



Capitol Network News

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LEGISLATURE MEETS DEADLINE, NEARS ADJOURNMENT

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The week concluded much the same way it began for lawmakers — on a fast pace.

Friday marked the deadline for fourth reading and final passage of measures containing appropriations and with the exception of one agency — the Department of Transportation — lawmakers successfully brought funding measures to the floor for consideration and passage.

The Department of Transportation will not be without money despite the failure of the bill to make it to the legislative floors for consideration, House General Conference Committee on Appropriations chairman Rep. Jim Hamilton, D-Poteau, said. That's because lawmakers need to hold one bill for final certification of next fiscal year's revenue by the Board of Equalization.

If there's more additional money than first believed, Hamilton said, it will likely make its way into the transportation bill. That bill, the appropriations chairman added, will include \$7.5 million in growth revenue, as well as \$6.5 million from the general appropriations bill approved earlier in the session and \$7.5 million from the Rural Economic Action Plan, **HB1434**, approved last week and signed by the governor.

While the bulk of lawmakers' attention was focused on state spending, other signifi-

cant matters also crossed their desks.

The Senate took up and passed two once controversial bills and passed them quickly and easily to the House for consideration.

SB1100, the massive education reform bill, passed by a significant margin after only a few questions about minute points of the bill. The measure resulted in the better part of a day's worth of Senate debate earlier in the session.

Similarly, **SB1200**, the community corrections bill, passed the Senate and is headed to the House. The bill would place offenders in the hands of authorities where the crime occurred. After extensive questioning that led to the rejection of the bill's confer-

ence committee report, the bill won Senate approval.

Both issues await House consideration sometime during the legislature's final four days next week.

Representatives also gave Senators an issue to consider next week in the form of **HB2670**. The bill, which passed the House without discussion or debate, increases to \$24 the Department of Corrections payments to county jails holding state inmates.

Two bills related to property tax reform are headed to the governor's desk — **SB681**, dealing with homestead exemptions, and **HB2981**, proposing three constitutional amendments related to property tax reform.

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COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ON HOLD IN HOUSE

By Brandon Beard
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The bill that will allow municipalities to provide alternative sentencing options for their local offenders is on hold this week. Still in its conference committee, the bill was expected to be heard by the House Friday after it passed the Senate late Thursday.

SB1200, by Sen. Herb Rozell, D-Tahlequah, creates the Oklahoma Community Corrections Act. It offers counties, through the creation of local community ac-

tion boards, the opportunity to sentence local first and second time non-violent offenders to a variety of community sentencing options, including community service projects and house arrest.

County sheriffs are opposed to sections of the bill that would, they say, place large financial and personnel requirements on county governments.

Prisoners sentenced under the bill would become the responsibility of the county they were sentenced in, not the state Department of Corrections, leaving medical costs to be paid by the county.

A document from the Oklahoma Sheriff's Association (OSA) states the bill would also create possible personal liability for members of the local advisory councils. Contracting for goods and services, hiring and firing personnel and renting or purchasing property top the list of potential problems for counties.

OSA officials are worried that, while the concerns may be covered in the bill, it may not be enough to remove counties from liability.

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