

Amendment R Talking Points

1. **The Message—Amendment R is the foundational requirement for fixing the shortage of skilled workers in South Dakota.** It will, for the first time, elevate the mission of the Technical Institutes in educating and training skilled workers, to a constitutional mandate. This will allow for a stronger voice in prioritizing State and Federal assets in support of the Technical Institute mission and increase their output—entry level skilled workers.
2. ***Amendment R will elevate the profile and recognize the mission of the Technical Institutes as a critical and unique part of the education structure in the State. It will afford them a seat at the table to articulate their needs for development of a skilled workforce.*** Technical Institutes came into being in 1965 as an extension of the K-12 system. Since then, their status has changed to fully accredited postsecondary institutions that award AAS degrees in technical areas requiring unique training and education from other postsecondary institutions. However, their status under our State Constitution has not been recognized as the last change to the constitution dealing with postsecondary education was made in 1944. As a consequence, our Technical Institutes lack a clearly defined and recognized status. Without this mandate, Technical Institutes have no advocate to represent their realistic funding and program needs during the State appropriations process. Not surprisingly, per student funding is significantly lower for Technical Institutes than it is for universities or K-12 districts. This creates staggering disparities: South Dakota's Technical Institutes cost less to operate than two-year colleges in the six surrounding states, but receive less State support. Our students make up the difference, paying more than their counterparts at any two-year colleges in neighboring states. This makes it difficult to recruit adequate numbers of students to fill our State's skilled workforce demands.
3. ***This amendment has broad support from the administration, legislative branch and local districts but we need to educate the public as to the importance of passing this amendment.*** House Joint Resolution 1003 spawned this amendment and was passed with only one nay vote through both legislative houses, and the Regents, the Governor's office, business and industry, the Technical Institutes and school districts testified as proponents. However, history tells us that the default vote on an amendment in South Dakota is "no" unless there is a strong campaign to inform and educate the public.
4. ***We need financial and political support from our industry partners to conduct a media campaign that educates the public on this amendment's potential to boost our State economy.*** We request a letter of support from your organization and your permission to use your name as a proponent of this amendment. Additionally, we respectfully ask you to consider a financial contribution to this campaign. This is a one- time shot at trying to reset our thinking on the importance of a skilled workforce to our economy. We need everyone aboard to help us get this done.