

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



## RYAN LUKE BILL PUT ON HOLD UNTIL MONDAY

■(GIT) The author of the so-called Ryan Luke child abuse prevention bill again on Wednesday withheld the bill from House consideration.

Rep. Laura Boyd, D-Norman, reiterated again that a discrepancy in projected costs and personnel associated with **HB2053** was the reason behind the delay.

A House fiscal analysis indicated the bill will cost approximately \$370,000 per year to implement. A Department of Human Services analysis of the legislation, however, put the cost at nearly \$1.4 million and included 20 additional social workers and four supervisors to monitor child abuse cases.

Currently, Boyd noted, DHS has 600 caseworkers who investigate child abuse reports across the state. In addition, the legislature is considering an appropriation that would provide what the Norman Democrat called "a significant number" of additional caseworkers.

Also, Boyd said, the department has 50 vacancies in its caseworker ranks that have already been budgeted by the legislature but have not been filled.

"We realize that DHS needs more caseworkers, and we're working on that," Boyd said. "But their last estimate — that another 24 caseworkers and supervisors are needed besides what we're already negotiating plus their existing vacancies — was just excessive."

Boyd said she expects to have the inconsistency resolved before next week and to present the bill to the full House for its consideration on Monday.

In a related development, Boyd said Governor Frank Keating "appeared to be addressing the wrong measure" when he said on Tuesday he would sign the bill "as long as it addresses recommended changes in the structural system of DHS and the criminal system." The governor made the remark during his weekly press conference.

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
05/01/96

## LUKE BILL BACKED UP, DELAYED AGAIN

### Author Comments on Tannehill Acquital

■(GIT) It will now be Tuesday before the House considers the so-called Ryan Luke child abuse prevention bill, its House author

said on Thursday.

Rep. Laura Boyd, D-Norman, said the additional one day delay was necessary so that a provision could be added to the bill to address some recently raised concerns about its costs.

Boyd said a new conference committee report, which will be released Monday, will make the bill's continuing monitoring provision dependent on the availability of funding.

A House fiscal analysis indicated **HB2053** will cost approximately \$370,000 per year to implement, while a Department of Human Services estimate puts the cost of implementation at \$1.4 million. The DHS estimate included the addition of 20 social workers and four supervisors to the DHS staff.

Boyd has called the DHS analysis inaccurate, noting, "We realize that DHS needs more caseworkers, and we're working on that. But their last estimate — that another 24 caseworkers and supervisors are needed besides what we're already negotiating plus their existing vacancies — was just excessive."

The conflicting schedules of the House and Senate also contributed to Boyd's delay in bringing the bill before the House. Boyd first asked on Wednesday that the bill's conference committee report be rejected and that it be returned to committee for further consideration. Soon after making that motion, however, Boyd withdrew it.

She made the motion again on Thursday and received unanimous consent for the action. However, the Senate had already adjourned for the day, making a similar action in that house of the legislature impossible.

Boyd said the request will be made of the Senate on Monday and that the conferees have already agreed to the proposed change.

That, she added, means the bill should be before the House on Tuesday.

In a related development, a Pittsburg County jury acquitted Larry Tannehill of first-degree murder in the death of two-year-old Ryan Luke. It was the death of the toddler that led Boyd and other members of the legislature to propose the child abuse mea-

sure.

Upon learning of the verdict, Boyd said she was not surprised, particularly after hearing one of two alternate jurors say they believed Tannehill's testimony to be sincere and because of the speed with which the child's mother had agreed to a plea bargain.

Boyd said, "I feel the system failed this baby. It failed us and it failed that family."

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
05/02/96

## OKLAHOMA AFDC ROLLS CONTINUE TO DROP

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) March figures released by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services show Oklahoma's Aid to Families with Dependent Children program caseload dropped 1.7 percent from February and 14 percent from March one year ago, a state official has said.

"We hope these are good signs that there really is improvement in the Oklahoma economy and that more citizens who once needed help are finding jobs and becoming self-sufficient," said DHS Director George S. Miller. "I know our staff has been working with new clients from day one to let them know that AFDC is a short-term, temporary solution to a family's financial crisis. We want clients to know we're putting our energies into helping them find work and becoming independent."

"We are going to serve all who are eligible for public assistance. That's our mission as public servants, but we also have a mission to help people help themselves. We have to believe the efforts our staff have put into reforming Oklahoma's welfare system through job training, education, job placement and other supportive efforts have contributed to a steady decline in the AFDC rolls."

While the drop in AFDC rolls creates a cost savings for Oklahoma, Miller said it would be in the best interest of the program to apply some of those savings to a continuing effort to find ways to put people to work. "At some point, we will get those who have the fewest skills and abilities to work and it will take a more valiant effort on the part of our workers to help these individuals."

Although each AFDC grant has to have an adult payee, Miller said staff is reminded the program has been designed since it started in 1936 to serve the children and they

*"What some invent, the rest enlarge."  
Jonathan Swift*