

FARM BUREAU DRAFTS RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNTIES

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Members of the resolutions committee of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau this week drafted resolutions and recommendations for action at the annual conference in Tulsa, Nov. 17-19.

Scott Bulling, director of governmental relations, said nearly 600 resolutions were approved at the county level and studied by the committee. "Every resolution that passed a county annual meeting can be brought up on the floor" at the annual meeting, Bulling said.

Tax relief and effective programs to combat rural crime were high on the list for Farm Bureau members this year. Other often-mentioned issues included private property rights, predator species of wildlife, estate tax exemption and lobbying with tax dollars.

Specifically, Bulling said, taxes are on the minds of county members, who want a complete elimination of the federal capital gains tax, or a \$500,000 capital gains exemption. Another tax burden members want eased is the estate tax. Although a \$600,000 exemption for farms and businesses became law today, members want the national limit raised to \$2 million.

The spending of tax dollars is closely watched. Many counties brought up the practice of public institutions using tax dollars to pay membership dues in organizations. County Farm Bureaus recommended measures be passed on the state level to ban the practice.

Farmers and ranchers are opposed to the state or national introduction or release of predators in rural areas. Bulling mentioned pet cougars and mountain lions which get too big to be pets being released into the wild, causing problems for ranchers with their livestock. The recommendation, Bulling said, covers all predators, including, wolves released in western states.

Committee members had a few ideas about programs to combat rural crime. They recommend all releases of prisoners, whether early or not, go through the state parole board. About rural crime, Bulling said members are worried about the increase in crime in rural areas of Oklahoma. The subject will be discussed at the annual meeting, he said.

Committee members sorted and processed the resolutions Tuesday and Wednesday, and came up with these and other recommendations for the state meeting. Delegates from all 77 counties will participate in determining organizational policy for 1977.

All proposals were studied at the county level, where individual members voiced concerns and possible solutions. Voting delegates at the annual meeting will decide the fate of many issues.

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For his part, Hall is confident the House will remain in the control of Democrats.

"Back at filing," he said, "Republicans were talking about getting control of the House, then they cut the number of seats they thought they might pick up to around 15, and now they're talking about six."

"I don't think we'll see movement in more than six seats," Hall added, "meaning we'll pick up three."

CORPORATION COMMISSION

One seat on the Oklahoma Corporation Commission is up for grabs — Literally.

Wylie is confident that incumbent Ed Apple, R-Duncan, will reclaim the seat, while Hall is certain challenger Wanda Jo Peltier, D-Oklahoma City, has the post locked up.

But neither Apple nor Peltier have shown a substantial lead in either partisan or non-partisan polls conducted since the July filing period.

The race has been one of the most hotly contested in the state this year, particularly in the waning days of the campaign. In press conferences, news releases and radio and television advertising, Apple has accused Peltier of attempting to mislead the public and of hiding the source of some of her campaign funding. Peltier has charged that Apple is controlled by special interest groups, evidenced by both his votes and campaign finances.

It is the impression left by those messages, particularly those being aired in the last week of the campaign, that will likely be the deciding factor when voters step into the voting booth on Tuesday.

Peltier surprised some observers when she threw her hat into the ring. Others, however, noting her position was a consumer advocate, say it's a natural progression for the lawmaker.

Apple, who was appointed by Governor Frank Keating to fill the post when J.C. Watts was elected to Congress, seemed assured reelection until Peltier joined the race.

COMMISSION REVIEWS APPLICANTS

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The State Fire Marshal Commission met Friday to review finances and discuss hiring of a State Fire Marshal. Of the 16 original candidates for the position, Chairperson Kelley Mattocks said "the field has been narrowed to 25 percent of those and resume acceptance has been closed. All were qualified," she noted. "We had a very good field of candidates from which to choose." A decision could be made as early as December, Mattocks said.

To save money, the commission made the following personnel decisions, which eliminated pay for three FTEs:

- Leave the assistant fire marshal's position unfilled;
- Do not fill the investigator position in Elk City; and
- Do not fill the public education position.

These decisions were necessary to keep the budget in line with the 19 percent shortfall in funds requested for the fiscal year. The 1997 budget request was \$1,213,035; funds actually appropriated were \$985,709.

Other cost-cutting measures approved included cutting:

- all travel for training and most training;
- all protective clothing;
- safety supplies;
- computers and software; and
- microfilming.

Expenditures from the following accounts are to be reduced as much as possible: PikePass, postage, telephone, office supplies, printing, motor pool and equipment.

A change in operating policy includes:

- Increasing turn-around time on plans review from 10 to 20 working days;
- Restricting the 800 number calls to requests for help from fire chiefs, sheriffs and arson hot line calls. All others will need to pay for the call to this office.
- Monitoring request calls and responding only to fire deaths and known suspects after hours; and
- Stopping agents from receiving requests for service at home.

"It is not enough to do good; one must do it in the right way."

John Morley
Rousseau, 1876