

North Dakota Department of Commerce opens additional funding round for Destination Development Grants

The North Dakota Department of Commerce announced the opening of an additional funding round for the Destination Development Grant (DDG) program, making \$4 million available to advance tourism projects across the state.

The funds, originally allocated to ND Country Fest for venue expansion in New Salem, have been reallocated after the applicant chose not to proceed with the project.

Applications are now open and will be accepted through 5 p.m. CST on March 10. All submissions must be completed online; email or mail submissions will not be accepted.

The DDG program supports the development or expansion of attractions that attract new visitors to North Dakota which strengthens North Dakota’s economy. These new experiences and amenities also enhance the quality of life for residents. Eligible applicants include for-profit businesses, nonprofit organizations, and tourism-related entities. State and federal government entities and previous DDG recipients from the 2023-25 or 2025-27 rounds are not eligible. Previous non-awarded applicants are encouraged to reapply

using a streamlined application designed for ease and efficiency.

Matching requirements:

- 1-to-1 match required (cash or in-kind contributions)
- Cash match reimbursement: 50% of approved invoices after verification under the grant agreement

In-kind contributions may include:

- Documented value of donated land or facilities
- Materials and equipment
- Eligible in-house labor (excluding administrative or programmatic costs)

Competitive proposals will demonstrate how projects will attract new visitors to North Dakota, align with the state’s identity, include realistic timelines for completion within the 2025-27 biennium and deliver long-term community impact. Grant awards will be announced on April 30.

For more information and to apply, visit <https://ndgov.link/Destination-Development>.



Electronic posting system for private land available

Landowners interested in posting private land electronically for the 2026-27 hunting season can log into “My Account” on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website: gf.nd.gov.

New this year, landowners have the option to electronically post their land from Aug. 1-July 31 (entire season); Aug. 1-Nov. 22 (through deer gun season); or only during deer gun season (Nov. 6-22).

Landowners who have a profile on the Game and Fish Department’s mobile application have the option to communicate with hunters using their cellphone app. A link will be available for hunters to send a request to the individual posting the land.

The deadline to digitally post land

is July 1, which enables Game and Fish to produce print material and digital content prior to hunting seasons that begin in August.

Landowners who enrolled land electronically last year can renew, add or modify posting designations during the enrollment period. Others posting for the first time might need to create a profile. To post land, proceed to the “Land Parcels/Electronic Posting” section at the bottom of the page and click “Search/Renew Land parcels.” The electronic posting system is linked to land descriptions based on county tax parcel information.

The Game and Fish website has complete instructions for landowners, along with frequently asked questions for both landowners and hunters.

North Dakota Republicans on the fence about state convention amid party’s shift to the right

Incumbent state officials gathering signatures to appear on ballot

By: Michael Achterling/North Dakota Monitor

Campaign season for North Dakota Republican incumbents has a different feel this year, with statewide office holders collecting signatures to appear on the ballot rather than relying on a state party endorsement.

The shift comes two years after the party supported candidates for U.S. House and state school superintendent who lost in the primary, which some say illustrates a disconnect between the state party and Republican voters.

There have been no campaign press conferences from NDGOP headquarters this year, a departure from previous election cycles.

Statewide incumbents have been largely noncommittal about whether they plan to attend the state Republican convention as a more conservative faction has control over the party.

“These districts are being taken over by the far right and they are pushing out anybody who disagrees with them,” said Rep. Mike Nathe, a Bismarck Republican who attempted to eliminate the state party endorsing process during the legislative session.

The state party last summer narrowly elected newcomer Matthew Simon as chair in a nearly tied vote over Shane Goettle, a former national committeeman who previously worked for U.S. Sen. John Hoeven. At the same meeting, the state party passed a resolution expressing “extreme disappointment” toward Republican Gov. Kelly Armstrong for vetoing a library content bill. They also condemned property tax legislation that was popular with a majority of elected Republican leaders.

Simon, who received support from the rising populist wing of the party, said he expects statewide candidates seeking the Republican Party endorsement to attend the state convention.

