



Capitol Network News

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TASK FORCE HEARS REPORT ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Oklahoma's Advisory Task Force on Children's Services was asked repeatedly Wednesday to remember two words: home visitation.

Home visitation, the task force was told by Debbie Richardson, with the Healthy Families child abuse program, and representatives of the Department of Health, is a key component in the fight against child abuse and neglect.

Referring to a number of studies which identified early intervention as the most important factor in decreasing abuse rates and improving parenting skills, Richardson told the panel that home visitation, particularly for first-time parents, was key to initiating those intervention efforts.

"At birth or before," said Richardson, "parents are hungry for information about parenting and the challenges they will be facing. It is the most critical time at which we can approach them."

That fact, combined with the findings of both public and private studies, Richardson said, led the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse to recommend in 1992 that a

nationwide home visitation system be put in place. Called Healthy Families America, the initiative was based on the idea that first-time parents would participate voluntarily and would use those who visit their homes as resources for help in a variety of areas, such as parenting skills and other areas of need. The proposed system, Richardson said, would also rely on community-based help organizations to provide the needed services to the families.

Currently, Richardson told the task force, some 200 programs in 36 states utilize the recommendations of the national committee, including eight in Oklahoma.

The current problem Richardson said, is that there is not the infrastructure that is needed to provide the training and technical assistance, evaluation, research and development of new programs and expansion of

existing programs. Such an effort, she said, would require approximately \$33 million annually in Oklahoma.

The success, however, of such statewide efforts, Richardson said, has been borne out in Hawaii and Connecticut, which have both reported positive results from statewide home visitation and early intervention programs.

Representatives of the Department of Health supported Richardson's claims before the task force, noting that the state's child abuse prevention program relied heavily on the idea of home visitation and early intervention in its efforts to combat child abuse.

Also appearing before the task force were Midge Woodard, who oversees the Department of Human Services foster care program, and Debi Farmer, department program ad-
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LUKE BILL AUTHOR DISAGREES WITH LACKEY

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The author of what is considered the state's most extensive child abuse reform legislation in recent memory disagrees with the governor's human services secretary over the possible impact her legislation could have had in the case of an eight-year-old boy believed murdered last year.

"The bill requires that multidisciplinary teams be established in each district attorney's district," explained Rep. Laura Boyd, D-Norman and author of HB2053, the so-called Ryan Luke Bill.

A report prepared by a special task force appointed by Governor Frank Keating to investigate the handling of the Shane Coffman case repeatedly recommended the implementation of multidisciplinary teams in child abuse investigations. The body of the eight-year-old Coffman child was found in an abandoned freezer outside a trailer house once occupied by his family. Keating appointed the special task force, headed by Secretary of Human Services Ken Lackey, after reports that law enforcement agencies

and the Department of Human Services had multiple contacts with the family prior to the boy's death, going so far in one case as to remove the little boy and his siblings from their mother's care.

During a Nov. 1 press conference, Lackey said he doubted any of the provisions of the Ryan Luke Bill, which ironically took effect the same day the task force released its report, would have benefited Coffman.

Boyd disagrees, saying some of the recommendations included in the task force's report address specific issues covered by her legislation, particularly the establishment of multidisciplinary teams.

"I think it's an area in which we may need to do additional work," said Boyd, "but it's a requirement of my legislation."

Boyd stopped short of saying the presence of a multidisciplinary team would have prevented the Coffman child's death, explaining that it's impossible to speculate on how a case would have been handled if different procedures were in place.

"What we have to do," she said, "is look
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FALLIN GIVES COMMISSION LESSON IN LAW MAKING

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Lt. Governor Mary Fallin gave her commission on workers' compensation reform members a lesson in law making Wednesday, emphasizing that passage of the panel's proposed recommendations would likely draw some opposition.

Fallin, who formed the so-called Fallin Commission on Workers' Compensation Reform earlier this year, said some shots had already been fired at her and the commission, ranging from the claim that she was planning to use the commission's work as a springboard to seek the governor's office to accusations that the panel was dominated by big business and excluded lawyers. None of those claims, Fallin stressed, were true.

Those claims and others, Fallin said, would be part of the plan of attack launched by those she said support the status quo. That attack, she added, would be aimed at defeating the commission's efforts before the legislature.

To prove her point, Fallin showed a videotape of a paid program that recently aired on an Oklahoma City television station. An installment of a four-part series, the program focused on the workers' compensation system and claimed to address questions about the system, including, "What rights would be lost if the system is changed."

Specifically, the program attempted to lead viewers to the conclusion that efforts to reform the system were aimed primarily at eliminating the right of injured workers to be represented by an attorney. Such a recommendation has not been advanced by the

commission and the accusation was denied Wednesday by Fallin.

While visibly drawing the ire of some commission members, the program also drew laughs, particularly when one of its participants said, "Oklahoma has one of the better, if not best, workers' compensation systems" in the country and is used as a model by other states.

Fallin has reiterated since the commission's start that her reason for calling together those involved, which include representatives of small and large employers, as well as representatives of the medical, legal and insurance industries, was the result of her discussions with state business people who complained that the workers' compensation system was too costly and cumbersome.

Fallin also outlined Wednesday some of the components to be included in the legislation resulting from the commission's work and introduced Sen. Jim Maddox, D-Lawton, who has agreed to carry the legislation during the 46th Legislature.

