



Capitol Network News

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HOUSE DEADLINES SET; SENATE WAITING

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The official start of the 46th Legislature is still 2 1/2 months away, but that does not mean the lawmaking process is not already underway.

Members of both the state House and Senate face certain deadlines in order for their ideas about the state's public policy to become law.

In the House, which will hold an organizational meeting Jan. 7, representatives must meet the following deadlines;

✓ Dec. 13, deadline for requesting bill drafting;

✓ Jan. 10, deadline for introduction of bills; and

✓ Jan. 20 to 31, committee work on bills.

In the Senate, the deadlines are less certain, pending a decision by Sen. Bill Mickle, D-Durant and majority floor leader, who is responsible for setting that legislative house's deadlines. It is expected, however, that the Senate will follow its traditional deadlines, requiring bill drafting requests to be submitted by the middles of January and setting an end of January deadline for bills' filings.

How many bills will cross lawmakers' desks is uncertain, even among those who deal with the measures.

"It's just too hard to guess" how many measures will be filed, Larry Warden, chief

House of Representatives clerk, said. "Each of the past few years they have set a new record, but that doesn't mean it's been a tremendous increase, just a slight increase."

Warden, who has served the House for 26 years, said he could remember the days when only 700 or so bills were filed during a session. During the second session of the 45th Legislature, 1,638 bills and 246 resolutions were filed. Over the 45th's two terms, a total of 3,851 measures were introduced.

"With only 15 new members in the House," added Warden, "we could see the number being held down, because the already established members are more focused and know which issues they want to deal with."

"Still, it's hard to guess what's going to happen."

Of the 1,884 measures introduced during the second session of the 45th Legislature:

✓ The governor signed 355 bills and 12 joint resolutions, including 207 House bills

and 148 Senate bills, eight House and four Senate joint resolutions;

✓ An additional 132 simple and concurrent House and Senate resolutions were adopted and filed with the Secretary of State; and

✓ One House bill and one Senate joint resolution were sent to the Secretary of State rather than the governor because they called for statewide elections on constitutional amendments, including the recently-adopted ad valorem reform proposals and Crime Victims' Bill of Rights.

At the same time, Governor Frank Keating issued a total of 52 vetoes, including 17 line-item vetoes, during the 45th's second session and his second legislative term as governor. When added to Keating's single-year record of 57 vetoes at the end of the 45th's first meeting, the governor's two-year total stands at 109, outpacing many of the state's former chief executives.

ELECTION BOARD BEGINNING PURGE PROCESS

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The enactment of the so-called Motor Voter Law put an end to voter registration purges in Oklahoma as they were once known, but now the State Election Board is gearing up to implement a new process that could result in some voters having their names dropped from the rolls.

"Before Congress enacted the Motor Voter Law, we purged the voter registration laws, removing those who had not voted for some period, generally eight years, every four years," explained Lance Ward, secretary of the state election board. "Purging the rolls like that is specifically prohibited under the terms of the Motor Voter law, but a change in that law in 1995 requires us to establish a new process after the presidential election for dealing with that issue."

That process, Ward added, must be implemented by June, and the state election board office is already prepared to meet that deadline.

Three groups of non-voters, Ward said, have been identified and will be sent letters that, combined with the voter registrants' own actions, will determine whether their names remain on the voting rolls.

The first group, Ward explained, are the potential duplicates, individuals who for one reason or another are registered in two or more different precincts.

"These are some of the same people who were identified in the recent contests filed concerning the general election," Ward said, "as well as others."

Those individuals, the state election board secretary explained, will be asked to identify their correct place of residence. If they fail to respond and fail to vote in the next two general elections — 1998 and 2000 — their names will be removed from the voter rolls, Ward said.

The second group will be made up of those to whom the election board has sent first class mail, including such things as voter

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