

# SOUTH DAKOTA FELL BEHIND UNDER NOEM

## Highlights:

- South Dakotans suffered with high COVID positivity rates and high death rates under the Kristi Noem administration.
- South Dakota's economy saw job losses and revenue declines under the Kristi Noem administration.
- Health care services in South Dakota were poorly ranked under the Kristi Noem administration.
- South Dakota's education system ranked poorly under the Kristi Noem administration and faced teacher resignations and vacancies.
  - 2023: South Dakota's average teacher salary ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

## South Dakotans Suffered With High COVID Positivity Rates And High COVID Death Rates Under Noem

### **2020: SOUTH DAKOTA'S COVID RESPONSE RESULTED IN HIGH POSITIVITY AND DEATH NUMBERS COMPARED TO OTHER STATES**

#### **2020: South Dakota's Largest Hospitals Hit Capacity As COVID Cases Soared**

**2020: South Dakota's Largest Hospitals Hit Capacity To Care For Critically Ill COVID Patients And Had To Fly Patients Out Of State At The End Of 2020.** According to South Dakota News Watch, "South Dakota's largest hospitals are at or above their capacity to care for critically ill COVID-19 patients, forcing some of the sickest patients to be flown out of state to receive care. The strain of a months-long surge in coronavirus cases has reduced hospital capacity to care for those with severe symptoms, making it increasingly uncertain whether the sickest South Dakotans will be able to get treatment in the state, health providers say. Meanwhile, ICU space is quickly evaporating in neighboring states as well. Both the Sanford USD Medical Center and Monument Health Rapid City Hospital have reported that their Intensive Care Units are out of space. On Dec. 2, Avera McKennan reported that 6.7% of its ICU beds were available for use. Statewide, the number of available ICU beds has been steadily declining as coronavirus cases have continued to climb." [South Dakota News Watch, [12/4/20](#)]

**South Dakota Reported The Highest Daily Death Rate In The U.S. At The End Of 2020.** According to KELO, "In the last 7 days South Dakota has had the highest daily reported death rates per 100 thousand population of the United States," Dr. Michael Elliot of Avera Health said." [KELO, [12/21/20](#)]

**By November 2020, One Out Of Every 19 Residents In South Dakota Had Been Infected With COVID.** According to the Washington Post, "By Nov. 1, 1 out of every 19 residents of the state had been infected with the virus. Out of every 2,100 South Dakotans alive at the beginning of the year, one had died of the virus. Hospitalizations began to surge, reaching a peak near the end of the month." [Washington Post, [2/3/21](#)]

#### **By Late 2020, South Dakota Totaled Over 1,000 COVID Deaths, Ranked Among Top Of COVID Deaths On A Per Capita Basis**

**December 2020: South Dakota COVID Deaths Passed 1,000.** According to the Aberdeen American News, "South Dakota's COVID-19 death toll pushed past 1,000 on Thursday, with 38 additional deaths, the state Department of Health reported. The additional deaths moved the total to 1,033, and they included a person in the age range of 20-29, which has been a rarity. So far, three people in that age range have died with COVID-19, while 15,656 in that age range have tested positive for the coronavirus." [Aberdeen American News, [12/3/20](#)]

**South Dakota Had Lost More Lives To COVID-19 Than Oregon, Despite Only Being One-Fifth The Size.** According to the Capital Journal, "Now, even with nearly five times as many residents as South Dakota, Oregon has seen fewer deaths from the coronavirus than South Dakota. Last weekend, the Capital Journal highlighted how South Dakota lost more lives to COVID-19 than New York City did for a recent week. However, since the start of the pandemic, the total deaths in NYC are

much higher than in South Dakota. On the contrary, the Oregon comparison does not use a time period. South Dakota simply has more COVID-19 deaths since the pandemic began than a state nearly five times its size.” [Capital Journal, 12/4/20]

