

## Ethics

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doesn't have any form of an ethics commission," Gibson said.

House Republican leader Brian Gosch of Rapid City said state legislatures across the country enacted ethics commissions in the wake of President Nixon's Watergate scandal.

Gosch said South Dakota's ethics commission was disbanded after it was used to besmirch reputations of some legislators.

An attempt to restore the commission in 1992 failed in a House committee, according to Gosch.

He cited a variety of state laws and state constitution provisions, as well as the code of conduct in the Legislature's rules book and additional rules in place in the House and the Senate.

Gosch also pointed to the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee.

"Expect to see this again, and I hope we defeat it once again," Gosch said.

Rep. Steve Hickey, R-Sioux Falls, said the resolution's list of cosponsors "regrettably" all come from the same party and there wasn't an attempt to enlist Republicans.

"I think today it's far worse than Watergate, especially the farther east you go," Hickey said.

"The way you deal with perception is with additional procedures," he said.

Hickey called an ethics commission a means for additional vindication when wrongly attacked.

Rep. Lee Schoenbeck, R-Watertown, called it "a bad idea whose time has passed."

He noted that Illinois received a grade of C on the Center for Public Integrity study two years ago, despite four of the past eight governors having gone to prison, while South Dakota ranked 49th with a grade of F.

"They revealed it because it became a playground for bad things," Schoenbeck said. "If this idea works, I want a Tom Cruise commission to make us all strong and handsome," he added.

Rep. Karen Soli, D-Sioux Falls, said the Illinois governors who went to prison were caught doing illegal activities.

"We do need to build trust. I think most of us have experienced that," Soli said.

"I would just love to see what that group would come up with," she said.

The debate Wednesday eventually turned into a defense of how Republicans handled the legislative inquiry last year into the EB-5 economic development program that was quietly expanded during the administration of previous Gov. Mike Rounds.

The program used an Aberdeen company, SDRC Inc., to recruit foreign investors for South Dakota business projects. The \$500,000 investments helped applicants and their immediate families qualify for permanent visas to live anywhere in the United States.

The legislative inquiry came at the request of the House of Representatives and the Senate last year.

Rep. Mark Mickelson, R-Sioux Falls, said GOAC took "an exhaustive amount of testimony" during the past year.

Mickelson, who voted against the EB-5 probe last year and then served on the investigation, called an ethics commission "an unnecessary step."

Rep. Shawn Bordeaux, D-Mission, spoke in support of creating the commission again.

"It's almost like the rug isn't big enough to sweep

everything beneath it," he said, adding, "South Dakota has a big black eye."

Rep. Justin Cronin, R-Gettysburg, defended the scope of GOAC's look and said "one issue" — double billing for trips to China — came out.

Cronin said the result was "blasting and smearing" Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Rounds, who was campaigning for election to the U.S. Senate at the time. He won in November.

"But what never happened

was no one was charged. The U.S. attorney to this day will not confirm or deny an investigation was happening at all," Cronin said.

He said the only person with information is dead.

There wasn't any mention by Cronin or any other legislator of the contract arrangements by that person, nor of the \$550,000 of state grants funds that were redirected by that person, Richard Benda.

Benda was secretary of

tourism and state development the final five years of Rounds' administration.

Benda signed the management contract for SDRC Inc. with its president, Joop Bollen of Aberdeen, to handle EB-5 for state government in 2009 and then went to work for SDRC Inc. in 2011.

Bollen had formed SDRC Inc. in 2008 while overseeing EB-5 activities for state government from an office at

Northern State University. The \$550,000 was routed through Northern Beef Packers, which received EB-5 loans, back to SDRC Inc. in order to pay the loan monitor, Benda, for Northern Beef.

Rounds had approved several grants for Northern Beef. Benda was found to have increased the amount of one of those grants to cover the \$550,000 that Northern Beef diverted to SDRC Inc. from another of the grants.



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## Cabins

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12x12-foot dimensions of the older model.

He added that this gives visitors more accessible opportunities to stay at the park.

"The cabins are really popular," he said. "It works out for people that they can just bring their bedding and a few other things instead of having to pack a tent or bring a camper. They can just show up and enjoy the park."

The addition means the park district, including Springfield, LCRA and Chief White Crane, will include 32 cabins in total.

Ziegenhagen-Riedel said the addition help keeps the park up to date.

"Keeping up with the replacing (of structures, electrical systems, etc.) allows the park to keep going and meet the expectations of the customers," she said.

Aside from the cabin updates, other projects in the park include a new roof coating on the Marina Restaurant and general park maintenance.

You can follow Rob Nielsen on Twitter at [twitter.com/RobNielsen-PandD/](https://twitter.com/RobNielsen-PandD/). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net/](http://www.yankton.net/)

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