

REGIONAL MANAGERS TO KEEP THEIR JOBS, DEPARTMENT CALLING FOR ELIMINATION OF CLERICAL POSITIONS

By Marta McCloskey
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Representatives from the State Tourism and Recreation Department said they would not eliminate the State's Regional Offices, however, they will redirect the clerical functions of those offices. Members of the Senate Tourism and Recreation Committee heard the proposed plan from Executive Director of the Tourism and Recreation Department, Ed Cook.

Today, Cook said the elimination of the ten clerical positions would give an added \$300,000 directly to maintenance. Maintenance for the state's 53 parks has an annual budget of approximately \$700,000.

Cook explained the plan to committee members. The ten employees currently in clerical positions at the regional facilities would remain with the department. The positions will be eliminated through attrition. The four regional managers would remain at their posts in the four quadrants outlining the state, along with park superintendents. "We are not going to lay off anyone," Cook said.

In fact, Cook explained that the department was in the process of modernizing equipment for those facilities and has completed necessary employee training for those systems. "Regional managers will report directly to the Oklahoma City administration office."

Earlier during Interim, Sen. Gene Stipe, D-McAlester, told Cook he was concerned about calls he had received on the matter. "This way we will not have senators and representatives scattered around the state taking care of complaints from people that think all regional offices are going to close," Cook said.

In the last five years, Cook said the department has saved money by increasing fees and through the process of attrition. "The maintenance situation is critical. If we do not do something, we will not be able to maintain our parks," he said.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BILL RECEIVES AMENDMENTS ON HOUSE FLOOR

By Marta McCloskey
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■(GIT) HB2430, a workers' compensation bill amending language pertaining to workers' compensation, received an amendment by Rep. Don Kinnamon, D-Stroud, stating that the burden of proof for any claim for compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act shall be on the employee. "The burden of proof for accidental injuries arising out of and in the course of employment shall be preponderance of the evidence."

The bill also states that injury from combat that occurs in the workplace and injuries sustained while under the intoxication of drugs or alcohol shall not be compensated.

Rep. Al Sadler, D-Ardmore, questioned the intent of Kinnamon's amendment. "Are you saying if a guy picks up a two-by-four and starts attacking me, there is nothing I can do," he asked Kinnamon.

Kinnamon said if the injury was not work related, the company would not be liable for the costs.

The amendment passed 74 to 20.

Rep. Bill Smith, D-Ringling, proposed an amendment that would make mediation the mandated first choice for both parties before going to court. However, if the claim could not be

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