**South Dakota Led Country In Average Daily Number Of COVID Deaths Per Capita At One Point At The Beginning Of December 2020.** According to a New York Times opinion column from Frank Bruni, “As of Friday afternoon, South Dakota led the country in the average daily number of recent Covid-associated deaths per capita, with three for every 100,000 people, according to a New York Times database. North Dakota was second, with 1.5. More than 40 percent of South Dakota’s 1,033 Covid-related deaths to that point occurred in November, according to statistics from the Covid Tracking Project, and the same was true of North Dakota’s 983 deaths.” [New York Times Opinion, Frank Bruni, [12/5/20](#)]

## **SOUTH DAKOTA RANKED THIRD-HIGHEST IN NATION IN COVID CASES AND EIGHTH-HIGHEST FOR COVID DEATHS AS OF JUNE 2021**

**South Dakota Ranked Third-Highest In Nation In COVID Cases And Eighth-Highest For COVID Deaths As Of June 9, 2021.** According to KELO, “According to state by state data compiled by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, South Dakota ranked third-highest in the nation in COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population as of June 9. For deaths related to COVID-19, South Dakota was tied for eighth-highest among states per 100,000 population (and ninth-highest if New York City is included, as the CDC does.)” [KELO, [6/14/21](#)]

## **SOUTH DAKOTA SAW TEST POSITIVITY RATE OF 23.9% AS RECENTLY AS JULY 2022**

**South Dakota Saw Test Positivity Rate Of 23.9% As Recently As July 2022.** According to the Black Hills Pioneer, “As of July 27, the South Dakota Department of Health (DOH) reported 4,390 active cases, up from 4,176 the previous week. State data shows 56 of 66 counties as having high community spread, defined as 100 cases or greater per 100,000 or a 10% or greater PCR test positivity rate. The overall state positivity rate over the 7-day period leading up to July 27 was 23.9%.” [Black Hills Pioneer, 7/30/22]

## **2020-2024: SOUTH DAKOTA REPORTED MORE THAN 3,000 COVID DEATHS**

**South Dakota Reported More Than 3,300 COVID Deaths As Of January 9, 2024.** According to the South Dakota Department Of Health, South Dakota had 3,331 COVID total deaths as of January 9, 2024. [South Dakota Department Of Health, accessed [1/9/24](#)]

**South Dakota Reported More Than 298,000 COVID Cases As Of January 9, 2024.** According to the South Dakota Department Of Health, South Dakota had 298,317 official COVID cases as of January 9, 2024. [South Dakota Department Of Health, accessed [1/9/24](#)]

## **2023: SOUTH DAKOTA HAD THE LARGEST SPIKE IN COVID HOSPITALIZATIONS IN A SINGLE WEEK AT 127%**

**2023: South Dakota Had The Largest Spike In COVID Hospitalizations In A Single Week At 127%.** According to KOTA, “A summer surge of COVID-19 has been observed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 47 states have had hospitalizations remain stable or increase according to the CDC. Only three states Alaska, New Hampshire, and North Dakota saw COVID-19-related hospital visits drop. According to the CDC tracking, in mid August, South Dakota had the biggest spike in COVID-19 hospitalizations at 127% in a single week.” [KOTA, [9/1/23](#)]

## **South Dakota’s Economy Saw Job Losses And Revenue And GDP Declines Under Noem**

### **2023: WALLETHUB: SOUTH DAKOTA RANKED 43<sup>RD</sup> IN BEST ECONOMIES**

**2023: Wallethub: South Dakota Ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> State In Best Economies.** According to KELO, “For at least two years Gov. Kristi Noem has cited South Dakota’s economy as one of the strongest. The latest ranking by Wallethub shows the state has toppled from any top spot it may have had. Wallethub is a personal finance group that does research on economic factors and

analyzes data. South Dakota is ranked 43rd in best and worst economies. The best economy is in Washington.” [KELO, [6/9/23](#)]

