



## Free school meals backers deliver signatures, paving way for fall vote in ND

ND Monitor

North Dakotans could vote this November on whether public schools should provide free meals after an advocacy organization on Thursday submitted thousands of signatures to the Secretary of State's Office.

The proposed measure would change the state constitution to guarantee that all K-12 public schools provide one free breakfast and lunch to all students. Tribal schools and private schools would be able to opt into the program.

The group behind the petition, called the Together For School Meals coalition, said in an afternoon press conference it turned in more than 57,000 signatures. That's roughly 80% more than the 31,164 valid signatures required for the proposal to appear on the 2026 general election ballot.

"This is about families, this is about community and this is about the generations that come after us," said Cheryl Kary, executive director of the Sacred Pipe Resource Center and a coalition member.

Volunteers gathered the signatures in a little over 100 days, which coalition chair Robin Nelson called a testament to the proposal's popularity.

"While I've been collecting signatures, the most common comment I had is, 'Now this is somewhere I want my tax dollars to go,'" she said during the press conference.

If the measure passes, public schools would start providing free

lunches during the 2027-28 school year.

The state would be responsible for funding the program.

In recent testimony to lawmakers, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction estimated that the program would cost about \$133 million for the 2027-2029 state budget cycle.

By default, money for the program would come out of the state's Legacy Earnings fund, though the proposal allows the Legislature to find an alternate source of funding. The Legacy Earnings fund also supports the state's primary residence credit, a property tax relief program.

The Secretary of State's Office has until May 14 to review the petitions and decide whether enough valid signatures were turned in for the proposal to get on the ballot.

More than 47,000 K-12 students in North Dakota receive free or reduced meals through the National School Lunch Program, according to data from the Department of Public Instruction. About 3,000 of those students are subsidized by state money under an expansion to the program adopted by the Legislature.

Whether students qualify for this assistance depends on their household income.

Michelle Wagner, a dietician and child nutrition director for Bismarck Public Schools, said that the current system isn't working for many families.

"We see students skip meals," Wagner said at the press confer-



Michelle Wagner, left, carries boxes of signed petitions for a proposed ballot measure to make public school breakfasts and lunches free in North Dakota on April 9, 2026, at the Capitol. To her right is Amy Jacobson and Ashley Gaschk. All three are members of the sponsoring committee for the measure. (Photo by Mary Steurer/North Dakota Monitor)

ence. "We see unpaid meal balances. We see schools spending valuable time managing eligibility instead of feeding students."

In a 2025 North Dakota United poll, 79% of respondents said they support school lunches for all students. North Dakota United is a union representing teachers and public employees. A 2024 poll by the North Dakota News Cooperative reported that 82% of respondents supported more state involvement in providing free school meals.

Attempts by state lawmakers to make all school meals free through the legislative process have been unsuccessful.

A proposal introduced during the three-day special legislative session in January narrowly failed in the

Senate after passing in the House. That bill, brought by Rep. Mike Nathe, R-Bismarck, would have provided \$65 million for meals for the 2026-2027 school year out of the state's Strategic Investment and Improvements Fund.

Some lawmakers opposed to the bill said that making school meals free is not the best use of state funds. Others argued existing food assistance programs are sufficient and that the bill was government overreach.

Lawmakers also raised concerns about the state subsidizing families that don't actually need the support.

Two school meal proposals also failed during the 2025 legislative session.

There were no outstanding songs and very little dancing other than that done by the chorus, the production for the most part being just a show of girls with an amusing skit sandwiched in while the girls were preparing for their next appearance."

"Dakota Datebook" is a radio series from Prairie Public in partnership with the State Historical Society of North Dakota and with funding from the North Dakota Humanities Council. See all the Dakota Datebooks at [prairiepublic.org](http://prairiepublic.org), subscribe to the "Dakota Datebook" podcast, or buy the Dakota Datebook book at [shopprairiepublic.org](http://shopprairiepublic.org).

### DATEBOOK cont. from page 2A

Legion, serving as state commander, and later as national chairman of the American Legion Foreign Affairs Committee. But it was in 1951 that Whelan was asked to do something that no other North Dakotan had ever done.

