

## Senate Bills, continued from page S-3

by the legislature, is required by the federal government. Federal highway dollars depend on every state's passage of a zero tolerance law.

### Developments Assessed at Fair Market Value

In order to right a wrong, Sen. Ted Fisher, D-Sapulpa, introduced **SB730** to change the way land on a current development is assessed. Rep. Wayne Cozort, R-Tulsa, is House sponsor of the bill.

Sen. Fisher explained a developer pours his own money into roads, water and sewer lines and electricity when raw land is being developed into building lots.

"In any development," Fisher said, "25 percent of the lots are prime, 25 percent are junk and the rest are mediocre."

"The best lots are always the first lots to sell," Fisher continued. After the sale the county assessor puts that value on all the remaining lots.

With the new law, the developer gets to keep the raw land valuation until the lot sells, after which, the new buyer isn't stuck with an assessment of prime land, because the lots are all assessed at fair market value.

"That's the cowboy definition," Sen. Fisher concluded.

### Vehicle Accident Victims Provided New Protection

Among other senate bills to become law, **SB1147** limits access to written accident reports filed by law enforcement officers for accidents involving an injury, fatality, or damages in excess of \$300.

As a result of the new provisions, access to such reports will be limited to law enforcement officers, legal newspapers, and broadcast news entities.

The law prohibits using the accident report to contact any of the principals involved or relatives of those involved in an accident to attempt to solicit work or funds.

### Small Town Medical Care Gets a Helting Hand

Sen. Bruce Price, D-Hinton, and Rep. Randy Beutler, D-Elk City, gave cities, towns and counties in Oklahoma an opportunity to take care of their own medical needs with **SB999**.

This new law allows those entities to create a hospital authority — with the approval of the people. Levying a two percent sales and service tax on themselves, rural cities, towns and counties can set up a board and funnel the two percent tax into a hospital or medical facility for local residents.

Danny George, assistant executive director of the Oklahoma Municipal League, said rural communities may not have a large enough tax base to support a hospital. "This bill gives them the ability to tax themselves and subsidize their medical care if they choose to do so," he said. "It's just another vehicle available to maintain rural medical care," he added.

### Estate Tax Exemptions Rise for Farms, Businesses

Senator Bruce Price, D-Hinton, introduced legislation to raise the estate tax exemption for Oklahomans from \$175,000 to \$600,000. In the process, Price said, it was estimated the exemption would cause a \$16 million a year hit to the general revenue fund.

"The leadership thought the loss was too high," Price said, "but they liked the idea." So a compromise was reached.

The \$600,000 estate tax exemption passed in **SB 1111**; but only for inheritors of small businesses and farms.

"It helps with the economy," Price said, "because when an estate passes, those who inherit the property won't have to sell the business or farm to pay the taxes." And the hit to the general fund is only \$4 million a year, Price said.

Individuals are still limited to a \$175,000 estate tax exemption, but Price said, "I'm working on it."

### Quality Jobs Program Extended

**SB689**, authored by Sen. Ted Fisher, D-Sapulpa, and Rep. Don McCorkell, D-Tulsa,

continues the Quality Jobs Program, Saving Quality Jobs and Former Military Facility Development Acts, by removing their sunset provisions. The bill requires the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to submit a report every three years documenting the results of these programs and their cost effectiveness.

In 1996, the Oklahoma Quality Jobs Program Act continued its noticeable impact on Oklahoma's economy, and is credited for improvements to the Oklahoma economy. For the second consecutive year, Oklahoma added more than 30,000 net jobs. Oklahoma ranked fifth in the nation for growth in personal income for the third quarter of 1995.

As a basic premise of the Quality Jobs Program Act when it originally passed in 1993, the Legislature continued to focus on assisting certain basic industries which generally export their goods and services, and on creating growth which would not otherwise occur.

### Investing in Electric Cars Gets a Tax Break

**SB679**, by Sen. Bill Gustafson, R-El Reno, and Rep. Jack Bonny, D-Burns Flat, extends the current tax credit for conversion of motor vehicles to alternative fuels at 50 percent of the expense. The amount was scheduled to be lowered to 20 percent in 1997.

The bill also extends the tax credit to conversion of motor vehicles to electric power.

