

RYAN LUKE BILL WON'T SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS

From OPEA

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Oklahoma Public Employees Association (OPEA) is confident that the Ryan Luke bill will improve the state's child welfare system, but according to OPEA Executive Director Gary Jones, **HB2053** won't solve all the problems that currently haunt the system.

"I'm frustrated and angry when I'm not able to do the things that I need to do,...."

*Elizabeth Norton,
Child Welfare Worker*

Jones is calling on legislative leaders and Governor Frank Keating to create a blue ribbon panel that will be charged with compiling a comprehensive plan to cure what ails Oklahoma's child welfare system.

"While OPEA believes HB2053 will be helpful, the Association is putting Oklahomans on notice that it will not resolve all Oklahoma's child welfare problems," Jones commented this week. "While the bill addresses several important problems that must be resolved, many more issues still require attention and action."

Jones pointed out that the state needs additional child welfare workers and increased emphasis on prevention services. He said child welfare workers across Oklahoma have been "crying out to those who will listen" that the system does not work the way it should. He said they believe that even with the passage of the Ryan Luke bill, the system's inadequacies will still put children in harm's way.

"I'm frustrated and angry when I'm not able to do the things that I need to do, whether it's because I have too many referrals that I have to investigate or because of a judicial system that, in some cases, doesn't put a premium on resolving issues related to children and their families," said Elizabeth Norton, who has been a child welfare worker for eight years. "Whatever it is, I see children placed in situations where I really don't know if we have improved their lives."

"Power tends to confuse itself with virtue and a great nation is peculiarly susceptible to the idea that its power is a sign of God's favor ... Once imbued with the idea of a mission, a great nation easily assumes that it has the means as well as the duty to do God's work."

*J. William Fulbright
Speech in U.S. Senate, 1966*

"We're doing all we can, but the system needs to be changed," child welfare worker Emetta Jennings added. "The process needs to be streamlined so child welfare cases can be resolved immediately.

We're also concerned that more money and effort need to be spent in prevention. Many families and children become involved with DHS because we do not have prevention services that give them the help they need to resolve family problems."

Jones pointed out that OPEA has sent letters to the Governor, Speaker of the House Glen Johnson and President Pro Tem of the Senate Stratton Taylor, asking state leaders to take appropriate action.

"The Oklahoma Public Employees Association has been involved in a series of efforts over the past eight years concerning child welfare problems," Jones said. "Many have resulted in changes and modifications, but they have all been Band-Aids and not the major surgery we believe is necessary if the system is going to be fixed. No solution will resolve all the problems, but OPEA believes that based on what is happening in other states, the Oklahoma system could be improved to better meet the needs of Oklahoma's endangered children."

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name was placed on the memorial. Latimer's name has also been placed on the Oklahoma Police Officers' Memorial in Oklahoma City.

"As a former police officer I wanted to sponsor a resolution honoring the memory of a brother law enforcement officer," said Helton. "This is an honor I hold close to my heart."

Helton said we must always remember the law enforcement officers throughout the nation who have given their lives to protect ours.

"I urge all Oklahomans to remember these special people in their prayers as they continue working to ensure that all Oklahomans can enjoy the safety they provide," he said.

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.

ONE-DAY WOMEN'S WORKSHOP SUCCESSFUL

From Okla. Dept. of Wildlife

■(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.

Two researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, where the BOW program began, recently completed a study that addressed whether or not BOW workshop participants increased the use of the outdoor skills they learned. The study also intended to determine if participants' attitudes towards outdoor recreation became more positive or negative since attending a workshop.

More than 750 survey forms were sent to BOW participants and the results showed significant differences between workshop participants and a control group. Workshop participants showed an average increase of almost 20 percent in their participation in outdoor recreation activities. The researchers concluded that the increase in some of these activities was almost certainly attributable to the workshops.

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.