Recommendations for inclusion in the yet-to-be-written bill include:

- Legislative establishment of a clear

Children's Services, cont. from page 1 ministrator, who explained that the state's need for foster families currently outpaces the availability of such families. Specifically, Woodard said, some 3,500 children are now in foster care in the state, while only 1,600 foster families are available. Approximately 300 of those, she added, participated without the benefit of reimbursement normally associated with being a foster parent.

Efforts are underway at the county level, Farmer said, to recruit new foster families, but staff limitations sometimes make it impossible to respond to all the inquiries concerning the program. Additionally, she noted, the foster care division will ask the Commission on Human Service to approve the expenditure of up to \$800,000 to pay daycare costs for foster families in which both parents work as part of an effort "to tap into a new family base" for foster care placements. Currently, Farmer explained, such reimbursement is not available and its absence may discourage families in which both adults work from considering becoming a foster family.

The money, Farmer said, would cover the anticipated costs for the second-half of the 1997 fiscal year.

statement of the intent of the purpose of the workers' compensation;

- Creation of a legislatively-sound, state-wide mediation system;
- Reduction of the temporary disability maximum limit to 104 weeks;
- Allowing employers to direct the medical treatment to be received by those claiming workplace injuries, except in emergency situations;

- Elimination of the ability to claim permanent disability from a soft tissue injury when an employee returns to the same job;

See *Workers Comp*, page 3

Luke Bill, continued from page 1

at what unfortunately has happened and try to take steps to prevent it from happening again."

Specifically, Boyd said, there may be a need to hire what she called part-time coordinators to work with the teams.

"I'm interested in seeing some uniformity in the way these teams work," she explained. "I would like to see everyone on the same page, doing things essentially the same way."

Boyd's suggestion bears a certain resemblance to a suggestion made by Governor Keating, who said a primary investigator should direct child abuse cases and make sure every piece of information is properly investigated and processed. A key concern expressed by the task force focused on the large number of Department of Human Services and law enforcement reports about the family, many of which were never examined by later investigators.

"I could see (a chief investigator proposal) if it worked within the framework of the multidisciplinary teams," Boyd said. "I think I would be more comfortable with someone who was designated as a coordinator, rather than a chief investigator, simply because they could be responsible for coordinating the investigation, as well as ensuring compliance with any court orders involved in a case."

That, Boyd admits, may not be a popular position because it implies added costs.

"It's something I think we're going to have to consider," the Norman Democrat said, "so that we can ensure the kind of uniformity I think everyone wants in the way these kinds of cases are handled."

Boyd said she plans to author more child abuse legislation to be considered by the 46th Legislature, much of which will focus on prevention efforts.

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LEGISLATORS OBSERVE JAIL CONDITIONS

By Michelle Boyd Waters
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Approximately \$48 million annually and additional personnel funding is required for Oklahoma sheriff departments to meet the national sheriff departments average, said Rep. C. Michael Thornbrugh, R-Tulsa.

Members of the Jail Task Force, a joint interim study, visited the Wagoner County Jail on Wednesday to observe conditions that John Walsh, executive director of the Oklahoma Sheriff's Association, said exemplified the disrepair of most of Oklahoma's county jails.

"I think (the tour) reaffirmed what we already suspected," Thornbrugh said. "The situation must be addressed financially from a state level. But the state can't afford to support all the county jails."

He said the members of the Jail Task Force, who are studying the problems associated with the jails, discussed possible options, but did not make any decisions.

One option included the possibility of setting up a jail trust authority or oversight committee. The task force also discussed community sentencing, problems the sheriff's had with the previous bill and regional jails.

Workers Comp, cont. from page 2

- Changing the method of appointing the court administrator;
- Allowing only treating physicians to determine that an injured worker is permanently impaired;
- Eliminating percentage payments of attorneys' fees and making attorneys' fees dependent on the number of hours involved in working a case;
- Elimination of lump sum settlements;
- Focusing on employer and employee education and safety;
- Criminalization of workers' compensation fraud as a felony punishable by prison time and a fine; and

- Amending current law to tighten the definition of compensable injuries in cases where the worker has ended their employment with a company and had neither previously reported a work-related injury nor sought medical treatment for such an injury.

Fallin, who also schooled those at Wednesday's meeting on how a bill winds its way through the legislative process, said other recommendations not yet formalized would also be included in the proposal.

"No one had an answer," Thornbrugh said. "What can you do? They must accept every prisoner at their doorstep."

"It will take a substantial amount of money to get up to standards," Walsh said.

He was not sure if any legislation would be introduced during the 46th legislature, but said that the system would have to be changed, by legislation or other means.

Thornbrugh said that corrections would be the most dominate issue to be faced during next year's session.

The Oklahoma Sheriff's Department employs 173 part-time sworn-in deputies, less than the national average for part-time staff.

Rep. Thornbrugh said that in 1993, the nationwide operational expenditure for sheriffs' departments was \$124.7 million while Oklahoma sheriffs' departments were underfunded \$84 million annually.

The national average for base starting salary for entry-level sheriff employees was \$19,393 while Oklahoma's starting salary was \$15,000, less than the average.

Fourteen percent of Oklahoma's elected sheriffs make less than \$20,000 per year and 45 percent make less than \$25,000 per year, Thornbrugh said.

Tulsa and Wagoner counties can serve as examples of the statewide problems, Thornbrugh said.

The Tulsa Sheriff's Department employs 195 full-time, sworn-in deputies while the national average is 390 for departments in similar counties. Tulsa's operational expenditures last year were \$3.6 million and the national average was \$15.3 million.

In Wagoner County, the Sheriff's Department employs 8 full-time, sworn-in deputies while the national average is 25 for similar counties. The department's operational ex-

penditures were \$309,000 but the national average was \$2.7 million Thornbrugh said.

