

# News From The States

# EVENING WRAP

from States Newsroom

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*From Kate Queram*

GOT QUESTIONS? ASK KATE

**Skip right to the election news?** I vote yes.

(See what I did there?)



## The Big Takeaway

Lawmakers in Georgia are expected to consider sweeping changes to the state's election rules before the conclusion of legislative session Thursday, leaving local officials on alert for policies that might need to be implemented ahead of November, [the Georgia Recorder reported](#).



*Now with changes! (Photo by John McCosh/Georgia Recorder)*

The proposals, all approved last week by various legislative committees, address everything from [election worker qualifications](#) to the number of voting machines in use on Election Day. [One bill](#) would change the tabulation process by replacing a ballot QR code with readable text. [Another](#) would require the secretary of state to scan and upload ballots to a website for public perusal following an election. Members of the public could file open records requests to observe the scanning process at their local election office and, for a fee, request a copy of specific ballots.

[A third proposal](#) clarifies voter eligibility requirements and the criteria to challenge it. Under the bill, a local registrar could uphold an eligibility challenge for “probable cause,” including a voter being registered at a nonresidential address or in a different jurisdiction. Election officials would be required to contact those voters, who could resolve the challenge by providing proof of their eligibility.

**Supporters said the bill aimed to clarify a 2021 law** that empowered voters to challenge other people’s eligibility based on their own suspicions

that the person is voting somewhere other than where they reside. More than 100,000 voter challenges have been filed since the law took effect, according to voting rights groups, who said they appreciated the attempt at clarity but doubted the bill would reduce the number of bogus disputes. Others scoffed at the idea of affording voters the “opportunity” to prove their own eligibility.

“When you’re met with the fact that you’ve been challenged at the ballot box,” said state Sen. Jason Esteves, an Atlanta Democrat, “that is not the opportunity to be joyful about the democratic process.”

**VERIFICATION BY PERSON CIRCULATING PETITION**

**CIRCULATOR:** This section **must** be completed following circulation and before the petition is filed.

Enter the names in the form in which they are registered to vote. The circulator must add the residence address of the signer and the condition or third class municipality, a post office box may be used. The circulator must print the name of the signer in the space provided. Ditto marks may not be used. They may invalidate the signature.

RESIDENCE	DATE/COUNTY
NUMBER OR RURAL ROUTE AND BOX NUMBER	DATE OF SIGNING
	COUNTY OF REGISTRATION
NUMBER OR RURAL ROUTE AND BOX NUMBER	DATE OF SIGNING
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	COUNTY OF REGISTRATION

**DECLARATION OF CANDIDATE**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (here insert the jurisdiction of \_\_\_\_\_, number of legislative district or "state") of South Dakota, \_\_\_\_\_ County, whose mailing address is \_\_\_\_\_, SD \_\_\_\_\_, and whose principal residence address is \_\_\_\_\_, SD \_\_\_\_\_, as an Independent candidate for the office of \_\_\_\_\_, at the general election to be held November \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

I am eligible to seek the office for which I am a candidate and that I reside in the district from which I am a candidate. If \_\_\_\_\_

*Joy abounds. (Illustration by Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)*

The democratic process did not spark joy for independent legislative candidates in South Dakota, who operated for months under guidance directing them to collect far more petition signatures than is required to appear on the ballot under state law. The guidelines, posted on the secretary of state’s website, were updated only after a retired attorney flagged the errors. By that point, they’d been online for two months, [South Dakota Searchlight reported](#).

**The discrepancies were staggering.** The original list directed independent legislative candidates in two Sioux Falls-area districts to collect 1,029 signatures. The real numbers: 114 and 88. On March 8, after Davis reported



the errors, the numbers were changed to 114 and 88, respectively. Independent candidates in two Rapid City-area districts were initially told to collect 454 signatures; really, they needed just 115 and 99.

**The mistake should have been obvious** to anyone with a passing understanding of [state election law](#), which requires candidates to collect a number of signatures equal to 1% of the votes cast in their district in the last gubernatorial election. Each legislative district has around 25,000 people, based on 2020 census data — meaning that no legislative candidate would need to collect more than 250 signatures, even if every single voter participated in the most recent gubernatorial race.

Rachel Soulek, director of the Division of Elections within the South Dakota secretary of state's office, refused to discuss the issue by phone but offered a wordy explanation by email, which really needed only this one sentence: "A staff person had an error in our calculations when putting the signature requirements together."

Her office notified county auditors once it updated the totals, she added.



*No booing, please. (Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)*

**U.S. Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) won't need to collect signatures** in his run for Senate Republican leader — which is probably a good thing, [given the jeers](#) elicited by his photo at a state GOP fundraiser in September. In normal times, a politician might take that as a sign to rethink his plans. But “these aren't normal times,” [Thune told Searchlight](#).

It's a bit of a full-circle moment for Thune, who [won his Senate seat](#) in 2004 by ousting then-Minority Leader Tom Daschle, a Democrat. The victory elevated him to hero status in the GOP — albeit a very *different* GOP, he acknowledged. But for the most part, Thune said, he hasn't changed along with it.

