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(SD)-SD Legislature Sends Budget To Gov

By: John Axtell Posted at: 03/13/2019 10:48 PM

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) - Wednesday was the last day of the main run of the South Dakota legislature and lawmakers used it to complete the #1 priority for the session - passing next year's budget.

The House in the morning approved the roughly \$4.9-billion dollar budget 53-6 after the Senate had passed it 27-2.

The package for the next fiscal year includes roughly \$1.7 billion in general state spending, an increase of about \$59 million from the current budget year.

One of the two no votes in the Senate came from Republican Stace Nelson, whose argument wasn't with the budget itself but legislative leaders not leaving enough time for members to study it. Nelson complained they's received it early in the morning for action a short time later.

The state spending plan includes increased funding for education and raises for state employees as well as larger-than anticipated spending hikes for nursing homes and community support providers.

The Legislature big increase for nursing homes comes in the wake of recent closures in communities across South Dakota. Joint Appropriations Committee Co-Chair Sen. John Wiik says the funding hike is a "good start" to addressing the issue.

Lawmakers will return to Pierre in two weeks for the final day of the session to address any remaining issues, such as any vetoes by Gov Kristi Noem between now and then.