He also added that two sheriffs were elected recently that had no law enforcement experience or CLEET certification.

Solutions to the problems faced by the county jail system that the legislature might consider include regional jails, privatization, the appropriation of more resources to the jail system and video arraignment. (Legislation is in place to provide for video arraignments, however, no funding was appropriated by the legislature to allow counties to buy the equipment.)

"The sheriffs didn't get the cost per diem they were promised last year," Thornbrugh said.

He said there would be a bipartisan approach this year to raise the cost per diem paid to the county jails from \$7.

"I think that some legislators will get a first-hand look at how bad the jail system really is," Thornbrugh said. "It is a horrendous situation."

Walsh said Oklahoma's county jails are suffering from a lack of funds for maintenance, personnel and alleviation of overcrowding.

"The buildings were built in the early part of the century," Walsh said. "We have totally outmoded facilities. Our system is incapable of dealing with today's inmates. The jails are drastically undermanned."

He said one of the most severe problems is understaffing. One staff member must supervise 30 to 40 inmates in the Wagoner County Jail, the director said. That staff member must also run the communications center, attend to visitors and meet other needs.

"There is one person where there should be 3 to 5 people," Walsh said.

ELECTION CHALLENGES REMAIN UNRESOLVED; WEDEL WITHDRAWS RECOUNT REQUEST

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Voters and candidates in one state House and one state Senate race continued to hold their breath Wednesday while local election board officials and district judges sorted through ballots and charges of voting irregularities.

While recounts of all the House District 41 ballots in Garfield County and Logan County ballots in the Senate District 21 were scheduled for Wednesday, only the House race recount was taking place, assistant state election board secretary Carol Dennis said. And that, she added, was moving slowly.

By mid-afternoon, Dennis said, only six of the Garfield County's 21 ballot boxes, including the absentee box, had been recounted at the request of Curt Roggow, R-Enid. Roggow demanded the recount and alleged a series of voting irregularities in his 11-vote loss last week to incumbent Sean Voskuhl, D-Marshall. The pace was slowed, Dennis said, by the

See *Election Challenges*, page 4

FRESHMEN SENATORS TARGET AREAS OF INTEREST

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) After the swearing-in Nov. 19, Oklahoma's legislators will begin getting organized for the 46th Session. Seven freshmen senators will contribute their expertise and ideas to the legislative process. *Capitol Network News* talked with these seven new members of the senate this week to find out about their preliminary goals. Like most incumbents in the senate, the freshmen want to reform the worker's compensation system, further economic development and encourage the business climate in Oklahoma.

Sen.-Elect James R. Dunlap, R-Bartlesville, currently a Representative and a veteran of the House since 1989, will now represent senate district 29. He is the only legislator moving from the House to the Senate. Dunlap is a general contractor in the Bartlesville area. He ran for the Senate of-

Election Challenges, cont. from page 3 sorting of city ballots from some of the ballot boxes and the separation of absentee ballots by voting precinct.

Meanwhile, Dennis added, a hearing was underway in a nearby courtroom on allegations of irregularities in last week's general election. Roggow contends that 11 voters, including his opponent's parents, cast their ballots improperly during the election, because they voted in a precinct in which they were not registered.

Randy Wedel, R-Stillwater, withdrew his request for a recount of the Logan County ballots from his apparently unsuccessful race for the Senate District 21 seat against Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, citing the anticipated success of his irregularity allegations. Only 32 votes separated the two candidates.

Wedel's attorney argued in a Payne County courtroom Tuesday that as many as 68 voters cast their ballots improperly during last week's election. That argument was being advanced Wednesday in a Logan County courtroom, as well, and was scheduled to be heard Thursday in Lincoln County.

Recounts in the House District 41 seat will conclude Thursday with Logan and Kingfisher counties scheduled to reopen their ballot boxes and manually count the ballots.

While the results of the recounts could affect the outcome of the election, it will be up to the judges involved to determine whether the allegations of irregularities are sufficient to warrant calling a new election.

fice, he said, for two reasons. "The current senator was retiring," Dunlap said, and while the "House of Representatives has been very friendly to small business, worker's compensation reform has stalled in the Senate. I want them to realize how small business is," he added.

Because of his business experience, Dunlap is most interested in legislation on small business issues and worker's compensation reform. "I'll be interested in what Lt. Gov. Fallin's committee comes up with on worker's comp legislation," Dunlap said. "I want Oklahoma to be as business-friendly as possible. I'm also interested in franchise issues."

Dunlap is looking for answers, not glory. He said he'll ask for help with small business legislation from more experienced senators, like Senator James Maddox, D-Lawton, whom Dunlap describes as "a true champion of the cause," of small business.

Sen.-Elect Owen Laughlin, R-Woodward, won over Democrat incumbent Don Williams for the district 49 seat. Laughlin, an attorney, ran for the senate post because, "I want to see a place where my children could and would come back to live. We've created an economic environment [in Oklahoma] that makes it difficult to survive."

Laughlin, too, believes worker's compensation reform is a major issue for the legislature. "It's an area we need to address," he said. "Also, we tax business too much, which translates into taxing individuals too much."

As a former assistant district attorney, Laughlin was personally involved with the criminal justice system. "We shouldn't be releasing criminals early," he said, and offered a plan. "We've got to make inmates work and build prison space. We can't afford to build expensive penitentiaries. I hope to introduce legislation like that. We've got to start figuring out how to do it. The first year? That remains to be seen."

