



Capitol Network News

Today's news from Oklahoma's best government information resource

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Happy Thanksgiving from Everyone at Capitol Network News

SENATE RELEASES WORKERS' COMP REVIEW

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) It is one of the most talked about systems in state government, and according to a Senate staff study released this week, Oklahoma's workers' compensation system is improving, thanks, in part, to legislative reforms implemented over the past four years.

The study, entitled 'Workers' Compensation in Oklahoma: Recent Reforms and Results,' has already won the praise of a handful of Democratic senators, including Sen. Jim Maddox, D-Lawton. Maddox recently announced that he will carry the bill that proposes the next wave of changes in the workers' compensation system. That bill will be the result of the recommendations from Lt. Governor Mary Fallin's Commission on Workers' Compensation, which is currently in the process of preparing its fi-

nal proposals and turning them into legislative language.

The Senate study looks specifically at reforms in the workers' compensation system implemented since 1992 and identifies efforts targeting six areas:

- Reducing health care costs through the introduction of managed care;
- Requiring workplace safety programs;
- Creating a more politically independent judiciary;
- Strengthening fraud investigation and prosecution;
- Increased use of independent medical examiners; and
- Making benefit payments more fair for employers and employees.

The study concludes that the reform efforts "have improved cost containment, workplace safety and lowered employers'

premiums in recent years." Significant results identified by the study include:

- The reduction of costs according to the Oklahoma Insurance Department Actuary, which was reflected in data presented to the Board of Property and Casualty Rates in January that indicated enough savings have achieved to warrant up to a 14 percent reduction in costs with additional savings expected to materialize in coming years; the board settled for a 4.5 percent cut in workers' compensation costs, the largest reduction in a number of years;

- Stiffer fraud penalties, workplace safety, benefit changes and so-called dueling doctor reforms that have, in part, accounted for an eight percent decrease in workers' compensation filings since those reforms were passed during a 1994 special session of the

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STATE LAWMAKERS STUDY NATIONAL CEMETERY

By Brandon R. Webb
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Four members of the House Veterans and Military Affairs Committee convened Tuesday at the Capitol for the second meeting of Interim Study 96H-25 on Fort Sill State/National Cemetery Site. Rep. Al Sadler, D-Ardmore, presided over the interim group created to study placing a National Cemetery at Fort Sill north of Lawton.

Rep. Ron Kirby, D-Lawton, who requested the interim study, was unable to attend due to the death of his father on Monday. Sadler, joined by Rep. Bill Case, R-Midwest City, Rep. Danny Hilliard, D-Sulphur and Rep. Dale Wells, D-Cushing gathered to inquire about access roads to the cemetery.

Department of Transportation represen-

tative Bob Rose said, "The Department of Transportation would like to work with the Veterans Affairs Committee and all others to bring the National Cemetery to Oklahoma. We stand ready to offer any kind of assistance."

Sadler asked Rose if any studies had been done on what type of road improvements would be needed.

Rose responded, "No studies have been conducted yet. We are going to need to know if the Federal Government has any specific requirements for access roads into National Cemeteries."

Wells commented, "We need to do a study to find out how many visitors will be traveling to the cemetery." In addition, the

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