**South Dakota Did Not Rank In The Top Tier Of Jobs For STEM Majors.** According to KELO, “The Wallethub analysis also analyzed STEM jobs in each state as part of an evaluation of innovation potential The Bureau of Labor and industry experts project increased growth in STEM jobs in the future. The BLM said jobs could increase by almost 800,000 by 2031. South Dakota did not rank in the top tier of jobs for STEM majors in an evaluation by ISE ICT Solutions & Education in 2020. Smartasset in 2023 did not list it as a state with fast-growing STEM opportunities. Industry publications and analysis do not list South Dakota on top 10, top 5 or top 20 lists for start-ups over the past several years.” [KELO, [6/9/23](#)]

## **2023: STATE REVENUE SLOWED UNDER NOEM**

**2023: South Dakota’s General Fund Revenue Was \$1.2 Million Lower Than The Legislature’s Budget Had Anticipated.** According to Dakota Searchlight, “The state’s general fund revenue is also \$1.2 million lower than the South Dakota Legislature’s adopted budget had anticipated, though that represents less than a percentage point of the state’s nearly \$2 billion in annual revenue. A drop in lottery revenues, as well as dips in sales and use, tobacco and severance taxes are to blame for the shortfall, according to State Economist Derek Johnson, though he said the most recent figures fit within the typical ebb and flow of tax dollars. The overall growth projections speak to a slowdown several lawmakers cited as a concern during debates over the reduction in the state’s sales and use tax from 4.5% to 4.2%. That tax cut ultimately passed both the House of Representatives and Senate on its way to the desk of Gov. Kristi Noem, who signed it into law in March. The reduction will take effect on July 1.” [South Dakota Searchlight, [5/31/23](#)]

## **SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR CUT POSITIONS AND CLOSED OFFICES UNDER NOEM**

**South Dakota Department Of Labor And Regulation Cut Positions And Closed Offices Across The State.** According to South Dakota News Watch, “As Gov. Kristi Noem continues a \$6.5 million advertising campaign to attract more workers to South Dakota, her Department of Labor and Regulation is cutting positions and closing offices across the state, according to an email obtained by South Dakota News Watch. Labor Secretary Marcia Hultman sent an email to South Dakota Job Services offices Dec. 14 informing them of ‘22 reductions in force resulting in office closures and the elimination of positions. ‘These reductions are the result of federal funds not increasing while the cost of doing business has grown. We have dealt with this in recent years by gradually reducing staff and utilizing carry-over funds. However, the inflationary impacts of the past year called for a more targeted effort resulting in today’s actions,’ Hultman wrote. ‘Those impacted have been notified in person, and I would like everyone to have the same facts.’” [South Dakota News Watch, [12/15/23](#)]

## **SOUTH DAKOTA GDP DECREASED IN FINAL QUARTER OF 2022**

**South Dakota GDP Decreased In Final Quarter Of 2022.** According to the Dakota Scout, “South Dakota saw a decrease in gross domestic product in the final quarter of 2022, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported, raising a red flag on the state’s underlying economic health. The 4.3 percent decrease in GDP was the worst performance of any state in the country. Just three states registered decreases in GDP, but South Dakota saw the steepest decline. Nebraska and Iowa also registered decreases in GDP.” [Dakota Scout, [4/10/23](#)]

## **Health Care Services Were Poorly Ranked In South Dakota Under The Noem Administration**

### **SOUTH DAKOTA WAS AMONG THE WORST STATES FOR HOSPITAL SAFETY UNDER NOEM**

**2022: South Dakota Was Ranked 45<sup>th</sup> In The Nation For Hospital Patient Safety With Only 10% Of Hospitals Receiving An “A” Grade.** According to the Center Square, “South Dakota is among the worst states in the nation for hospital safety, according to a new report. The Leapfrog Group ranked South Dakota 45th after analyzing nearly 3,000 acute-care hospitals across the U.S. for patient safety. The Leapfrog Group is a national nonprofit watchdog organization that assigns letter grades to hospitals based on safety and patient experience. Only 10% of the hospitals it investigated in South Dakota received an ‘A’ grade. It used national patient safety measures from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and other supplemental data sources to develop the grade. Some of the measures taken into consideration included nurse and

doctor communication, staff responsiveness, communication about medicines, culture of leadership structures and systems, nursing workforce, and other safety measures.” [Center Square, [5/11/22](#)]