Since the early 1940s, it was well known that North Dakota Senator William Langer had one very salient complaint during his time in Washington. He often lamented that "There's never been one ambassador from North Dakota, not in [all] the years since statehood." In response, President Harry Truman appointed Whelan to be the U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua in 1951.

The North Dakota farmer soon found himself and his family relocating to the Latin American country. To Truman's delight, Whelan became one of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza's closest friends. The two referred to each other affectionately as 'Tommy' and 'Tacho.' The men "...partied, played poker, [and] junketed around the country together."

When President Eisenhower took office in 1953, Whelan resigned, but the President quickly reappointed him to the position. In 1956, Somoza was shot and critically wounded by an assassin. Whelan rushed to his friend's side and quickly "...arranged to fly the dying dictator to a U.S. hospital in the Panama Canal Zone." Somoza was succeeded by his sons, and Whelan

remained ambassador until 1961. By the time his tenure ended, Whelan was the nation's longest serving ambassador. He returned to North Dakota, where he passed away in 1977 and was interred in his hometown of St. Thomas.

### Vanities

By Sarah Walker

April 16, 2026 – Earl Carroll, New York theatrical producer, was known for his risqué productions in the 1920s. His shows were lavish with beautiful, often with scantily-clad women. His lifestyle reflected some amount of this, and he was in and out of newspapers across the country.

In fact, in 1927, he had been sentenced to a year and a day for perjury during an investigation into a rather infamous bathtub party he hosted – a party that supposedly featured a nude showgirl sitting in a bathtub, from which she served champagne. Remember, this was still during the Prohibition era.

He was being taken to a penitentiary in Atlanta by train when he collapsed. It wasn't until a few days later, reported on this date, that he regained consciousness.

Around that time, residents of North Dakota followed the news on Carroll with great interest, considering that his production, "Vanities," which had run for 55 weeks on Broadway in the Earl Carroll Theatre, was scheduled to play in Bismarck at the City Auditorium, now the Belle Mehus, and then in Fargo at the Orpheum.

In Fargo, at least one citizen protested this to the city commission, and the city attorney was instructed to investigate and take steps to prevent the show from going on, if he deemed it necessary. He announced that unless it could be proven beforehand that the show was immoral, Earl Carroll's "Vanities" would indeed go on.

The show was to feature more than one hundred performers, and was called "a girly show, a musical revue, with beauty as the keynote, beauty of feminine face and form, beauty of costume and scenery and light effects." It was to be done in full, with "sensuous" music that had become popular, with comedians, and indeed with many girls.

After the show played in Bismarck, however, the Tribune reported: "That much talked of musical revue, Earl Carroll's 'Vanities,' has come and gone and Bismarck is probably none the worse for its having been here. True, some of the costumes worn by the chorus now and then were rather abbreviated, but not more so than in other productions which have been here in the past... The Vanities simply provided more than two hours of meaningless entertainment which kept the audience in an uproar most of the time.





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**100-297 High School Grant**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 11:30a.m.  
Board Room, 1207 William Hardesty Street  
Belcourt, ND 58316

TENTATIVE AGENDA

1. CALL to ORDER
2. ADOPTION of AGENDA
3. ADOPTION of CONSENT AGENDA
  - 3.A - TMCS Superintendent Report - Dr. Shane Martin
  - 3.B - Business Manager Reports - Duane Poitra
  - 3.C - Approval of Class of 2026 Graduation Items — Jaylee Malaterre/Student Representatives
  - 3.D - Approval of Minutes 03/10/26 @ 11:30a.m.
  - 3.E. - TMHS Board Report - Brad LaRocque
  - 3.F. - Approval of 2026-27 Draft School Calendar (TMHS) — Duane Poitra
  - 3.G. - Approval of Accounts Payable - Earl Demery
4. OLD BUSINESS:
  - 4.A - NONE
5. NEW BUSINESS:
  - 5.A - NONE
6. ADJOURNMENT





**Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians**  
P. O. Box 900 - Belcourt, ND 58316

**Request for Proposals (RFP)**  
**For Professional Services**  
**Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation**

