



South Dakota Secretary of State

Monae L. Johnson
Secretary of State

Thomas J. Deadrick
Deputy Secretary of State

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SECRETARY JOHNSON ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF JOHN LEWIS YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD

PIERRE, S.D. – Secretary of State Monae L. Johnson is pleased to announce the introduction of the John Lewis Youth Leadership Award in South Dakota. Beginning in 2025, 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.

At just 21 years old, John Lewis was among the original thirteen Freedom Riders. He became the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington and one of the "Big Six" leaders who helped organize it. In 1965, he played a pivotal role in the Selma to Montgomery marches, where his leadership on "Bloody Sunday" marked a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement. Lewis went on to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives for 33 years until his passing in 2020.

"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.



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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 p.m. CT on November 1st, 2025**. 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 about John Lewis, please visit <https://sdsos.gov/elections-voting/voting/college-students.aspx>