



photo | courtesy of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library

AERIAL VEW OF THE Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, ND in September 2025. The grand opening of the library is scheduled for Jul 2026.

5 North Dakota stories to watch in 2026

By Jeff Beach

North Dakota Monitor

Federal policies on health care and trade are likely to continue to color North Dakota’s biggest government stories in 2026. Congress and the Trump administration are spending money in an attempt to help the rural health care system and farm economy to offset cuts to Medicaid and declining ag commodity prices.

It’s also an election year, featuring ballot measures and a U.S. House race in North Dakota. And the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library plans its grand opening in conjunction with the nation’s milestone 250th anniversary.

Special session

Gov. Kelly Armstrong has set Jan. 21 as the date for a special legislative session to allocate federal rural health funding that was part of what Republicans called the One Big Beautiful Bill Act in 2025.

North Dakota was awarded \$199 million after applying for its share of the federal funding. One North Dakota policy change prompted by the competition for federal funding was prohibiting the use of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to buy candy and junk food. The new restrictions are expected to be implemented by September 2026.

North Dakota’s application for funds from the Rural Health Transformation Program focused on four areas: workforce; preventive care and healthy eating; bringing high-quality health care closer to home; and improving health care technology.

Once lawmakers gather at the Capitol, they could propose bills addressing other issues. But legislative leaders have said they plan to limit the scope of the session, and rules require that a two-thirds majority in each chamber must agree that the topic should be considered.

Election

North Dakota’s only U.S. House seat and a potential statewide vote on making school meals free for students are likely to be the top races in 2026, but there are many more. More than half of the Legislature’s seats are up for election, and there are local races for seats on school boards, judgeships and other positions.

U.S. Rep. Julie Fedorchak, a Republican in her first term, plans to run for reelection and has already received President Donald Trump’s endorsement. Republican Alex Balazs, who came in fourth out of five candidates in the 2024 primary but received the state party endorsement, has announced plans to challenge Fedorchak.

Other statewide offices — all held by Republicans — on the 2026 ballot are secretary of state,

attorney general, agriculture commissioner, tax commissioner and two seats on the Public Service Commission.

The statewide nonpartisan offices up for election are the Superintendent of Public Instruction and two seats on the state Supreme Court.

In the Legislature, odd-numbered districts are on the ballot and two even-numbered districts, 26 and 42, have elections for House seats. The primary is June 9.

North Dakotans may be voting on state funding for school breakfasts and lunches, something the 2025 Legislature voted down. Organizers still need to turn in signatures to get the issue on the general election ballot.

Voters will consider during the primary election a ballot measure to require all proposed amendments to the state constitution to comprise a single subject.

The Legislature also approved putting two measures on the 2026 general election ballot. Measure 1 proposes to make changes to term limits voters approved in 2022. The measure would allow lawmakers to serve up to 16 years in one chamber and clarifies that a partial term does not count toward the limit. Measure 2 would require that 60% of voters approve a measure instead of a simple majority.

Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library

The grand opening of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library is set for July 4 in Medora, coinciding with the 250th birthday of the United States.

All living presidents are invited to the grand opening, said Matt Briney, spokesperson for the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation. However, they may not attend on the opening weekend and instead arrange a time to see the library before the year ends.

President Trump has not confirmed whether he will attend the library opening, Briney said. July 1 is highlighted on a national calendar of 250th events to celebrate the library’s grand opening.

Members of Theodore Roosevelt’s family are planning to camp in the area during the opening weekend, and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, who is also a library foundation board member, plans on attending the library opening, according to Briney. Among public officials expected to attend is Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, who championed the library project as North Dakota governor.

The state has high hopes for attracting more tourists to the town of fewer than 200 people with the museum dedicated to Roosevelt, who ranched in the Badlands before becoming revered as one of America’s greatest presidents.

Energy

As the nation’s No. 3 oil producing state, North

Dakota relies on oil and gas taxes for more than half of its revenue. Production has held relatively steady, though the price of oil is struggling to stay above the level forecast by the state.

Industry observers will be watching to see if a couple of carbon dioxide gas sequestration projects — Minnkota Power’s Project Tundra and the Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline — will move forward.

Sequestration is permanent underground storage of the greenhouse gas. Minnkota would sequester CO2 from a coal-fired power plant while Summit would gather CO2 from ethanol plants in five states, including one in North Dakota. While in the works for years, construction has not started on either project. Summit, which has faced regulatory challenges, has indicated the possibility of changing the pipeline route, but also has said a North Dakota storage area “remains an important long-term asset for the project.”

Meanwhile, hearings on a controversial high-voltage transmission line are coming up in January. There is high interest in a pipeline to bring natural gas from western North Dakota to the east, though construction won’t start until 2028. There could also be headwinds for wind and solar energy as the Trump administration cuts incentives for green energy projects.

Potential efforts to extract critical minerals from coal, lawmakers’ study of nuclear energy’s feasibility in the state and the ongoing discussion surrounding data centers are also likely to be major energy topics in 2026.

Agriculture

The farm economy took a beating in 2025, and 2026 isn’t looking so good, either. A major factor will be export markets. China has been a key importer of North Dakota soybeans in years past but did little buying in 2025.

Depressed prices for soybeans and other crops coaxed the Trump administration into aid payments for farmers, which should arrive in February. Former North Dakota Farmers Union leader Mark Watne questioned whether those payments would be enough to keep farmers afloat.

Construction will continue in 2026 on two giant milking operations for Minnesota-based Riverview in the Red River Valley. There is a lawsuit pending against the state for its permitting of the Herberg Dairy near Hillsboro and other legal challenges to the Abercrombie Dairy north of Wahpeton.

Beef production was the bright spot for North Dakota agriculture in 2025, and despite some ups and downs, could be again in 2026 as consumer demand remains strong despite higher prices.

North Dakota Monitor reporter Michael Achterling contributed to this story.