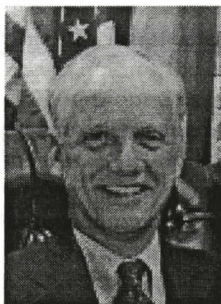


## GOVERNOR SIGNS RURAL DEVELOPMENT BILL

From The Governor's Office



Gov. Frank Keating

■ (BLANCHARD) Governor Frank Keating traveled to this McClain County community Monday to sign a bill that will channel some \$17 million to rural development projects and create a state Rural Economic Action Plan.

"I am pleased to continue a year-long effort to boost the economy in rural Oklahoma by signing **House Bill 1434**," the Governor said in a Main Street ceremony. "As I said in my State of the State speech in February, we cannot and we will not leave rural Oklahoma behind as we work to improve our state's economy."

The bill will allocate \$7.5 million for rural roads and bridges, \$4.5 million for water and sewer projects and \$5 million for a Rural Economic Action Plan administered through 11 regional planning districts. The state aid targets smaller Oklahoma commu-

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 Special Advocate (CASA) system mandated by **HB2053**, the so-called Ryan Luke child abuse prevention bill. Other appropriations in the bill included \$7,000 for the Child Death Review Board and \$20,900 for a child abuse medical examiner.

In addition to funds already appropriated to the Office of Handicapped Concerns, the bill appropriates \$10,034 to the office for the employee pay plan increase. Similarly, the Human Rights Commission would receive \$34,013 for the pay plan, as well as an additional \$23,000 to fund one full time equivalent.

Continued operating funds of \$26,000 will be appropriated to the Indian Affairs Commission under the terms of the bill, as well as \$7,044 for the state employee pay raise.

The House could considered the four bills as early as Tuesday.

nities.

"Earlier this year, I convened a rural economic summit," the Governor said. "One of the primary concerns expressed by leaders from our rural communities was the infrastructure problem — how to attract jobs and business when the roads and water systems are in poor shape. This bill begins to address that problem."

Keating said the REAP program and other aid contained in the bill will "go hand in hand with the tax cuts and credits on agricultural projects, family farms and businesses and marginal oil wells." Those tax relief measures, which total some \$45 million in annual savings for taxpayers, formed a centerpiece of the Governor's 1996 economic stimulus package.

## SENATE TOURISM CONFIRMS SIX, DEBATE OVER WEST

By Brandon Beard  
Staff Writer

■ (GIT) The Senate Committee on Tourism and Recreation met Monday, confirming six of Governor Frank Keating's appointments to related agencies. Debate and a motion to table the nomination of one appointee disrupted the otherwise smooth flow of confirmations.

John West, of Elk City, was appointed by the governor to serve a six year term on the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Board. Succeeding himself, West met with resistance from Sen. Robert M. Kerr, D-Altus, who moved to table his nomination.

Kerr said, though he bears no ill will toward him, West had requested a study to consider alternative locations for the fire-ravaged Quartz Mountain. After the study was completed, West decided to rebuild the facility on its present site.

As a result of the study, considerable time and money was wasted, time and money that could have been invested in rebuilding the facility.

"He [West] really pushed for studying alternative sites," Kerr said after the meeting. "It was my honest belief that the site where the lodge burned was the most beautiful and isolated site in the park."

Kerr said the Tulsa architectural firm who assisted with the study took several weeks. He could not comment on the total cost of the study.

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