

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Association of Central Oklahoma Governments ★ January 26, 2017



► Inclusion of bills and issues does not equal endorsement by ACOG. ◀

February 6

The first regular session of the 56th Oklahoma Legislature convened to organize on January 3. The first day of the session begins on Monday, February 6.

Schultz, McCall Elected

Senator **Mike Schulz** (R-Altus) was officially elected as Pro Tempore of the Oklahoma Senate on January 3. There are currently six Democrats in the Senate and 42 Republicans.

Representative **Charles McCall** (R-Atoka) was elected Speaker of the House on January 4. In November, Oklahomans elected **32 new members and 69 incumbents** to serve in the House.

Bills, Resolutions: 2,242 Filed

A review of the ballot titles of new filings reveals that 10 percent of bills filed involve teacher and/or school matters. Of the 2,242 bills filed, 831 are Senate bills.

Teacher Raises

Speaker **McCall** has endorsed HB 1114, which will raise teacher pay by \$6,000 per year by 2019-20. Senator **David Holt** has also introduced a measure, [SB 316](#) to fund a \$10,000 teacher pay raise.

Word Cloud of Bills

A word cloud created by

[Oklahoma Watch](#) via [Tableau](#) reveals the number of bills filed for the first session of the 56th Oklahoma Legislature. Hover over each word to see how many bills are assigned to each topic. Visit acogok.org/hover-bills.

\$900 Million Shortfall Tax Credits Examined

Oklahoma faces a \$900 million budget shortfall forcing legislators to look at a broad range of proposals to close the gap. These include examining tax credits and incentives and broadening the sales tax base.

Legislators recently endured a number of days of rather gloomy budget hearings. These were underscored by a report that in **2016 state revenue dropped 7.4 percent** from the 2015, which is the lowest since 2012.

Breakdown

Republicans hold 42 of 48 Oklahoma Senate seats (87.5 percent) and 75 of 101 House seats (72.3 percent).

OPI's Budget Guide

The Oklahoma Policy Institute has introduced a new product that may be helpful to local governments. The [Online Budget Guide](#) is organized into five main chapters and can be read like a book from start to finish. Chapters cover expenditures, revenues, budget process and policy challenges.

OCPA Freedom Agenda

The Oklahoma Council on Public Affairs has released the January 2017 issue of their policy magazine, *Perspective*. The theme is [Freedom Agenda](#) and covers various legislative issues including stopping cronyism; expanding

education choice; resisting Medicaid expansion; breaking the cycle of incarceration; boosting labor force participation and empowering teachers.

Water, Water Rights

Thirteen water and/or water rights bills have been filed for this session. They include:

▶ SB 285 - Updating references to Oklahoma Brine and Produced Water Development Act;

▶ SB 421 - Oklahoma Water Sustainability Act of 2017; development of regional water projects;

▶ HB 2098 - Water Act of 2017;

▶ HB 2099 – Water Policy Act of 2017;

▶ HB 1739 – Water Rights Act of 2017;

▶ HB 2279 – Repealing 82 O.S. 2011, Section 1B, which relates to a moratorium on the sale or exportation of water;

▶ SB 448 – Department of Environmental Quality; prohibiting Department from promulgating public water supply rules beyond certain federal laws.

Bicycle Related Bills

HB 2191 relates to overtaking and passing bicycles; modifying due care requirements in certain conditions; modifying circumstances when certain fine is applicable; modifying fine amounts and more.

HB 1724 permits a bicyclist to treat a stop sign as yield, red light as a stop.

HB 1725 permits railroads to cease operations on a line without abandonment, and allows temporary recreational trail use of

the rights-of-way. The bill specifies how the trails will be established and maintained, permitted and prohibited uses, and liability protections for railroads, trail managers, adjacent landowners. A feature of the bill will permit “rails with trails” use if a railroad wishes to allow it.

Infrastructure

Read the [Blueprint To Rebuild America's Infrastructure](#) released earlier this week by members of the U.S. Senate. The proposal notes that the plan would make a historic \$1 trillion federal investment to modernize America’s crumbling infrastructure and create more than 15 million jobs.

Texting

SB 44 relates to texting and driving. It would modify inclusions, provide exceptions and delete certain definitions. The bill builds upon legislation passed last year to ban texting while driving. The bill would ban handheld phone calls in the car except for emergencies and also allow law enforcement to issue citations for violations based on their own eye witness accounts. Currently, motorists must admit to texting and driving before citations can be written.

EVs

HB 1449 relates to motor vehicle registration fees including an additional \$20 fee (annual) for Electric Vehicles.

