

OKLAHOMA GENERAL REVENUES UP, AHEAD OF FORECAST

From Office of State Finance

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) General Revenue collections for Oklahoma, including the four major tax sources, topped last year's figures, and last year's projection, for the first one-third of this fiscal year, Director of State Finance Tom Daxon said Tuesday. One key indicator, the sales tax, lagged behind the monthly estimate for October.

Collections for general revenue totaled \$288.8 million for October and \$1.197 billion for the first four months of the fiscal year ending October 31.

The October figure was up \$14.4 million, or 5.2 percent above a year ago, and exceeded the estimate by \$13.8 million, or five percent. The year-to-date total was up \$82.2 million, or 7.4 percent from the prior year and was \$55.5 million, or 4.9 percent above the estimate.

Estimates are based on historical collection patterns for the month and year to date as applied to the State Board of Equalization's certified estimate for the 1997 fiscal year.

More than two-thirds of the revenue above the estimate was in income and gross production taxes. Income tax collections for the four-month period topped last year's by 6.9 percent, even topping the estimate by 4.1 percent. Gross production tax receipts, re-

flecting higher oil and gas prices, were up 30 percent from last year and 40.6 percent above the estimate.

Sales taxes, the second largest source of general revenue, were up 4.8 percent from a year ago and two percent above the estimate in the cumulative total for the first four months, even though they trailed the estimate by less than one percent in October. Motor vehicle tax receipts were up 8.5 percent for the four months and were 6.6 percent above the estimate.

The four major taxes combined produced \$239.2 million in October, 5.3 percent or \$11.9 million above the prior year, and \$8.9 million or 3.9 percent above the estimate. Year-to-date receipts from the four major taxes totaled \$1.009 billion, a whopping \$69.4 million (7.4 percent) above the prior year and \$49.6 million or 5.2 percent above the estimate.

The total October General Revenue receipts of \$288.8 million will be supplemented with half a million dollars from general revenue receipts from prior months to meet November allocations of \$289.3 million to state agencies. This will leave a cash-flow balance of \$202.4 million, including \$62.6 million from current year collections, plus \$139.8 million remaining in the general revenue cash flow reserve fund.

105TH CONGRESS GREETSS NEW MEMBERS

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) When Congress convenes, the new House members — the oldest 65, the youngest 26 — will all scramble for seats on the prestigious committees — Ways and Means, Commerce or Appropriations.

Only freshman Rep.-elect Wes Watkins, R-Okla., a veteran of Congress who served 14 years in the House as a Democrat in the 1970s and 1980s, has an assurance from the GOP leadership that he will have a Ways and Means assignment.

Watkins is one of five old-new members. Another, Rep. Bob Smith, R-Ore., has been guaranteed the chairmanship of the Agriculture Committee — which lured him out of retirement.

Few freshmen will get a seat on the Commerce committee: there are eight openings, four Republican and four Democratic, and more senior members eager to fill them.

This freshman representative class is smaller and more balanced along party lines than the class of 1994, which was full of anti-politicians, including 35 men and women with no political background whatsoever. The ranks of their successors are filled with state and local public servants. Forty-four incoming House members have served in state or local positions, a few appointed, most elected.

There are seven ex-mayors, 25 practicing lawyers or at least graduates of law school, including the youngest, Rep. Harold Ford Jr., D-Tenn., son of retiring Rep. Harold Ford Sr., D-Tenn. The younger Ford is 26 and graduated from law school in May.

The next occupation mentioned most is businessperson, including both Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., who at 25 had a seat on the New York Stock Exchange, and Mike Pappas, R-NJ, who left college to work in his family's insurance business.

Six freshmen representatives have been House or Senate aides and five worked in presidential administrations: one for President Bush, and two each for Presidents Reagan and Clinton.

Other professions are: nine academics, three physicians, a nurse, two psychologists, two farmers, a TV newscaster, a border patrol agent, a pilot, a social worker, a lobbyist, and a landscape architect.

The new class of representatives has nine women, a decline from 1994's freshmen

HUNTER, ANGLER NUMBERS UP IN OKLAHOMA, CONSTANT IN U.S.

From Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The number of hunters and anglers remained relatively constant during 1995 even as expenditures for licenses, tags, and other permits continued to rise, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced last week.

In Oklahoma, the price of a deer tag for fiscal 1996 went from \$14.75 to \$16.75, except for the new class of tag for youth under 18, who still pay the \$14.75 fee.

Oklahoma hunters bought 64,884 resident annual hunting licenses in fiscal 1996, up from 60,923 for fiscal 1995. Fishermen bought 303,904 fishing licenses last fiscal year, up from 257,593 the previous year. Waterfowl hunters bought 11,551 stamps in fiscal 1996, up from 10,814 in fiscal 1995. The sale of tags was down last year, however, from 128,926 in fiscal 1995 to 120,100 in fiscal 1996. Deer gun tags accounted for 64,581 sales, and the new youth deer tag option was purchased by 7,699 people.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service re-

ported 15.2 million hunters bought licenses last year, a slight decrease from 15.3 million in 1994. Hunters bought 32.1 million licenses, tags, permits, and stamps compared to 31.6 million in 1994 — spending \$532.6 million compared with \$525.8 million in 1994.

Meanwhile, the number of anglers rose slightly to 30.3 million last year from 30.2 million in 1994. Anglers bought 37.8 million licenses, tags, permits and stamps, about the same as in 1994, but spent considerably more to do so, \$448.6 million compared with \$424.7 million in 1994.

Revenues raised through license sales support state wildlife agencies, their conservation projects, and their hunting and fishing safety and education programs.

"Hunters and anglers continue to pour millions of dollars directly into wildlife conservation, benefiting all Americans," said John Rogers, the Service's acting director. "It is important for the future of conserva-

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