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Project Management and Environmental Brownfields Tribal Response Programs are hereby soliciting Qualifications, Experience and Bids from qualified consultant ("Consultant") firms to provide remediation and disposal services in relation to the Azure's Store Underground Storage Tank Removal. The project is being funded under U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) grants and all Tribal and Federal laws, standards and requirement must be met. Must include 3% TERO Fee to bid of \$10,000.00 or more, also include 1% EPA Fee. Selection criteria will include appropriate certification and experience, cost estimates, timeline commitments and anything that is beneficial to the Tribe. Preference will be given to qualified Indian Owned Firms. Sealed written proposal(s) and bids in response to this RFP must be received or postmarked by **May 30th, 2026**. Proposals received after this date will not be considered. Proposals can be hand delivered, courier service, or by mail. No email or faxed bids will be accepted. Please deliver two [2] copies of this proposal to:

Allan Malaterre  
Director, Turtle Mountain Property and Supply  
P.O. Box 900  
4180 Highway 281  
Belcourt, ND 58316  
701 477- 2635  
[allan.malaterre@tmbci.org](mailto:allan.malaterre@tmbci.org)

Project Contact: Questions about the project and requests for copies of the RFP, maps and relevant documents; or to schedule a site tour should be directed to the Project Contact:


Philip Lenoir  
Brownfields Tribal Response Program Coordinator,  
TMBCI-EPA  
PO Box 900  
1308 Ogema Road (Transportation building)  
Belcourt, ND 58316  
(701 477-8339 work  
[xavierp72@outlook.com](mailto:xavierp72@outlook.com)

A pre-bid submittal meeting is scheduled **May 20th, 2026 at 10:00 am** at the Tribal Transportation Building, 1308 Ogema Road, Belcourt, ND. Site visits will follow the meeting. Further information on this meeting and site visits may be obtained by contacting Mr. Philip Lenoir, whose contact information is listed above.

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians reserves the right to reject any or all proposals/bids and to waive irregularities and informalities.

**BELCOURT SCHOOL DISTRICT #7**  
1207 William Hardesty Street, Belcourt, ND 58316

**AGENDA**  
**Board of Education**  
**Belcourt School District #7**  
**Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 @ 12 NOON**  
Board Room



1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA
4. OPENPUBLIC COMMENT
5. ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA
  - A. TMCS Superintendent Report — Dr. Shane Martin
  - B. TMCS Assistant Superintendent/HR Director Board Report — Levi Gourneau
  - C. Approval of Class of 2026 Graduation Class Song, Class Flower, Class Motto and Class Colors — Jaylee Malaterre/Student Reps
  - D. TMES Board Report — Shanna Davis-McCloud  
TMES Board Report
  - E. Business Manager Reports — Duane Poitra
  - F. Ojibwa Indian School Board Report — Angelique Bennett
  - G. Approval of NDPI School Construction Request & Facility Plan for Physical Education Gymnasium — Duane Poitra
  - H. Approval of Two 23-Passenger Activity Bus Purchase (\$284,300) — Duane Poitra
  - I. Approval of ND DPI School Construction Request & Facility Plan for Asphalt Paving Project — Duane Poitra
  - J. Approve Purchase of a 2019 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Cargo Transport Van — Duane Poitra
  - K. Approval of Inspired Instruction Contract \$32,820.00 — Claudette Gourneau
  - L. Accept Final FY2024-25 Audit as Issued by Brady Martz — Earl Demery/Duane Poitra
  - M. Approval of Minutes 03/10/26 @ 11:45a.m.
  - N. Approval of Minutes 03/10/26 @ Noon
  - O. TMMS Board Report — Gaillard Peltier
  - P. TMHS Board Report — Brad LaRocque
  - Q. Approval of 2026-2027 Draft School Calendars (TMES, TMMS, TMHS) — Duane Poitra
  - R. Approval ND Career and Technical Education (TMACT) Letter of Support — Kellie Hall
6. BE LEGENDARY
  - A. Cognia New Platform (Information Only) — Claudette Gourneau
  - B. NIEAC Conference for Cognia in Boston, NY (Information Only) — Claudette Gourneau
  - C. Administrator Walkthrough(s) (Information Only) — Claudette Gourneau
  - D. District Student Engagement Survey Results — Claudette Gourneau
  - E. Community Engagement Update and to Appoint the Community Engagement Committee — Laurie Elliott
7. OLD BUSINESS
  - A. NONE
8. NEW BUSINESS
  - A. TMCHS Student Representatives
  - B. Approval of Accounts Payable — Earl Demery
9. ADJOURNMENT