

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments ★ May 26, 2016



HB3126 | 9-1-1 Bill

HB3126 has passed the Oklahoma House and Senate and been signed by the Governor. Visit www.acogok.org/take-action-support-hb-3126-improve-9-1-1-oklahoma for a list of FAQs.

Budget Shortfall

Oklahoma's \$1.3 billion budget shortfall was the biggest news this session. There has been significant division between the Senate and the House, and between Republicans and Democrats; however, a budget agreement was reached this week. The gap was partially closed with \$153 million from state and county transportation funds; \$200 million in transportation bonds; \$66 million from the state's Rainy Day Fund.

Budget Cuts

Most agencies received about 5 percent cuts, but some, including the Oklahoma Department of Transportation saw cuts of more than 16 percent. Agencies and/or services receiving significant cuts include higher education, public safety, environmental protection, veterans' affairs, the arts, the health department and higher education.

Some agencies received additional funds to meet critical demands on their services. These include the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, which will receive an additional \$16.3 million and the Department of Health and Substance Abuse which will receive an additional \$6.9 million.

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections and the Oklahoma State Department of Education did not receive additional cuts. In addition, the Historic (rehabilitation) Tax Credit was preserved. [A study by the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture](#) recently revealed that the credit has attracted more than \$520 million in investments and has created 3,000 jobs.

The Oklahoma Healthcare Authority [reacted to the budget](#) agreement with gratitude and hope. **“It may be close enough for OHCA to avoid any additional provider rate cuts...”** their CEO Nico Gomez said.

Meanwhile, advocates with the Oklahoma Policy Institute [called for lawmakers to reject the budget](#) and come back with a plan that doesn't include large tuition increases, closing county health departments, ceasing epidemic prevention efforts and reducing the number of emergency responders, etc.

Also, [the proposed budget made national news](#) because of 70 percent cuts to the state's Earned Income Tax Credit. Opponents are concerned about the impact to 200,000 low-income workers who may lose the credit altogether.

[Click here to view a copy of the proposed budget allocations.](#)

Rural Economic Action Program (REAP)

REAP funding was preserved in the budget, but took a 4.59 percent cut. New total program funds are \$9,658,172.



#MakeMeCount

May is National Bike Month. On Bike To Work Day, May 20, cyclists got behind a national legislative advocacy campaign to change new requirements for how states and metro areas measure traffic congestion. Cyclists supported the campaign by tweeting photos of themselves cycling to work and sharing them with the U.S. Department of Transportation, @USDOT, with the hashtag, #MakeMeCount. Follow the advocates' voices at twitter.com/hashtag/makemecount.

Internet Tax Bill

[HB2531](#) was approved by the Governor on May 17. The bill means online shoppers will have to pay sales tax, which will not only make brick-and-mortar stores more competitive, but will also boost state revenue.



SQ 777

[Opponents of State Question 777](#) have organized into a nonprofit called Oklahoma Rising. They held a town hall meeting on May 12, in Oklahoma City. The proposed constitutional amendment would prohibit future legislatures, state regulatory agencies, counties or municipalities from passing laws or adopting rules and regulations that negatively impact the right of

farmers and ranchers to employ agricultural technology and livestock production and ranching practices. (Source: OML)

Oklahoma's RIGHT to Farm



The Kirkpatrick Foundation, one of the state's oldest philanthropic organizations, has [published non-partisan resources](#) to help inform Oklahomans about the SQ 777. To learn more about the group supporting SQ 777, visit [Oklahoma Right To Farm](#).

More Ballot Measures

SQ 776 - Death Penalty

Provides constitutional justification for death penalty statutes; specifies that methods for execution can be changed and that the death penalty is not cruel and unusual punishment.

SQ 777 - Agriculture

Prohibits the legislature from passing laws abridging the right of farmers and ranchers to employ technologies and practices without compelling state interest.

