

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

ral Utilities Service, an agency of USDA. Since 1993 this program has provided 119 grants totaling \$35 million to rural schools, hospitals and medical clinics in 39 states and one territory.

—US DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
10/09/96

## GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

### STATE BOND ADVISOR PREPARES IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

■(GIT) Governor Frank Keating will be asked before the end of the year to consider signing off on a plan to significantly improve state-owned facilities.

That plan, State Bond Advisor Jim Joseph said, is currently being developed and should be ready for the governor's review by Dec. 1.

"We asked all the state agencies in February to submit their lists of needs to us by July," said Joseph. "We have almost all of that information collected and put together and plan to submit it to the governor by Dec. 1."

The plan, Joseph said, will then be put before lawmakers for their consideration. Its first stop will likely be in the Senate's Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee, led by Sen. Penny Williams, D-Tulsa.

"There are a lot of needs the state just simply hasn't met over the years for one reason or another," explained Joseph. "The time is fast approaching, however, where the state has to dedicate resources to fund the repair and maintenance of its facilities."

One of the problems Joseph said that he sees is that some of the facilities are removed from the public, making it harder to generate interest in making the improvements.

One such example is the Department of Corrections, where the general public's contact is extremely limited.

"Setting aside the policy debate over whether to use the state's own facilities, build new prisons or rely on private prisons, the

Department of Corrections has a tremendous number of needs simply because of the age of some of its facilities," said Joseph. "But that's something that is going to be tough to sell the public on."

The same, Joseph said, is true of a number of state agencies and their facilities across the state.

Through the years, Joseph said, two things have exacerbated the problem.

"When money is tight," he explained, "capital improvements are the first thing to be cut. Everyone thinks they can continue 'to get by,' but what happens is that they end up creating a bigger problem the longer they delay addressing the problem."

Another problem, Joseph said, is that unlike other states, Oklahoma has no standing authority to issue debt.

"We have to guarantee any debt with issue with a specific revenue source," he explained, "and that requires legislative action."

Plenty of revenue, Joseph added, is available from the state's cigarette tax, which generates from \$58 million to \$68 million annually. Only \$27.5 million of that money is already dedicated to retiring existing debt, said Joseph, adding that the remainder of the money is funneled into the state's general fund.

"The only solution then," Joseph said, "is to go to the voters and ask for a dedicated tax to fund major maintenance and repair. Hopefully, we can win approval to do that during the next session."

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
10/07/96

### ROBERTS' CAMPAIGN SCRUTINIZED BY REPUBLICANS

■(GIT) In a news release issued late Monday, Maria Cino, executive director of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) said a complaint will be filed with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) that Darryl Roberts, candidate for the U.S. House of Rep. from District 3, "illegally and arbitrarily chose to conceal two weeks of his campaign's activity. Roberts' failure to disclose is unlawful and must be remedied immediately," Cino stated.

Roberts is a Democratic candidate for the District 3 seat currently held by retiring U.S. Representative Bill Brewster. Wes Watkins, R-Stillwater, and Scott Demaree, I-Glencoe, oppose Roberts in the race.

The NRCC press release is based on two campaign Reports of Receipts and Disbursements filed with the FEC, one covering January 1, 1996 to June 30, 1996 and the other covering July 15, 1996 to August 7, 1996.

Reached at his home in Ardmore, Roberts told *Capitol Network News*, "all contributions and all expenditures are reported. Where the form says July 15, it should read July 1. There was an error."

"Once a complaint is filed with the FEC," Roberts said, "it is forbidden to talk about it. They did this several months ago and then never filed a complaint," he added.

—GERRY CHERRY  
10/07/96

### OKLAHOMANS WITH DISABILITIES ENCOURAGED TO REGISTER AND VOTE

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Studies indicate that less than half of eligible U.S. citizens actually vote in elections. As a result, those who do not participate allow those who do to determine the outcome for everyone.

Among Oklahoma voters, more than 625,650, or 19.4 percent, are people with disabilities, according to estimates based on the 1990 United States Census. Although some people with disabilities do vote, many are not represented at the polls.

"Exercising your right to vote is a critical first step in ensuring that disability issues are brought to the attention of state and federal elected officials," said Linda Parker, Department of Rehabilitation Services director.

Those who want to register in time for the general election on Nov. 5 can now register at businesses where they buy car tags and renew drivers' licenses. Citizens must submit voter registration applications 24 days prior to elections — in other words, no later than Oct. 11 for the presidential election.

Election officials are working to eliminate barriers that prevent voters with disabilities from entering polling places. If a voter knows in advance that an assigned polling place is not accessible, the voter may ask the county election board to assign an accessible polling location. If a voter with a disability, other than a visual impairment, discovers barriers to entering a polling location on election day, two precinct officials will bring the precinct registry and ballots outside to the voter.

*Continued on next page*

*"Nowdays, for the sake of the advantage which is to be gained from the public revenues and from office, men want to be always in office."*

Aristotle  
'Politics'  
ca. 325 B.C.