“This is their opportunity to get with, let’s be honest, the activists within the party,” Simon said in an interview. “It’s important to empower your base and get them really excited because these are the people that are going to show up and support you.”

In North Dakota, candidates can either submit a certificate of endorsement from a political party or gather signatures to appear



Attorney General Drew Wrigley speaks during the NDGOP District 32 meeting on Feb. 2, 2026, in Bismarck. Wrigley and other Republican state office-holders said they are undecided about attending the state party convention and are collecting signatures to appear on the ballot. Photo by Kyle Martin/For the North Dakota Monitor

on the ballot. Republicans have traditionally sought the state party endorsement, though there have been some exceptions.

Rep. Ben Koppelman, R-West Fargo, said the NDGOP state committee has been closely divided for a long time. But until recently, most candidates respected the party endorsement process, he said.

“If the alternative to the state convention is to go and convince independents and Democrats, and Republican-leaning people, that aren’t party members, to help you get over the top in the primary, then really, there is no Republican Party,” Koppelman said. “At that point, we should stop having a slot on the ballot because nobody respects the membership in the party.”

Kevin Cramer notably skipped the endorsing process in 2012 when he ran for U.S. House, opting to go straight to the June primary, where he defeated NDGOP-endorsed Brian Kalk. Doug Burgum also successfully ran in the June 2016 primary after the Republican Party endorsed Wayne Stenehjem for governor.

This year, Attorney General Drew Wrigley, Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring, Secretary of State Michael Howe, Tax Commissioner Brian Kroshus and Public Service Commission member Sheri Haugen-Hoffart – all Republican incumbents seeking reelection – said they are gathering signatures.

For everyone but Howe, gathering signatures is a departure from how they handled their candidacy four years ago, the incumbents told the Monitor.

“It’s a little unpredictable, and I’m not one to leave things open to unpredictable,” Wrigley said of the state convention process. “To

be clear, the Republican-endorsed candidate comes out of the primary.”

Wrigley has been attending district NDGOP meetings but said he hasn’t decided if he’ll attend the state convention next month in Minot.

When asked whether he planned to attend the state convention, Kroshus said step one is to attend district conventions.

“I’ve been making the rounds to the extent that a person can because you still have a job to do and that comes first,” Kroshus said. “But, at the same time, you have to make your case to be reelected to continue doing the job.”

Howe said he gathered signatures in 2022 but ultimately didn’t submit them because he received the state party endorsement. All candidates collected signatures in 2020 when political conventions were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bob Harms, a former chair of the North Dakota Republican Party, called it “troubling” to see the separation within the state party, especially among the party leadership.

Harms said a lot of division is lingering from the 2024 state convention in Fargo where some delegates were nearly shut out from participating due to challenges to the district’s delegate selection process. Many also objected to the process for endorsing a U.S. House candidate in a five-way race. Some delegates intentionally spoiled their ballots, preventing either Julie Fedorchak or Alex Balazs from receiving enough votes to be endorsed. Fedorchak withdrew during the drawn-out process, leaving Balazs as the

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investigations because it is more efficient, Darcy said, but he is hoping they move more quickly on Cool’s case as well as others he’s recently come across.

It may be easier to process the case since the deceased were buried individually, and not as a group, he said.

“I would really like to go forward with this,” Peterson said. “And give him a proper burial.”

Back in Newburg, an empty gravesite at Dovre Lutheran Cemetery with Orlan’s name on the stone lies near the graves of his father and mother.

A total of 203 seamen perished in the wrecks of the Pollux and Truxton, while 186 survived.

The last known survivor of the Pollux, Lanier Phillips, died in 2012.

Phillips, the grandson of slaves, served as a mess attendant

on the ship due to segregation policies in the Navy at the time. Years after the war he became a civil rights activist, joining Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

Darcy maintains a database of over 17,000 MIAs from WWII; 340 of those are from North Dakota. He’s currently attempting to identify another 10 from North Dakota who went missing in action during the war, and hopes relatives step forward if they recognize names.

Once they do, they can request a DNA kit from the DPAA to start the process of identification and potentially get the remains returned to North Dakota, though procedures can take several years.