SQ 790 - Religion

Repeals Section 5 of Article 2 of the Oklahoma Constitution, which prohibits public money from being spent for religious purposes.

SQ 785 – Wine and Beer

Allows grocery stores and convenience stores to sell full-strength beer and wine.

SQ 779

Elected officials on ACOG's Board of Directors oppose [State Question 779](#), which threatens sales tax revenues collected by counties and municipalities. Support for 779 is well-organized and has a growing following on

social media as witnessed by the following accounts:

[YES for 779 Website](#)

[YES for 779 Twitter](#)

[YES for 779 Facebook](#)

Potential Ballot Measures

SQ 780 - Law Enforcement

Reclassifies certain property offenses and simple drug possession misdemeanor crimes.

SQ 781 - Law Enforcement

Uses money saved by reclassifying certain property and drug crimes as misdemeanors outlined in SQ 780 to fund rehabilitative programs.

SQs 786, 789, and 791 - Alcohol

Requires the Legislature to enact laws to regulate alcoholic beverages. Common ownership between tiers of the alcoholic beverage business would be prohibited. Some restrictions would be applied to manufacturers, brewers, winemakers, and wholesalers.

SQ 787 - Direct Democracy

Reforms the initiative and referendum petition process by lengthening the time period to collect signatures from 90 days to one year.

SQ 788 - Marijuana

Legalizes the licensed growth, use, and possession of marijuana for medicinal purpose.

Overtime

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has released the revisions to the white collar overtime exemption rules in the Fair Labor Standards Act. The new rule becomes effective on December 1, 2016. The FLSA applies to employees of several enterprises including schools and local governments.

Legislation Making National News

Last week Oklahomans saw an interesting 24-hour news cycle in which the state appeared in five national news stories. The topics included the collapsed May Avenue Bridge; a controversial abortion bill, SB1552, the Governor later vetoed; a final report on a “botched execution” and a bill, SB1619, to seek articles of impeachment against the President, U.S. Attorney General and U.S. Secretary of Education.

SB1552 was especially controversial and resulted in national figures threatening bans on Oklahoma. New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio issued a statement saying he would ban non-essential travel to Oklahoma if the bill was signed by the Governor, while conservative leaders praised the legislation.

SB1619 died in committee.

Candidates for State Elective Office

[Click here for the full list.](#)

Election Dates

June 28

Statewide Primary Election

August 23

Primary Election Runoff

November 8

General Election

Term Limits, House and Senate Seats

A total of 25 seats out of the chamber’s 48 seats are up for election in 2016. Senators serve staggered, four-year terms and half of the senate is up for election every two years.

Twelve incumbents will not seek re-election including three Democrats and nine Republicans. They Charles Wyrick, Earl Garrison, Brain Bingman, Susan Paddock, Patrick Anderson, Jim Halligan, Ron Justice, Mike Mazzei, John Ford, Don Barrington, Brian Crain and Clark Jolley. All are term-limited except for Halligan.

All 101 seats in the Oklahoma House of Representatives are up for election in 2016. Thirty incumbents are not running for re-election including 11 Democrats and 19 Republicans. A total of 19 are term-limited including Representatives Mike Brown, Ben Sherrer, Wade Rousselot, Jerry McPeak, R.C. Pruet, Jeannie McDaniel, Richard Morrisette, Mike Shelton, Jerry Shoemake, Doug Cox, Lee Denney, Marian Cooksey, Lisa Billy, Paul Wesselhoft, Jeff Hickman, Ann Coody, Pam Peterson, Sally Kern and Gary Banz.

Those not seeking re-election include Representatives James Lockhart, Mike Brown, Justin Wood, James Leewright, Mark McCullough, Dan Fisher, Seneca Scott, David Derby, Randy Grau, Jason Nelson, Mike Christian and Charlie Joyner.

Tim Gatz

Tim Gatz, Deputy Director of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation has been named Executive Director of the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.

