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Senate Appoints Select Committee on Discipline and Expulsion

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PIERRE—Today, Senate leadership announced details of the investigation into the alleged actions of Senator Julie Frye-Mueller (R-District 30) and Senate appointments to a Select Committee on Discipline and Expulsion.

On Jan. 25, 2023, Senate leadership were notified of an allegation of unprofessional behavior against Senator Julie Frye-Mueller by a Legislative Research Council (LRC) staff member. Because of the seriousness of the allegations, Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck (R-District 5) removed Senator Frye-Mueller from her committee assignments as permitted by Senate Rule S4-1.

On Jan. 26, Senate Republicans received a detailed report from an LRC staff member alleging inappropriate behavior and harassment related to private maternal matters, including childhood vaccines and breastfeeding, which took place in the LRC office inside the State Capitol Building. Senator Frye-Mueller was given an opportunity to speak to the Senate Republican Leadership on Jan. 25. Comments made by Sen. Frye-Mueller in that private discussion are inconsistent with her public statements and the report received from the LRC staff member.

“We thank the state employee for bringing this matter to our attention,” said Senate Majority Leader Casey Crabtree (R-District 8). “Our goal is to create a safe work environment for staff and legislators, and an environment where employees feel safe bringing concerns forward. All allegations of harassment must be taken seriously. There will be due process afforded to all parties as this matter moves forward.”

Senators voted to suspend Senator Frye-Mueller on Jan. 26 pending a full hearing on the merits which Senate leadership plans to commence next week. Since the allegations involve a sensitive personnel matter and formal accusations against a public official, the Senate will determine a procedure that respects the rights of all parties involved and keeps the public informed throughout the process.

The South Dakota [Constitution](#) states that “each house shall determine the rules of its proceedings” and “qualifications of its own members.” These rules are adopted in Legislative procedure and this precedence has been affirmed by *Gray v. Gienapp*, 727 NW2d 808 (SD 2007).

Senator David Wheeler (R District 22) will chair the Select Committee on Discipline and Expulsion that will hear the complaint and make a recommendation to the full Senate. Also appointed to the select committee are Senators Jim Bolin (R-District 16), Sydney Davis (R-District 17), Helene Duhamel (R-District 32), Red Dawn Foster (D-District 27), Brent Hoffman (R-District 9), Liz Larson (D District 10), Tim Reed (R-District 7), and Dean Wink (R-District 29).

The Senate will be asked to adopt the rules on Monday, and the Select Committee intends to provide a report back to the full Senate before the end of the fourth week of the legislative session. Except as provided by South Dakota law, the Select Committee hearings will be open to the public and the final report will be a public record.

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