



South Dakota Secretary of State

Monae L. Johnson
Secretary of State

Thomas J. Deadrick
Deputy Secretary of State

For Immediate Release: March 5, 2026

Contact: SOS.Media@state.sd.us

SECRETARY OF STATE ANNOUNCES 2026 JOHN LEWIS YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD

(Pierre, S.D.) – Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson is pleased to announce the 2026 John Lewis Youth Leadership Award. This year, two South Dakotans will be selected to receive this prestigious honor, which recognizes exceptional young leaders who are making a difference in their communities.

The John Lewis Youth Leadership Award was established in 2021 by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) to celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of the late Congressman John Lewis. Lewis' courageous leadership during the Civil Rights Movement and his decades of public service as a U.S. Congressman continue to inspire Americans of all ages.

“The John Lewis Youth Leadership Award allows us to recognize young South Dakotans who share Congressman Lewis' commitment to justice, service, and positive change,” said Secretary Johnson. “It is my hope that this award will not only honor their leadership but also inspire others to step forward in service to their communities.”

Award Criteria:

Recipients must be 25 years old or younger at the time of the award presentation and demonstrate:

- Recognized civic leadership and contributions to improving the quality of life in their South Dakota community.
- A meaningful commitment to addressing civil rights issues, including but not limited to voting rights.
- A proven ability to authentically bring about positive change through advocacy, community leadership, or creative work such as literature.

How to Nominate:

Community members are encouraged to nominate eligible candidates by completing the fillable nomination form and submitting it via email to elections@state.sd.us no later than **5:00 PM (CT) on November 1st, 2026**. Nominations must include a photo of the nominee and may include up to ten pages of supporting digital materials, such as news articles or social media posts. Submissions may be used for social media and other promotional materials by the South Dakota Secretary of State's office.

For more information on the 2026 John Lewis Youth Leadership Award, please visit the Secretary of State's [website](#).