Sen.-Elect Robert Milacek, R-Waukomis, is a teacher and former Oklahoma representative. He served in the House from 1976 to 1982, and quit, he said, because his three daughters were growing up and he didn't have enough time with them. Now retired as a high school and college teacher, Milacek ran for the district 19 senate seat because he was, "dissatisfied with the basic philosophy of my opponent," (Senator Ed Long).

His target this legislative session is, "in one word — jobs. Jobs are the key to the

welfare of any state. Jobs answer the education and criminal problems," he said. Milacek wants Oklahoma to make Oklahoma's business climate "more conducive for small business," with worker's compensation reform and tax incentives.

Sen.-Elect Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, is currently answering a challenge to his election by opponent Randy Wedel, R-Stillwater, for the district 21 senate seat, vacated by Bernice Shedrick. Morgan is an attorney who ran for the post because he felt, "Shedrick's leaving office would leave a void, and because friends and family wanted me to." If Morgan's election survives the challenge, he said he has "no personal agenda to present at the Capitol."

Sen.-Elect Jeff Rabon, D-Hugo, defeated incumbent Jack Bell, D-Idabel, in the August 27 primary election, and had no other challengers for the district 5 seat. He knows how government works, having served as an aide to former Senator David Boren and former Representative Bill Brewster.

Rabon ran for the senate to help his corner of Oklahoma. "I'm a lifelong native of southeast Oklahoma," he said, "and I'm concerned we were getting left behind down here. Everyone wants to fish our lakes and hunt our deer, but we don't get our fair share up there [Oklahoma City]."

Considering the needs of his Senate district, Rabon said he will support legislation for better transportation in southeast Oklahoma. "U.S. Highway 70 runs through Durant, Idabel and Broken Bow," he said. "It is a two-lane highway with no shoulders. Sitting on that two-lane highway is billions of dollars worth of industry—Weyerhaeuser, Tyson and others."

Infrastructure requirements in southeast Oklahoma prompted Rabon to request membership on the appropriations, transportation and wildlife and tourism committees, "which reflect the needs of this district."

Sen.-Elect Kathleen Wilcoxson, R-Oklahoma City, is still teaching school this week. She teaches fifth grade and also "teaches teachers to be more effective in the classroom," she said.

Active in local politics since 1980, Wilcoxson "found that Senator Cole was retiring and decided to run" for the district 45 Senate seat. "I've always wanted to do this, and I thought this was the time. I want to be involved in the growth of the state," she said.

Wilcoxson ran as a pro-business, pro-

See *Freshmen Senators*, page 5

LABOR SURPLUS AREAS NAMED IN OKLAHOMA

By Michelle Boyd Waters
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The U.S. Department of Labor designated 19 counties and two cities in Oklahoma as labor surplus areas until Sept. 30, 1997. DOL designated a total of 1,370 areas across the United States as labor surplus areas because of high unemployment, said Cynthia Grindstaff, an Oklahoma Department of Commerce research analyst.

The nineteen Oklahoma counties include Choctaw, Coal, Haskell, Hughes, Kay less Ponca City, Latimer, Le Flore, McCurtain, McIntosh, Murray, Muskogee less the city of Muskogee, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Pawnee, Pittsburg, Pushmataha, Seminole, Sequoyah and Stephens Counties.

The two Oklahoma cities that have been named surplus areas include Ponca City and Muskogee.

Labor surplus areas are eligible for federal procurement preference and are listed in a federal register. The areas are given priority over foreign bids when government entities are seeking bids for goods or services, Grindstaff said. According to Executive Order 10582, government entities can reject bids from foreign companies in favor of local companies located in a labor surplus area.

Labor surplus areas also automatically qualify for Enterprise Zone status, however, the areas must apply for the status. Compa-

nies within or relocating to an Enterprise Zone become eligible to receive doubled longer lasting incentives given by the state. According to Grindstaff not all the areas in Oklahoma have applied for that status.

This year, Oklahoma had only one or two additions to its list of labor surplus areas, Grindstaff said.

An area must have had an average unemployment rate of at least 7.1 percent for the two-year period 1994-1995 to be designated as a labor surplus area. The qualifying unemployment rate of 7.1 percent is a substantial decrease from the 7.8 percent qualifying rate for Fiscal Year 1996 and stems from a decline in the national unemployment rate.

Many observers look to this data as an indication whether the economic condition of a geographic area is improving or declining.

Areas with an unemployment rate under 7.1 percent in 1994 and 1995 may be considered for classification as labor surplus areas

on the basis of exceptional circumstances. These might include a sudden increase in unemployment that is not temporary or seasonal in nature and that results from such circumstances as plant closings, natural disasters or cancellations of contracts.

The labor surplus area classification list is effective October 1, 1996, through September 30, 1997.

The list of labor surplus areas and a complete description of the classification criteria — as well as updates to the annual list — are contained in "Area Trends in Employment and Unemployment," a monthly publication prepared by the Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration (ETA).

The publication is available at a cost of \$41 for a 12-month subscription or \$4.50 for a single issue. To subscribe or receive a copy, contact the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (202-783-3238).

NEW ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR OKLAHOMA

From Oklahoma Dept. of Commerce

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Secretary of Commerce Ronald Rosenfeld announced the appointment of Peter W. C. Mather as the new Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Technology Wednesday. In his new role, Mather will explore ways to maximize technological impact for economic and community growth across Oklahoma.

For the past 15 years, Mather was Vice President of Management Information Services for Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. a \$4 billion chemicals and industrial gases company, with operations in more than 30 countries. He reported to the chairman and was a member of this Fortune 200 company's management committee. His responsibilities included developing worldwide strategy, implementation and operation of the company's information resources involving an annual operating expense budget of \$150 million.