One such case is U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Irvin C. Ellingson, of Dahlen, North Dakota, whose remains were formally accounted for in June of 2025.

Ellingson was shot down over Japan in April 1945 and taken as a prisoner to the Tokyo Military Prison, where he died in a catastrophic fire the following month. The fire killed over 100 American POWs.

Remains of nearly three dozen of those POWs were examined in 2022, with Ellingson positively identified in that batch.

Ellingson will be buried in Dahlen on June 20, 2026.

The 10 from North Dakota Darcy is investigating include: Carrol L. Carlson of Bismarck, lost during the Palau campaign in the South Pacific; Normand J. Montplaisir of Horace, Melvin L. Nicholson of Bowesmont, and Arnt G. Odegaard of Tioga, all lost during kamikaze strikes in Okinawa; John T. Opsvig of Ward County, stationed in Sichuan but lost during China operations near present day Wuhan; Carrol N. Osterdahl of Ransom County, lost during operations in Malaysia;



By U.S. Navy, US National Archives RG-19-LCM, Box 69 - U.S. Navy Boston Naval Shipyard photo 2532-41 from Navsource.org, Public Domain

Arnold A. Pfaff of Sheridan County, lost in Ottre, Belgium; Aldrich A. Seeley of Cavalier County, lost at Neuenkirchen, Germany; Eldred W. Stafney of Burleigh County, lost at Haiphong, Vietnam (French Indochina at the time); and George A. Swenson of Ward County, lost off of Chieuti on the east coast of mainland Italy.

Families can contact Darcy at: teddarcy@yahoo.com or through the website at: <http://wfirg.com/>

Sagsveen said the list itself tells a story.

“Young men from every corner of North Dakota were deployed to serve and die in every corner of the globe,” Sagsveen said. “The ranks indicate they were junior commissioned and noncommissioned officers, likely leading small units into battle.”



The North Dakota News Cooperative is a non-profit news organization providing reliable and independent reporting on issues and events that impact the lives of North Dakotans. The organization increases the public’s access to quality journalism and advances news literacy across the state. For more information about NDNC or to make a charitable contribution, please visit newscoopnd.org.

WW II DEAD & MISSING									
CARLSON,CARROLL LAVERNE	LTJG	250895	2	ND BISMARCK	440907	6	USS HORN	VF-2	PALAU
COOL,ORLAN ROBERT	SEA1	3288363	2	ND WESTHOPE	420218	6	USS POLL		CN NF PLACENTIA BAY
ELLINGSON,IRVIN C	SSGT	39271130	11	ND NELSON CNTY	450526	6	ISLEY FLD	878TH BS	JAPAN TOKYO PRISON FIRE
MONTPLAISIR,NORMAND JOS	MM3	7577426	2	ND HORACE	450520	6	USS THAT		OKINAWA OFF
NICHOLSON,MELVIN LEVERN	SF1	3287908	2	ND BOWESMONT	450429	6	USS HAZEL		OKINAWA OFF
ODEGAARD,ARNT GEORGE	BM1	3813531	2	ND TIOGA	450527	6	USS BRAIN		OKINAWA OFF
OPSVIG,JOHN T	1LT	0730590	11	ND WARD CNTY	440506	6	SUICHWA	449TH FS	CHINA HANKOW
OSTERDAHL,CARROL N	1LT	0739573	11	ND RANSOM CNTY	450111	6	DUDHKUN	677TH BS	MALAYA MASAI
PPAFF,ARNOLD A	TEC4	37323733	1	ND SHERIDAN CNTY	450110	6		774TH TK BN	BELGIUM OTTRE
SEELEY,ALDRICH A	SSGT	17155252	11	ND CAVALIER CNTY	440329	6	BASSINGB	401ST BS	GERMANY NEUENKIRCHEN
STAFNEY,ELDRED W	SSGT	37281162	11	ND BURLEIGH CNTY	430915	6	KUNMING	373RD BS	FRENCH INDO-CHINA HAIPHONG
SWENSON,GEORGE A	SSGT	37307699	11	ND WARD CNTY	430903	6	BENINA	344TH BS	ITALY OFF CHIEUTI