honoring those who came before them and inspiring those who will follow.

"As President, I am deeply proud of every student who represented our institution at the 2026 AIHEC Student Conference. Their dedication, discipline, and perseverance were evident in every competition they entered. More importantly, they conducted themselves with respect, integrity, and cultural pride, serving as outstanding ambassadors of our college and our tribal communities.

Their achievements reflect not only their individual excellence, but also the strength and promise of the generations they represent. It is an honor to witness their success and to celebrate the positive impact they continue to make," stated Wanda Parisien, TMC president.

The American Indian Higher Education Consortium conference provides a powerful platform for students to showcase their talents, celebrate Indigenous identity, and engage in meaningful dialogue about the future of tribal nations. Our students embraced this opportunity fully and

left a lasting, positive impression on all who had the privilege of interacting with them.

TMC Students competed in Archery, Art, Chess, E-Sports, Handgames, Knowledge Bowl, One Act Play, Science Bowl, Scientific Poster, Speech, Traditional Plants, Volleyball, and Welding. TMC proudly earned top placements across multiple categories.

In Art, Danissa Malaterre won First Place and Judges' Choice in Mixed Media with her piece "Rewriting Assimilation." Art Coach: Memory Poni-Cappo.

In Chess, Nathan Conley earned First Place, and Lion'll Walette

was tied for Second Place. Chess Coach: Joe LaFountain.

In E-Sports, coached by Michael Selburg and Gavin Davis, TMC had several strong team and individual performances:

- Call of Duty: Black Ops 7 – First Place: Diego Jerome (Captain), Nathan Conley, Ty Brien, Payton Cottonwood, Craig Brien
- Super Smash Bros – Second Place: Alexis Poitra (Captain), Steven Gillis, Noah Azure, Ashton Dionne
- Valorant – Second Place: Noah Azure (Captain), Ashton Azure, Damian Azure, Connor Henry, Steven Gillis, Ty Brien, Ashton

Dionne

• Rocket League – Third Place: Craig Bruce (Captain), Bentley Falcon, Robert Lilley

Super Smash Bros Individual results included:

- Noah Azure – First Place
 - Alexis Poitra – Third Place
 - Ashton Dionne – Top 10
 - Steven Gillis – Top 20
- In Scientific Poster, Isaiah Bruce placed Third, coached by Ananth Chandra.
- In Volleyball, TMC earned Third Place with team members Danissa Malaterre, Addysen Blue, Mylee Belgarde, Ellareese Thomas, Tayden Azure, and Jer-

emy Laducer, coached by Joe LaFountain.

TMC also celebrates individual honors, as Gracie Herman was named TMC 2026 Student of the Year, and Taveshia Peltier was recognized as the 2026 Coca-Cola First Generation Scholar.

These accomplishments highlight the hard work, talent, and dedication of all TMC students and staff who participated in the 2026 AIHEC Student Conference. Congratulations!!

NOTE: More photos of AIHEC on page 8B

Prices good the week of (March 23-29, 2026)

477-8005

1-Stop Market

Open: Mon Sat-7:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. • Sun 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Boneless Round-Tip Roast



\$6⁹⁹ lb.

Boneless Ribeye Steak



\$16⁹⁹ lb.

Boneless Bottom Round Steak **\$6⁵⁹ lb.**

Cloverdale (14 oz.) Brats **\$3⁷⁵**

Buddig (2 oz.) Thin Sliced Lunch Meat **85¢**

Smithfield (12 oz.) Original Thick Cut Bacon **\$5¹⁵**

NY Strip Steak



\$13⁹⁹ lb.

Asst. Bone-In PORK CHOPS



\$2³⁹ lb.

El Monterey 8-(4 oz.) Chimichangos or Burritos \$5⁸⁸

Banquet Brown N' Serve (6.4 oz.) Sausage Patties or Links **\$2²⁹**

Dutch Farms (32 oz.) BBQ or Boneless Wings **\$9⁷⁵**

Life Everyday (12 oz.) Wing Sauce **\$1⁸⁸**

Barrel O' Fun (8 oz.) Popcorn **\$2⁹⁹**

Old Dutch (12-15 oz.) Pretzels **2/\$7**

Barrel O' Fun (8.5 oz.) Cheese Snacks **\$2⁹⁹**

Lipton (6 pack) Pure Leaf Iced Tea **\$7⁴⁹**

Old Dutch (9 oz.) Dutch Crunch Potato Chips **2/\$7**

Propel (6 pk-1/2 ltr.) Flavored Water **2/\$9**

Kemp's (4 quart) Ice Cream



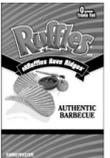
\$6⁹⁹

Prairie Farms (6 pk.) Sundae Cones



\$5⁴⁹

(8 oz.) Frito Lay Ruffles



2/\$8

Banquet Classic TV Dinners



2/\$4⁴⁵

(12 inch) DiGiorno Pizza



\$5⁹⁹

Totino's (50 count) Pizza Rolls



\$6⁹⁵

(10 pk.-7.5 oz. mini cans) Pepsi Products



\$4⁹⁹

(2 liter) Coke Products



\$2¹⁹

Dutch Farms (2 pound) Shredded Cheese



\$9⁴³

Cass Clay (1/2 gallon) Swiss Chocolate Milk



\$3⁸⁵

TJ Farms (2 lb.) Tater Rounds



\$3⁴⁹

Smuckers (32 oz.) Grape Jelly or Jam **\$2⁸⁵**

Pringles (5.5 oz.) Potato Chips **\$2⁶⁵**

Birdseye (10 oz.) Steam Fresh Vegetables **\$2¹⁵**

Frito Lay (10-15 oz.) Dairy Dips **2/\$8**

Life Everyday (15 oz.) Enchilada Sauce **\$2⁵⁸**

Life Everyday (12 ct.) Taco Shells **\$1⁶⁹**

Life Everyday (8 oz.) Cooking Spray **\$2⁷⁹**

(each) Avocados **99¢**

(each) Mangoes **\$1⁹⁷**

Fresh Express (9.4-11 oz.) Chopped Salad Kits **\$4⁴⁹**

Russet (5 lb.) Potatoes **\$1⁹⁹**

Sweet Onions **99¢ lb.**

(4 pound bag) Oranges **\$4⁹⁷**

DELI SPECIALS: March 23-27, 2026

HOMEMADE LUNCH SPECIALS & SOUP OF THE DAY, HOT MEX EXPRESS SERVED MONDAY-FRIDAY

Champ's Chicken & Take N' Bake Wingman Pizza Available 7 day's a week

Life Everyday (2 lb.) Powdered or Brown Sugar **\$2²²**

Life Everyday (10 oz.) Steak Sauce **\$2⁰⁹**

Pink Lady Apples **\$1⁴⁴ lb.**

Red or Green Grapes **\$2⁵⁹ lb.**