

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

Williams, D-Balko, is expected to save Oklahoma property owners millions in annual ad valorem taxes. The measure would amend the state constitution to accomplish the reform.

Under the measure:

✓ Increases in the assessed value of locally assessed real estate would be frozen at five percent. Exceptions to the freeze would be in cases where a title is transferred or improvements are made.

✓ Oklahoma citizens over the age of 65 who earn less than \$25,000 each year would have their property valuations frozen after Jan. 1, 1997.

✓ Statewide tax assessment ratios would be set at 11 to 13.5 percent of fair cash value for land and buildings. Personal property including jewelry and large household items would be held at 10 to 15 percent.

Thirteen and one-half percent for real estate and 15 percent for personal property are the most the rates could ever reach under the measure. They may, however, be lowered.

The proposed constitutional amendments passed the House with a vote of 99 to 0 and passed the Senate with a vote of 47 to 0. The bill's next stop is the governor's desk.

—BRANDON BEARD  
05/23/96

## TOURISM & RECREATION

### NATIONAL SAFE BOATING WEEK RECOGNIZED BY OKLAHOMA'S DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

■(GIT) As summer and Memorial Day approach, many Oklahomans will take their boats and start heading to the state's lakes. However enjoyable and relaxing, boating is not without risk. President William J. Clinton, proclaimed the week of May 18 through 24, as "National Safe Boating Week." In accordance, Oklahoma's Depart-

ment of Public Safety is gearing up for Memorial Day and summer by advising Oklahomans on safety measures when boating.

Lt. Bob Sanders, commander of the Department's Lake Patrol, explained that ninety percent of boaters drink alcohol, including passengers and operators. "Of course, most operators and passengers are of-age, but alcohol affects your judgment, which is compounded by the sun and the water hitting the boat," he said.

"In Oklahoma, it's legal to drink and operate a boat," Sanders said.

Sanders further explained that the Department of Public Safety does have the authority to arrest a boat operator suspected of drinking, but most arrested operators are released from jail in a couple of hours and are back on the lake.

Sanders said that until Oklahoma has something like a boat operator license, it will be "hard to keep drunks out of the water."

In addition to alcohol being a factor in most boating accidents, according to national studies, out of 77 percent of recreational boating fatalities, the victim was not wearing a life jacket. Sanders reinforced that statement. "Half of those lives would be saved if operators and passengers wore a life jackets."

Currently, when operating water vessels such as "wet bikes," life jackets must be worn at all times. However, in boats, life jackets are merely required to be readily accessible.

Overall, Sanders explained that most accidents occur because of "bad judgment or no judgment."

"Don't put yourself in a bad situation and don't leave your common sense on the shore," Sanders asserted. Last year in Oklahoma, approximately 15 boating fatalities occurred, "most of those happened, because individuals were not paying attention," Sanders said.

Rep. Barbara Staggs, D-Muskogee, authored a bill, **HB2957**, earlier this session, that would have stipulated that any person operating a water vessel while under the influence of any intoxicant or with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.10 could be in violation of the law and subject to punishment. However, the bill was left at second reading by the Senate Judiciary Committee. However, language of the bill that included an alcohol testing provision by blood or through a breathalyzer, was included in **SB1215**,

authored by Sen. Kevin Easley, D-Broken Arrow. The conference committee report has been submitted to the Senate.

Also at this time, Rep. Robert Weaver, D-Shawnee, has initiated legislation that would require the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, the Oklahoma Tax Commission, the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to study issues related to personal watercraft and boat operators. **HCR1110** passed the House Tourism and Recreation Committee on May 1.

—MARTA MCCLOSKEY  
05/20/96

## WILDLIFE

### ONE-DAY WOMEN'S WORKSHOP SUCCESSFUL

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation held a one-day outdoor skills workshop for women May 11 at the Department's northeast regional office in Porter.

Although windy, wet weather made some outdoor activities more difficult, participants seemed to thoroughly enjoy the day's events. More than 40 participants attended the one-day workshop, taking classes such as archery, game calling, basic shotgun shooting, map and compass, beginning fishing and survival.

The Porter event was the second one-day Outdoors Woman workshop held at the Wildlife Department. The workshops are part of the Department's effort to introduce outdoor recreation to non-traditional participants.

The Department also hosts a three-day event called the "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" (BOW) workshop. It is part of a national program started in 1991 to provide women with an opportunity to learn outdoor skills. It was created as a method of teaching fishing, hunting, shooting and other outdoor activities in a non-threatening atmosphere. The next three-day Becoming an Outdoors Women workshop in Oklahoma is scheduled for Oct. 11-13, 1996.

For more information on the next Oklahoma workshop, write to the Wildlife Department at 1801 North Lincoln, Oklahoma City, OK 73105 or call the Department's Education Section at (405) 521-4636.

—OKLA. DEPT. OF WILDLIFE  
05/21/96

*"I always cheer up immensely if an attack is particularly wounding because I think, well, if they attack one personally, it means they have not a single political argument left."*

Margaret Thatcher  
Daily Telegraphy  
March 21, 1986