Oklahomans in the New Administration

Oklahoma Attorney General **Scott Pruitt** was nominated to serve as director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Mayor **Mick Cornett** was named to the federal

advisory committee on driver-less vehicles.

Federal Cuts

Early reports indicate that under the new Trump Administration the **U.S. Departments of Commerce, Energy, Transportation, Justice** and **State** are slated for major reductions in funding and elimination of programs. Also, the **U.S. Economic Development Administration**, the **National Endowment for the Arts**; the **National Endowment for the Humanities** and the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting**. The cuts reflect policies outlined by the conservative Heritage Foundation.

Also, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency staff has been instructed to freeze all grants — including funding for research, redevelopment of former industrial sites, air quality monitoring and education. Also, employees have been instructed not to discuss the freeze with the public. EPA social media properties are under review along with traditional public relations products such as blog posts and external news releases.

ACOG’s Central OK Clean Cities Program

Members of President Trump’s transition team have included the elimination of the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (DOE EERE) in a budget outline, according to *The Hill*. ACOG’s Clean Cities program, now in its 21st year, received \$85,000 in funding last year through DOE EERE programs. ACOG provides \$8,000 in matching funds annually. In recent years this funding has fluctuated between \$70,000 and \$85,000, annually. If EERE is eliminated the future of the Clean Cities program is uncertain.

ACOG's Economic Development District

Additional proposed cuts include eliminating the U.S. Economic Development Administration, which many conservatives characterize as corporate welfare. ACOG will receive up to \$180,000 in EDA funding to support the work of the [Central Oklahoma Economic Development District](#) this fiscal year.

Arts, Humanities

Also proposed for elimination are the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting would be entirely eliminated. The NEA provided [about \\$1 million](#) in grant funding to Oklahoma arts organizations in 2016. The NEH provided \$692,000 in grant funding to the [Oklahoma Humanities Council](#). In addition, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting provides grants to support the work of KOSU, KGOU and other public radio and TV stations across the state.

OKC Chamber's Legislative Priorities

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce has identified numerous legislative priorities in [a full report on their website](#). Many of the issues speak to the needs and priorities of ACOG members. Highlights include:

► Protecting economic development programs such as the **Historical Building Rehabilitation Tax Credit**;

► Working to ensure the availability of a long-term **water** supply for Central Oklahoma.

► Numerous education and workforce development issues

such as raising teacher pay, supporting new graduation requirements and enhancing Career Tech.

► Numerous healthcare issues such as incentivizing the recruitment and retention of primary care physicians and allied health professionals in **rural and underserved areas in Oklahoma**.

Also, providing municipalities with **local control over local issues** such as tobacco use and smoking. Also, supporting stakeholders' initiatives to end prescription drug abuse.

► Numerous **transportation** issues including advocating for full funding and timely completion of work on major interchanges. Also, adequate funding for the state's Bridge Improvement Program; the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's eight-year construction work plan, and the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority's "Driving Forward" program. Also, protecting state revenues allocated into the state's Public Transit Revolving Fund.

♥ In addition, the Chamber will work with Oklahoma's congressional delegation, state legislators, ODOT and [ACOG](#) to oppose efforts to reduce or eliminate state or federal funding received by Oklahoma to operate the **Heartland Flyer Amtrak** service to Fort Worth, Texas.

► Several municipal issues including Mass Transit/Commuter Rail. The Chamber supports implementation of transit programs that will best serve central Oklahoma including the Central Oklahoma Transit and Parking Authority (COTPA) 2005 Fixed Guideway Transit Study and its following components: **ACOG's Regional Transit Dialogue Committees** to identify

regional transit alternatives and solutions for Central Oklahoma.

ACOG's Commuter Corridors Study recommendations to implement mitigation strategies for future congestion.

The Chamber further supports the development and implementation of a task force consisting of core Central Oklahoma cities working toward the goal of establishing a [Regional Transit Authority](#) to further plan and launch future regional transit services.

The Chamber will work with **ACOG**, municipal governments, ODOT and Class 1 railroads to conduct early-stage planning for introducing commuter rail service into downtown **Oklahoma City from Norman, Edmond and Midwest City**. Further planning consideration should be given to potential future expansion of rail service to the **Shawnee and Yukon** areas.

Also, the Chamber will work with the City of Oklahoma City, **ACOG**, COTPA, ODOT and the state legislature to ensure the continued viability of the intermodal hub at the **Santa Fe station** as well as support [alternative transportation](#) by supporting increased construction of sidewalks, trails and bike lanes.