“The one thing that I keep in perspective is that I certainly haven't changed my views,” he said. “I have the same conservative, core values that I've had my entire time in public life and prior to it. I think that these days, politics sometimes revolves around personalities more so than it does the issues. But if you look at the core values — the things that I ran on and ran for — that's still the same person I am.”

There's still a place for that type of Republican in the party, he added.

“Just bringing right-of-center, conservative, common sense to the big issues of the day, whether it's how we deal with the border, how we deal with the economy, some of the cultural issues. I'm still about limited government, personal freedom coupled with individual responsibility, economic freedom, free markets, free enterprise, strong national defense,” he said. “Those are the core Republican values that I hold dear and that I want to be able to advocate here in Washington.”

## **Core values**

- [Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek's wife gets aide, office space as governor considers creating 'Office of the First Spouse'](#)
  - [Pennsylvania House Republicans seek to move voter ID bill forward](#)
  - [Tennessee's population growth puts it on track for additional U.S. House seat in 2032](#)
  - [Federal appeals court won't block Washington's redrawn legislative district map](#)
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## Also Trending

A tire recycling program in Arkansas will run out of money within a year, but officials are still refusing to raise the fees that fund it. That leaves lawmakers with two options: Prop up the program with state reserve funds, or leave the state's four tire districts to operate at a loss — indefinitely, [the Arkansas Advocate reported](#).





*Who knew tires were so complicated? (Photo by John Sykes/Arkansas Advocate)*

“We think we have a window of time where we think we’re going to be able to make a full reimbursement,” Caleb Osborne, director of the state Division of Environmental Quality, said at [a recent legislative hearing](#). “We don’t know how long that will last ... We understand there may need to be more conversations heading into next session.”

**The program is not an optional line item** — it's basically the only way to dispose of scrap tires, which can't be processed at landfills and generally do not garner much demand for materials. The state's recycling program addresses that problem by accepting used tires from shops across the state and then shuttling them to licensed facilities. Most of the initiative's funding comes from a state-mandated \$3-per-tire rim removal fee, fronted by customers whenever they purchase new tires. After administrative costs, \$2.31 of that fee returns to one of the state's four used tire districts, which then reimburse recycling facilities for processing. Typically, that costs \$2.80 to \$2.90 per tire.

Lawmakers approved those rates last week but did not adjust state funding or the tire fee to cover the difference, so it's only a matter of time until the program bleeds itself dry. Once that happens, the four districts will be reimbursed based on the state's quarterly tire fee revenue — for example, an 80% reimbursement rate when the program's quarterly revenue is 80% of the amount needed to fund it fully. If that doesn't make sense, well, that's because it doesn't make sense, according to Conway County Judge Jimmy Hart, chairman of one of the districts.

"We're optimistic, but we're a little bit cautious because of the pro rata," he said. "We can't write checks with pro rata. We can't function and pay our employees and pay for operations with pro rata."

### **But other than that**

- [‘Downwinder’ renewal left out of massive budget bill rushed through Congress](#)
- [Ohio landowners say solar opposition groups threaten their property rights](#)
- [\(Oregon\) Rising temperatures from climate change depleting oxygen in coastal waters, threatening marine life](#)
- [In deep red Utah, climate concerns are now motivating candidates](#)



### **From The Newsrooms**

#### **EDUCATION**

- [School voucher proponents spend](#)
- [As Oklahoma adds virtual charter](#)



[big to overcome rural resistance](#)

- [More time needed to assess if Indiana's work-based learning overhaul is effective, says new brief](#)

[schools, some wonder if there's a 'saturation point'](#)

- ['Really troubling:' Washington survey finds poor outcomes for students with disabilities after high school](#)

## COURTS & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- [Idaho AG's office only ordered to pay part of attorney fees in grant investigation lawsuits](#)
- [\(Kansas\) NRA insider Phil Journey shines a light on corruption at influential gun-rights organization](#)

- [Minnesota to pay \\$109 million in property forfeiture class action settlement](#)
- [ACLU of Nevada threatens lawsuits over noncompliance with in-jail voting law](#)

## HEALTH CARE

- [Self-managed abortions increased by about 26,000 after Dobbs decision, study shows](#)
- [Five years later, this Mississippi mom is still fighting an outdated law blocking her child's inheritance](#)

- [Budget, Medicaid funding could dominate final weeks of Missouri legislative session](#)
- [After eight years of searching, why can't Rhode Island hire a permanent chief medical examiner?](#)



## One Last Thing

The door from “Titanic” that saved Rose but ([pointlessly](#)) killed Jack [sold for \\$718,750](#) at a Treasures from Planet Hollywood auction, fetching more cash than Indiana Jones’ whip and the ax from “The Shining.” For an extra bit of annoyance, the auction notes would like you to know that “in reality” it is

not even a door, but “part of the door frame just above the [ship’s] first-class lounge entrance.”

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