"The State of Oklahoma and the lead economic development agency should feel very fortunate to have Mather on board," Secretary Rosenfeld said. "His vast expertise will be an asset in encouraging future technology advancements for Oklahoma.

"It's not every day a state agency is able to attract a major league player of Mather's caliber. I'm anticipating his association with Commerce will be a major factor in the continued economic growth the state is currently enjoying," Rosenfeld said. "When you're trying to increase high-paying jobs and im-

prove the quality of life, you need some heavy hitters who can make things happen. Mather is one of those people."

Mather holds an MBA from Lehigh University and is a graduate of the Advanced Management Program of the Harvard Business School. He has extensive experience in evaluating, transferring and assimilating advanced technologies. For the past 20 years, Mather has been a recognized leader and spokesman for the information technology community.

He is past president of the International Society for Information Management and past chairman of the Chemical Process Director's Group. He led the U.S. Postal Service project on President Reagan's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control (the Grace Commission).

Mather recently moved to Oklahoma from Pennsylvania, where he was a member of the board of governors of Cedar Crest College and co-founder of the Lehigh Valley Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. He and his wife Karen and two children live in Edmond.

"Originality does not consist in saying what no one has ever said before, but in saying exactly what you think yourself."

James Stephens

Freshmen Senators, cont. from page 4

education candidate, she said, but doesn't plan to sponsor legislation this session. "I'm going up there and learn what's going on. I will support the Governor's economic plan. I don't want my daughter to get out of school and leave the state," she said.

Worker's compensation reform and education are also on Wilcoxson's support list.

Sen.-Elect James Williamson, R-Tulsa, is a former teacher, a former Oklahoma House member — District 76, 1981-1986 — and an attorney. He ran for the district 35 seat because he "wanted to keep the Senate district Republican, and to support Governor Keating in his proposals to move the state forward economically."

Williamson is interested in supporting economic legislation to "reduce worker's compensation costs to business," as well as improving education in Oklahoma, a goal he also sought as a House member. His other interest is in seeing that "transportation gets its fair share of the dollars, and that we continue to funnel resources into that area."

NEW LAW INCREASES NATIONAL FOREST ACREAGE IN OKLAHOMA

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Tuesday, President Clinton signed HR4236 into law. The "Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996" profoundly affects Oklahoma's forests, as well as parks, forests, trails, rivers or historic sites in 40 other states.

A land swap between the U.S. Forest Service, Ouachita National Forest, and Weyerhaeuser Corporation was part of the bill. "We were dealing right up to the last minute, trading value for value," Deputy Forest Supervisor Dave Hammond said Wednesday. Weyerhaeuser Corporation owns and manages pine forests for renewable sources of wood and paper products.

In the exchange 47,500 acres of National Forest land in southeast Oklahoma and Arkansas was traded to Weyerhaeuser for 180,500 acres of land in the same region. In Oklahoma, the Forest Service swapped 28,000 National Forest acres for 115,000 Weyerhaeuser acres, of "watershed around Broken Bow Lake, some pine plantations, 15 miles along the Glover River and some land in McCurtain County," Hammond said. The Glover River is southeast Oklahoma's last free-flowing river, he added.

One parcel in Arkansas, 24,000 acres along the Cossatot and Little Rivers will become the 501st National Wildlife Refuge.

Some of the land acquired by the U.S. Forest Service is cut-over; but Hammond said some of it is already good wildlife habitat and foresters will be working to improve other newly-acquired parcels. "Our work is just beginning," Hammond added.

More than 100 resources are included in the new law, some natural, some manmade. On the west coast, provisions in the law would improve the management of the Presidio in San Francisco. This military post, dating from 1776, includes both beautiful open spaces appropriate for National Park Service management and hundreds of unused buildings requiring a more innovative approach, President Clinton said when he signed the bill. This Act establishes a government corporation, known as the Presidio Trust, to refurbish and lease these buildings quickly and efficiently, but in a manner consistent with overall park management requirements.

Another laudable provision, the President said, authorizes appropriations of \$17.5 million to help the New York-New Jersey Palisades Interstate Park Commission to acquire lands within the Sterling Forest Re-

serve, just 40 miles from midtown Manhattan. This is one of the last areas of pristine forest in the Northeast and the area is critical for supplying safe drinking water to northern New Jersey.

The Act also establishes the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas. The North American continent was once covered by over 400,000 square miles of tallgrass prairie. Today, less than 1 percent remains. This Act will help to restore 11,000 acres of tallgrass prairie, an ecosystem of grass as tall as 9 feet, and includes trees, flowers, birds and other wildlife. This ecosystem is nationally significant and the Preserve is a welcome addition to the National Park System.

The Act also provides for ten separate nonfederal national heritage areas in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Iowa, Ohio, and New York. Other provisions would help to preserve the Nation's cultural heritage by authorizing memorials, protecting historic areas, designating the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail in Alabama, and authorizing the establishment of a Martin Luther King, Jr., memorial in the District of Columbia.

Park boundary adjustments, land exchanges (including the Arkansas/Oklahoma deal), and provisions to assist agencies in protecting national parks, forests, and public lands are also included in the new law.

Excluded from the bill, President Clinton said, were provisions "that would have adversely affected the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, the Shenandoah National Park and Richmond Battlefields National Park in Virginia, the Sequoia National Park in California, and other national parks and Federal lands.

