

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

Nickels further explained that MSAs are "basically individual retirement accounts," used for medical rather than retirement purposes. "They permit individuals to accumulate tax deductible funds in a savings account which can be used only for medical expenses. Medical Savings Accounts are now used in 17 states, and by 3,000 businesses."

—MARTA MCCLOSKEY
05/01/96

REVENUE & TAXATION

SENATOR EXPANDS UNEMPLOYMENT TAX CUT Reduction Would Save Business \$30 Million

■(GIT) Saying Oklahoma's continued economic growth has cleared the way for an even larger unemployment tax cut, State Senator Lewis Long is expanding legislation that would reduce the unemployment taxes existing Oklahoma businesses pay.

"The surplus in the state unemployment insurance fund just keeps getting bigger and bigger because we keep putting more and more people back to work," said Senator Long. "I'm revising my bill to reflect the continued growth of our economy. I think we can give our existing businesses an even larger tax cut without damaging the integrity of the fund."

In its original form, **HB1672** would have cut the unemployment tax on existing businesses by approximately \$5 million. The latest version of Senator Long's legislation would increase the tax cut to approximately \$30 million. That amounts to about a 25 percent reduction in the amount of unemployment taxes that each business pays.

If Senator Long is successful, this will mark the second year in a row that he has led the fight to cut unemployment taxes. Last year, legislation authored by the Glenpool legislator reduced unemployment taxes on new businesses by approximately \$20 million annually.

"Anyone who claims that we haven't cut taxes on Oklahoma businesses is ignoring the facts. When HB1672 is implemented, we

*"A successful lawsuit is the
one won by a policeman."*

Robert Frost

will have reduced the unemployment taxes on business by a total of \$50 million over a two year period. That's a pretty substantial tax cut in my book, and I think business people will agree," said Senator Long.

—SENATE MEDIA
05/01/96

GOVERNOR, LEGISLATOR AND CONGRESSMAN SPEAK OUT ON TAXES

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Wednesday, Governor Frank Keating urged the Oklahoma Legislature to honor Tax Freedom Day — the day when Oklahomans finally pay their federal, state and local tax bill and begin keeping the money they make — by passing three of his tax cuts still buried in conference committee and resurrecting four others previously killed by the Democratic majority.

"Since January 1, Oklahomans have been working full time to pay their taxes for 1996," Keating said. "Today is Tax Freedom Day for Oklahoma. After 122 days of working for government, our citizens finally get to keep the first dime. I would think the Democrats who control the Legislature might want to honor that day by moving on my proposed tax cuts."

Sen. Cal Hobson, D-Lexington, and vice-chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, responded to Keating's charges.

"I am glad Governor Keating has started to follow the legislative process, but I wish he would follow it a little more closely before he issues his next erroneous press release on the progress of tax reduction incentives," he said.

"Our magnanimous Governor just cannot force himself to admit that Democrats support tax cuts too. The difference is we've tried to tie our tax reductions to economic development, whereas the Governor has constructed his tax package for political gain ... his tax cuts would not create a single new job."

Oklahoma's Sen. Don Nickles also spoke out on Tax Freedom Day.

"The idea of Tax Freedom Day really drives home a point that most of us already understand: Americans are overtaxed. We have tried during this Congress to enact legislation to give taxpayers a break — such as my proposal to provide a \$500-per-child tax credit as part of the balanced budget package. Unfortunately, President Clinton vetoed

that bill."

Americans in different states have to spend slightly more or less time working to feed government's voracious appetite. The national average, known as the National Tax Freedom Day, this year falls on May 7 — the latest date in history.

—MARTA MCCLOSKEY
05/01/96

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

SITES FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTERS SELECTED

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Dr. Leo Presley, executive-director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, announced today the names of 33 rural communities chosen as sites for new telecommunications centers across the state.

All of the community centers will be interconnected through the statewide, fiberoptic network called OneNet which will allow them access to the Internet, the Library of Congress, public libraries, universities, medical centers, and other resources.

"Developing a state-wide capability in telecommunications is absolutely essential to the future of economic development and education in Oklahoma, particularly in rural areas of the state," commented Presley. "Such a networking system will make an entire world of information, data and communications accessible to all Oklahomans."

According to Beth Rodriguez, director of programs for the Commerce Department's research and planning group, no other state has this system on such a large scale. "Most centers will have equipment in several locations — for example, a public library, cooperative extension office, and a school — creating a 'virtual,' rather than physical, community center," commented Rodriguez. The concept for the telecommunications centers originated from Oklahoma's 1993-98 Strategic Economic Development Plan.

The 33 sites for the new centers were selected from a total of 63 communities' proposals submitted from throughout the state. A panel of judges composed of independent public and private sector leaders in community development and telecommunications rated the community center proposals on criteria such as community impact and design quality.

The cities selected are: Ada, Altus, Alva,