

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY

AGRICULTURE

MOISTURE BRINGS END TO BURNING BAN FOR MOST COUNTIES

■(GIT) Governor Frank Keating issued a proclamation Monday revoking the recent burning ban for all counties in Oklahoma except Beaver, Beckham, Cimarron, Harmon, Jackson, Kiowa, Texas and Washita. The proclamation was supported by information from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture. The Department concluded that pasture conditions are improving, but above average temperatures and high winds continue to dry residual moisture.

Considering the weather, southwestern Oklahoma wheat farmers will begin harvest early this week.

Amid row crops, producers have started preparing seedbeds and planting sorghum, soybeans, peanuts, and cotton. However, corn planters have now completed their planting, ahead of schedule. In addition, alfalfa hay's first cutting progressed to 49 percent.

Changing to something sweeter, watermelons and strawberries were rated by the Department to be in fair condition. Watermelon planting remained active with 82 percent planted.

Cattle marketings continue below average, but they have shown an increase in movement. Livestock conditions are rated fair, and insect activities are light to moderate across the state.

Keating's proclamation will be distributed at the Department of Public Safety, the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation, the State Fire Marshal, the South Central Interstate Forest Fire Protection Compact, the Secretary of the Environment and to the sheriffs of Oklahoma's 58 counties, where the burning ban has been raised.

—MARTA MCCLOSKEY
05/21/96

AWARDS & CEREMONIES

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS HONORED IN STATE SENATE

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The late Joseph Lewis "Jody" Latimer and all other law enforcement officials who have given their lives to protect Oklahoma's citizens were honored in a resolution passed by the state

Senate on Monday.

"In our busy day to day lives it is easy to forget the law enforcement officials who work so hard to keep us safe. These men and women go to work every day and put their lives on the line to ensure that ours are a little safer," said Senator Sam Helton, author of **Senate Concurrent Resolution 65**.

Latimer served as deputy sheriff in Cotton County until he was killed in an auto accident as he rushed to the scene of a drive-by-shooting to assist another officer.

Representatives Loyd Benson and Bill Smith, the resolution's House authors, said they were proud to sponsor a resolution honoring Oklahoma's lawmen and women.

Latimer's family has been recognized at the National Police Officers' Memorial in Washington DC where Deputy Latimer's name was placed on the memorial. Latimer's name has also been placed on the Oklahoma Police Officers' Memorial in Oklahoma City.

Attending the ceremony at the Senate were Latimer's wife Stacy, her mother Linda Stewart, Latimer's mother Brenda all from Geronimo and Cotton County Sheriff Melvin Copeland.

—SENATE MEDIA
05/21/96

BUDGET

HOUSE GCCA ADVANCES FOUR BILLS

■(GIT) The House division of the General Conference Committee on Appropriations gave 'do pass' recommendations late Monday afternoon to four bills, moving a small step closer to completing its budget work.

The four bills receiving 'do pass' recommendations include **SB806**, **HB1777**, **HB1787** and **HB1800**.

SB806 makes appropriations to the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as the Legislative Service Bureau. The House will see a 4.5 percent increase under the terms of the bill, while the Senate's increase will be 4.8 percent. Both increases are the result of the \$1,200 across-the-board annual pay raise approved for state employees earlier this year.

In addition to the pay raise for employees of the Legislative Service Bureau, an additional \$1.8 million will be appropriated to the agency with the bulk of the money — \$1.75 million — going toward computer hardware and software upgrades and the

balance being dedicated to intergovernmental association dues.

HB1777 appropriates funds to the offices of the governor and lieutenant governor. Through the general appropriation bill already approved, the governor's office will receive an additional \$298,000. **HB1777** will pump an additional \$66,267 earmarked for the state employees pay raise. The two bills combined will raise the appropriation to the governor's office by 18.5 percent.

The lieutenant governor's budget increases only 3.6 percent or \$14,923 under the terms of the bill. That money, too, is earmarked for the state employee pay raise.

In addition to funding the employee pay raise, **HB1787** appropriates \$200,000 for replacement of revolving funds, \$50,000 for moving expenses, \$35,000 for the County Government Commission and \$80,000 to data processing equipment upgrades to the Office of the State Auditor Inspector. The employee pay raise and other appropriations increase the auditor's budget by some 15.4 percent.

The same bill also reduces the appropriations to the Office of State Finance by 1.4 percent or by \$123,912. While adding some \$200,858 to the office's budget to cover the costs of the state employee pay raise, more than \$325,000 were cut from the office's budget in the general appropriations bill approved earlier in the session.

The bill increases funding to the Oklahoma Tax Commission by 4.2 percent or \$1.8 million. The bulk of that money — more than \$1.6 million — is dedicated to the state employee pay raise, while \$135,000 will be spent for the administration of **HB2102** and \$45,000 will be used to implement a fax-on-demand system.

HB1787 also provides for a 4 percent increase in the amount appropriated to the Office of State Treasurer. Some \$70,000 will be appropriated to the office under the terms of the bill in addition to more than \$100,000 for the employee pay raise.

HB1800 includes appropriations to the Commission on Children and Youth, the Office of Handicapped Concerns, the Human Rights Commission and the Indian Affairs Commission.

In addition to more than \$31,000 earmarked for employee pay, the Commission on Children and Youth will receive \$174,000 for expansion of the Court Appointed Spe-

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