"Unfortunately, the Act still includes a few objectionable provisions. Among them is a provision that changes the status of about 70 acres of fragile land that was previously protected as part of the Coastal Barrier Resources System. Prior to my signing of the Act this land could only be developed at private expense. Now, this land will be eligible for Federal development subsidies in the form of infrastructure funding and flood insurance. The taxpayer should not bear the risk of development in these damage-prone areas. . .

"I must also note," President Clinton continued, "that two sections of the Act require careful construction and application to avoid violating the Appointments Clause of the Constitution. First, to avoid an unconstitutional limitation on the President's power to appoint officers, I will regard the limitations on my ability to make appointments to the Board of Directors of the Presidio Trust as advisory. The second issue involves officers of the National Park Service (NPS). To avoid an unconstitutional congressional removal of an officer, I will not construe the Act to require that the current NPS Director be subjected to the new appointment process established by the bill. Further, appointments to the NPS Deputy Director positions created by the Act must be made in a manner consistent with the Appointments Clause in order for them to exercise significant governmental authority."

Clinton closed his statement with a quote from a far-sighted former President who was the first to set aside land in the U.S. for future generations to enjoy. President Teddy Roosevelt said: "The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, not impaired, in value."

WILLIAMS DONATES PIPE FOR HACKBERRY FLAT

From The Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Williams Companies, Inc. has agreed to donate approximately 16 miles of steel pipe to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for use in its Hackberry Flat wetland restoration project. The pipe will be used to deliver 2,352 acre feet of water supplied by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Mountain Park Conservancy District of the Hackberry Flat basin in Tillman County, Oklahoma, from a supply source located approximately 16 miles north of the state.

"This generous pipe donation is an important link in our effort to restore these wetlands to their original prominence," said Greg Duffy, director, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. "Williams is a leader in pipe donations for wetlands conservation and an important partner in Oklahoma's efforts to provide habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds."

Hackberry Flat is a 3,750 acre natural basin in southwest Oklahoma that was at one time the largest isolated wetland in the state. Prior to its drainage and conversion to farmland, it

See *Hackberry Flat*, page 7

UNIVERSAL ACCESS, A PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE E-RATE

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The Telecommunications Act of 1996 sailed through Congress, because both houses saw the need. Implementing the provisions of the broad plan will take years.

Briefly, the Act calls for access to the Internet for all schools, libraries and rural health care providers at a rate consistent with urban access, or lower, with the goal of being "hooked up" nationwide by the year 2000.

The E-rate, a free "education rate" will "advance our nation's long-standing goal of affordable access to telecommunications service for all Americans including schools, libraries and rural health care clinics," Secretary of Education Richard Riley said in a letter to Reed Hundt, chairman of the FCC.

"Technological literacy is a critical skill for America's students to succeed in the 21st century," Riley's letter said.

"Simply put, today's work force rewards those workers who possess computer literacy skills, and tomorrow's work force will demand computer literacy skills. In order to prepare our children to meet the challenges of the 21st Century, universal access to the Information Superhighway will be critical. The Internet, in many ways, is the blackboard of the future. It is our strong belief that by

advancing free basic access, we will increase the pace of classroom learning and continuing efforts to improve education."

The main drawback to users is the cost of access to telecommunications services. These costs prevent many of our teachers and children from using the educational resources of the Internet. The second drawback is the on-going monthly charges for access. "By way of illustration," Secretary Riley wrote, "we know that some [school] districts are paying about \$200 a month in access charges while others pay \$2,000 for the same technology and services.

Across the U.S. today, only nine percent of the nation's classrooms are connected. "For these reasons, we support a guarantee of universal access to advanced telecommunications and information services for every public, private, and parochial K-12 school and library in America," to ensure that no school or library will be denied the opportunity to participate in the Information Age because of an inability to pay, Riley wrote.

Schools and libraries are investing million of dollars on computers, software, and teacher training, a waste of money if schools and libraries cannot afford to pay the monthly access charges.

Last week, the Federal-State Joint Board reached another decision furthering universal access. "Almost 70 percent of all schools will get at least a 50 percent discount on a wide range of telecommunications services," Riley said. "By providing the deepest discounts to schools with the largest number of poor children — discounts of up to 90 percent — the Federal-State Joint Board begins to give these schools a real start to being part of the ongoing telecommunications revolution.

"This is long overdue. This recommendation coupled with other Administration efforts now underway with the private sector tells me that we are on track to meet the objective that all of our nation's schools and libraries are connected to the Internet by the year 2000," Riley added.

Recommendations from the FCC Telecommunications and Health Care Advisory Committee for implementing the plan include a flat-based pricing system for urban and rural users to eliminate the long-distance access charges so onerous to rural users today. The act specifically mandates telecommunications providers to sell access to rural health care providers at rates comparable to rates in urban areas. Companies providing access would be subsidized for profits lost in the transaction, at the same time gaining access to a much broader range of potential customers for service. If a student uses the Internet at school, the student will probably want access to the Internet at home.

Oklahoma's First Steps

Josh O'Brien, Director of Media Relations for the Oklahoma Department of Education said the state has been waiting to see what "Washington, D.C. would do.

"We're interested in improving technology at this agency and all the school districts," O'Brien said. Oklahoma has 549 school districts, some with more than one school. At this time, no static count of how many school districts are using the Internet can be made.

On Dec. 5 "Web Day" sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Education, will be held in 18 different locations simultaneously to familiarize school district officials with the state's web page and encourage individual school use of the Internet, O'Brien said.