## **SIX OF SOUTH DAKOTA’S NURSING HOMES WERE ON A FEDERAL LIST OF THE WORST-RATED FACILITIES**

**Six Of South Dakota’s Nursing Homes Were On A Federal List Of The Worst-Rated Facilities.** According to Dakota News Now, “Six of South Dakota’s 98 nursing homes are on a federal list of the nation’s worst-rated care facilities. Five of the facilities are eligible for a special program to improve quality of care through increased regulatory oversight, and the other one is already in the program. The five eligible South Dakota facilities as of the July report from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are Avantara Norton in Sioux Falls, Bennett County Hospital and Nursing Home in Martin, Dells Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Dell Rapids, Firesteel Healthcare Center in Mitchell and Riverview Healthcare Center in Flandreau.” [Dakota News Now, [7/14/23](#)]

## **SOUTH DAKOTA TIED FOR THE LARGEST PERCENTAGE DROP OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN MEDICAID UNDER NOEM’S ADMINISTRATION**

**From March To September 2023, South Dakota Saw 27,572 Children Drop Enrollment In Medicaid And The Children’s Health Insurance Program.** According to the Rapid City Journal, “The federal government is urging South Dakota to take a more proactive approach in keeping the state’s children from losing health insurance coverage. South Dakota is tied for the largest percentage drop of children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, according to new data released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. From March to September 2023, the state saw a 27% drop in enrollment — amounting to 27,572 children. HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra wrote he was ‘deeply alarmed’ by the data in a Dec. 18 letter to Governor Kristi Noem.” [Rapid City Journal, [12/20/23](#)]

## **The Federal Government Urged South Dakota To Act To Keep Children From Losing Medicaid Coverage**

**Department Of Health And Human Services Secretary Wrote To Noem To Urge Her To Act To Keep Children From Losing Health Insurance Coverage.** According to the Rapid City Journal, “The federal government is urging South Dakota to take a more proactive approach in keeping the state’s children from losing health insurance coverage. South Dakota is tied for the largest percentage drop of children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, according to new data released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. From March to September 2023, the state saw a 27% drop in enrollment — amounting to 27,572 children. HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra wrote he was ‘deeply alarmed’ by the data in a Dec. 18 letter to Governor Kristi Noem.” [Rapid City Journal, [12/20/23](#)]

## **South Dakota Ranked In The Bottom Half Of States For Many Educational Markers During Noem’s Administration**

### **WALLET HUB RANKED SOUTH DAKOTA 23<sup>RD</sup> OVERALL FOR EARLY EDUCATION QUALITY**

**WalletHub Ranked South Dakota 23<sup>rd</sup> Overall For Early Education Quality.** According to KELO, “Governor Kristi Noem is correct, a recent WalletHub study did rank South Dakota No. 1 when it comes to early education quality. But what the Governor didn’t share in her Aug. 16 Kristi Noem X account post is the same study ranked the state 23<sup>rd</sup> overall. Based on research from multiple groups, the children who received early childhood education get a quality education, but only a comparative few get the education. The WalletHub study ranked South Dakota 37<sup>th</sup> in access to early education and 41<sup>st</sup> in resources and economic support. WalletHub evaluated programs, funding, cost and other factors and scored the results based on weights for each to determine the rankings.” [KELO, [8/18/23](#)]

### **BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER RANKED SOUTH DAKOTA 50<sup>TH</sup> FOR ITS ABILITY TO OVERSEE FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

**Bipartisan Policy Center Ranked South Dakota 50<sup>th</sup> For Its Ability To Oversee Federal And State Funding In Early Childhood Education.** According to KELO, “The Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington, D.C., think tank organization that focuses on bipartisan approaches to issues, has also ranked states’ ability to oversee federal and state funding in early childhood

education. In January, the policy center ranked South Dakota 50th. It ranked the state 47th in 2018. Washington, D.C., was included in the evaluation of all 50 states both years.” [KELO, [8/18/23](#)]