SATELLITE TOWN MEETING SET

From U.S. Dept. of Education

■(WASHINGTON) Truancy is often the first sign a young person is in trouble. It can also be a gateway to crime. According to the Los Angeles County Office of Education, truancy is the most powerful predictor of juvenile delinquent behavior.

How big is the problem? While no national data exist, according to the "Manual to Combat Truancy" (available at <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/truancy/>), in some cities, unexcused absences number in the thousands each day. Pittsburgh and Milwaukee, for example, count 2,450 and 4,000 (respectively) absent without an excuse.

"When young people start skipping school," the report says, "they are telling their parents, school officials and the community at large they are in trouble and need our help if they are to keep moving forward in life."

"What can schools and communities do to keep students in school, challenged and learning?"

That question is the focus of this month's Satellite Town Meeting, at 7 p.m., Tuesday,

See *Town Meeting*, page 8

Hackberry Flat, cont. from page 6

was an important stopover for thousands of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Once the area is restored, it is expected to be used by more than 200,000 waterfowl and shorebirds, including the endangered whooping cranes.

"The opportunity to partner with Oklahoma for such a worthwhile project is exciting, and we look forward to doing what we can to make this effort a success," said Keith Bailey, Williams chairman, president and chief executive officer. "The Williams Companies is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment which is so important to us all."

The donated pipe will be collected from Williams' five natural gas pipe companies: Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation, Northwest Pipeline Corporations, Kern River Gas Transmission Company, Texas Gas Transmission Corporation, and Williams Natural Gas Company. It is planned that the pipe will be gathered and delivered to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation by the end of 1997.

Town Meeting, continued from page 7

November 19. Secretary Riley will host "Schools as Safe Havens: Discipline, Safety and Truancy Prevention."

Coming to you via satellite from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C., this teleconference features a panel of educators and juvenile justice officials from around the country who are creating community-wide partnerships to reduce truancy, including:

- Dr. Kelly F. Blanton, superintendent of Kern County Schools, Bakersfield, CA.
- Linda Hyler Harrill, president and state director of Communities in Schools, North Carolina.
- Janet Ransom, supervisor of the Truancy Intervention Project in the Fulton County Juvenile Center, Atlanta, GA.
- Diane McCarthy, president of Western Maricopa Coalition/Save Kids Partnership, Glendale, AZ.

Topics include: involving parents in truancy prevention and school discipline; making sure students at risk are actively engaged in learning; ensuring students face consistent sanctions for truancy or disciplinary problems; and involving law enforcement and social services in truancy prevention.

How You Can Join the Meeting

You can participate in the Satellite Town Meeting by calling during the live teleconference and asking your questions of the Secretary and the panel.

Your local cable access station might broadcast the town meetings if you ask them

to, or you can organize your own downlink site on the night of the program. Local PBS member stations, schools, community colleges and universities, and cable access stations are often willing to serve as downlink sites. Just gather a group of interested community members and join.

Coordinates

The following Satellite Coordinates explain where to direct your satellite dish to receive the November Town Meeting:

- C-BAND: Galaxy 9, Transponder/Channel 1, Vertical Polarity, Downlink frequency 3270 MHz, Orbital location 123 degrees West.
- KU-BAND: SBS-6, Transponder/Channel 15, Horizontal Polarity, Downlink frequency 12068 MHz, Orbital location 74 degrees West.
- Audio subcarriers: 6.2 (Spanish) 6.8 (English)

Note: Galaxy 9 at 123 degrees West is in the orbital position formerly occupied by Telstar 303 or T3. Check with your technician to ensure your satellite dish is re-programmed regularly. Also, please note that satellite coordinates are subject to change. Register your participation to ensure you will be notified of any changes by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN. For technical assistance during or after the program please call 202-463-5912.

The Satellite Town Meeting broadcast is free and unrestricted. Use, duplication and distribution of these materials are encouraged. The program is closed captioned.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
ABROAD ESTABLISHED**

From The White House

■ (WASHINGTON) The President welcomed the formation of a Special Advisory Committee to the Secretary of State on Religious Freedom Abroad. This "Advisory Committee," established by Secretary of State Christopher and chaired by Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor John Shattuck, will call attention to problems of religious persecution abroad. It is also expected to provide advice on how to bring about reconciliation in those areas where religious enmity is a threat to peace.

The Administration has embarked on this initiative because of its commitment to helping people of all faiths live free of the threat of persecution. As a nation founded by men and women who sought refuge from religious persecution, our country continues to serve as a model for the world of freedom of belief and harmonious relations among different faiths.

Because of this heritage, the United States has led the way in championing religious rights around the world. Close to fifty years ago, under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, the United States delegation to the United Nations saw to it that the "right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion" was written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet today, in many places around the world this right is not honored. Religious persecution is suffered by many religious groups who are singled out for punishment or discrimination because of their religion.

The establishment of the Advisory Committee, which is composed of representatives of the largest American religious groups, together with academic leaders and members of religious groups that have suffered persecution abroad, carries forward the commitment of the United States to advance religious freedom, help those suffering under repression, support the forces of tolerance and advance reconciliation among the many communities of faith.

"When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him."

*Swift
Thoughts on Various Subjects, 1711*



PRESIDENT SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER ON WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

From The White House

■ (WASHINGTON) "On November 14, 1994, by Executive Order 12938, I declared a national emergency with respect to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States posed by the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons ("weapons of mass destruction") and the means of delivering such weapons. Because the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means of delivering them continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on November 14, 1994, and extended on November 14, 1995, must continue in effect beyond November 14, 1996. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing the national emergency declared in Executive Order 12938.

"This notice shall be published in the Federal Register and transmitted to the Congress."

*Signed by President William J. Clinton,
November 12, 1996.*



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A PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION National Family Caregivers Week 1996

At this special time each year, we give thanks for our many blessings. Among those blessings are the quiet but heartfelt contributions made on a daily basis by our Nation's caregivers, particularly on behalf of the elderly in our society.

The true value of the role that caregivers play in the lives of America's families is immeasurable. Providing physical comfort and emotional reassurance, these strong and selfless people care for loved ones who can no longer care for themselves. The vast majority of caregivers are family members — often older relatives — and women provide most of the informal care that their families receive. Of the millions of people who provide informal care to older adults, over half are spouses or children. While many caregivers experience stress and frustration in fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities, and many sacrifice personal opportunities to care for a loved one, most regard the challenges of caregiving as a rewarding and satisfying experience.

By the year 2030, one in five Americans will be at least 65 years old, compared to one in eight today. In addition, the number of older Americans will double, from the present 34 million to about 69 million. At the same time that our population is aging, more older persons are suffering from chronic illnesses and face potentially disabling conditions. Moreover, individuals with lifelong disabilities are living longer and may require assistance in caring for themselves as they age. The overwhelming majority of older Americans would prefer to remain in their homes while growing older — even when no coordinated system of home- and community-based care is available. As a result, more Americans are becoming involved in caring for family members who want to age with dignity and respect.

This week, as we celebrate the contributions of caregivers to their families and communities, let us recognize the challenges these generous individuals must confront on a daily basis — challenges that include fulfilling multiple and often conflicting roles of caregiving for their aging relatives, caring for young children, and working outside their homes. Let us promote community programs and encourage workplace policies that help to lighten or share the burden of their caregiving responsibilities. And let us, as a Nation, recognize and commend the vital role they play in ensuring that older Americans age with grace, dignity, and a precious measure of independence.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 24 through November 30, 1996, as National Family Caregivers Week. I call upon Government officials, businesses, communities, volunteers, educators, and all the people of the United States to acknowledge the contributions made by caregivers this week and throughout the year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

"The primary cause of all our disorders lies in the different State Governments, and in the tenacity of that power which pervades the whole of their system . . . Incompatibility in the laws of different States, and disrespect to those of the general government must render the situation of this great Country weak, inefficient and disgraceful."

*George Washington
letter to David Stuart
July 1, 1787*

Calendar of Meetings & Events

Thursday, November 14, 1996

- 10:00** **Oklahoma Municipal Power Authority Board of Directors**
Edmond, Activity Center, 28 East Main, Edmond, OK
-
- 10:00** **Interim Study 96H-3, Manufactured Homes**
Members of the House County & Municipal Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 412-B
-
- 1:30** **Oklahoma Tax Commission**
Room 501B, State Office Building, 440 S. Houston, Tulsa

Friday, November 15, 1996

- 9:30-11:30** **Joint Task Force on Parity for Mental Illness Insurance Coverage**
State Capitol, Room 511-A
-
- 10:00** **Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement Commission**
Lincoln Plaza Office Center, Suite 270, 4545 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City
-
- Ethics Commission**
Public Hearing
Board Room, Second Floor of Administration Building, Rogers University/Tulsa Campus,
700 North Greenwood, Tulsa
-
- 1:00** **Managed Care Task Force**
Conference Center, Conference Room C & D, Integris Baptist Medical Center,
3366 NW Expressway, Oklahoma City
-
- 2:30** **Dispute Resolution Advisory Board**
Denver Davison Building, 1915 N. Stiles, Suite 305 Conference Room, Oklahoma City

Monday, November 18, 1996

- 1:30** **Energy Administration Reform Task Force**
Created by SB 911
Auditorium, University Center at Tulsa/Rogers State College, Tulsa

Wednesday, November 20, 1996

- 9:00** **Police Pension & Retirement Board**
1001 NW 63rd Street, Suite 305, Oklahoma City
-
- 10:00** **Adult Day Care Task Force — DHS**
312 NE 28th, Oklahoma City

Calendar of Meetings & Events

Thursday, November 21, 1996

9:00 **Horse Racing Commission**
Shepherd Mall Activity Center, 2426 Plaza Prom, Oklahoma City

Commission on Children & Youth
4545 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 114, Oklahoma City

9:30 **Joint Interim Committee on Electric Utility Task Force**
Created by SJR 37
State Capitol, Senate Chamber

Monday, November 25, 1996

10:00 **Rehabilitation Services Commission**
3535 NW 58th Street, Second Floor Large Conference Room, Oklahoma City

Tuesday, November 26, 1996

10:00 **Commission on Children & Youth**
4545 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 114, Oklahoma City

Monday, December 2, 1996

10:00 **State Board of Equalization**
State Capitol, Governor's Conference Room

11:00 **Oklahoma Transportation Commission**
200 NE 21 St., Commission Room, 1st Floor, Oklahoma City

Tuesday, December 3, 1996

9:30 **Oklahoma Commission for Human Services**
Room 214, Sequoyah Office Bldg., Oklahoma City

Tuesday, December 10, 1996

9:00 **Commissioners of the Land**
State Capitol, Governor's Large Conference Room

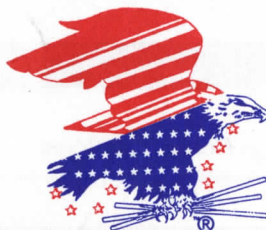
Thursday, December 12, 1996

1:00 **Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Prep**
Dyer Room, Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City

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