## **2019: STANDARDIZED TESTING IN SOUTH DAKOTA SHOWED ONLY ABOUT HALF OF STUDENTS WERE PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH, MATH, AND SCIENCE**

**2019: Just Over Half Of South Dakota Students Were Proficient In English Language And Fewer Than Half Were Proficient In Math And Science.** According to the Argus Leader, “South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said she is disappointed in recent statewide standardized test scores indicating that just over half of students were proficient in English language and fewer than half showed proficiency in math and science. The results of the South Dakota Department of Education 2019 Report Card, based on standardized tests, showed that about 54% of students tested in grades three through eight and in 11th grade showed proficiency in reading and writing. Only about 47% of those same students were proficient in math for their respective grade levels, and roughly 40% of students were proficient in science.” [Argus Leader, [10/1/19](#)]

## **2023: SOUTH DAKOTA’S AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY RANKED 50<sup>TH</sup> IN THE NATION**

**2023: South Dakota’s Average Teacher Salary Ranked 50<sup>th</sup> In The Nation.** According to South Dakota News Watch, “Despite those efforts, South Dakota’s average teacher salary of \$49,547 currently ranks 50th in the nation, according to the National Education Association, well below the national average of \$65,293 and neighboring states Minnesota (\$66,561), Wyoming (\$60,234), Iowa (\$58,831), Nebraska (\$56,463), North Dakota (\$54,837) and Montana (\$53,133). South Dakota ranks 39th in per-student state spending at \$11,102, according to the NEA.” [South Dakota News Watch, [1/11/23](#)]

## **TEACHER OPENINGS INCREASED AND REMAINED UNFILLED IN SOUTH DAKOTA DURING THE NOEM ADMINISTRATION**

**Teacher Openings Increased From 2021 To 2022 In South Dakota.** According to South Dakota News Watch, “There were 176 statewide teacher openings at the end of December 2022, compared to 111 at the end of December 2021, a result of teacher retirements but also a rise in K-12 enrollment in South Dakota from 128,000 to 141,000 students over the past decade. The current openings include 36 in special education and 34 in elementary education. The state’s largest school district, Sioux Falls, had 25 open teaching positions in June 2022, according to Assistant Superintendent Jamie Nold, and administrators are still working to fill several positions for the second semester, which begins Jan. 17.” [South Dakota News Watch, [1/11/23](#)]

**2022-2023: 175 Teacher Vacancies Went Unfilled Across South Dakota.** According to the Argus Leader, “During the 2022-2023 school year, about 175 teacher vacancies went unfilled across the state of South Dakota.” [Argus Leader, [11/20/23](#)]

## **20% Of The 131 Teachers Who Resigned From The Sioux Falls School District In 2022 Left The Profession**

**Altogether.** According to the Argus Leader, “Resignations also contribute to the shortage. In a school board work session Aug. 28, Dorman said 20% of the 131 teachers who resigned from the Sioux Falls School District last year left the profession altogether, which is a higher percentage than the district has seen so far.” [Argus Leader, [11/20/23](#)]

## **2024: South Dakota Schools Were Pushed To Limit Offerings Because Of Teacher Shortages**

**2024: Aberdeen School District In South Dakota Stopped Offering Calculus And Statistics Because A Teacher Could Not Be Found.** According to the Argus Leader, “Aberdeen School District Superintendent Becky Guffin said months ago her district stopped offering calculus and statistics classes because a teacher couldn’t be found for those classes.” [Argus Leader, [1/4/24](#)]

**2024: Tea Area School District In South Dakota Closed A Special Education Position In The High School.** According to the Argus Leader, “The Tea Area School District had to close a special education position in the high school this year and lost two teachers to other industries over the school year, Superintendent Jennifer Nebelsick Lowery said.” [Argus Leader, [1/4/24](#)]