

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY

## AWARDS

### GOVERNOR ATTENDS AWARDS ANNOUNCEMENT AT GM PLANT

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Governor Frank Keating attended a ceremony Wednesday at the General Motors Plant in Oklahoma City where *Motor Trend Magazine* awarded its most prestigious honor — The 1997 Car of the Year Award — to the Chevrolet Malibu, being built solely at the Oklahoma City GM plant.

The Governor also addressed a crowd of state officials, auto industry representatives and General Motors employees who gathered for the ceremony.

"This is a tremendous honor for the state of Oklahoma and more specifically the Oklahoma City General Motors plant to host this landmark event and it's a credit to the thousands of local GM employees involved in the production of the new Chevrolet Malibu. The Malibu is produced solely by Oklahomans and it's obvious by today's honor from *Motor Trend* that the new Malibu is a quality product," the Governor commented.

"Oklahomans are known for their intense work ethic and the productivity of the Oklahoma City GM plant is certainly no surprise to me. I'm honored to have the privilege to assist in showcasing our plant and its employees to the rest of the country. This award is a true compliment to their efforts," the Governor said.

—THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
11/20/96

## BANKING & FINANCE

### BANKERS SEEK MORE FUNDS FROM LEGISLATURE

■(GIT) The Oklahoma Legislature is essentially assessing an additional tax on state banks by keeping surplus funds for its own uses, said Banking Commissioner Mick Thompson at the State Banking Board meeting on Wednesday.

State bankers are working on a legislative proposal as part of a code review bill to change the law so that the department can keep a greater percentage of the fees the banks pay.

Thompson said the extra funds would be used to fund the understaffed and underfunded Oklahoma State Banking De-

partment. He said that the federal government recently mandated an increase in salaries and travel compensation, but did not provide additional funds to pay for them.

The banking department assesses fees on each state-chartered bank based on the amount of 21 cents per \$1,000 of asset value.

Thompson said the department collects the fees and then writes a check to be deposited in the general fund. The legislature then appropriates a dollar amount of money back to the department's budget.

The banking department collected approximately \$3 million from state banks for fiscal year 1996. However, the legislature appropriated 72.62 percent of the funds back to the department, or approximately \$2.2 million. The government kept \$828,003 in the general fund for its own use.

In FY 1995, the legislature appropriated 76.86 percent of the deposited back to the banking department. In FY 1990, the legislature appropriated 90.84 percent of the funds to the department.

—MICHELLE BOYD WATERS  
11/20/96

## CORRECTIONS

### CORRECTIONS BOARD DISCUSSES NUMBERS

■(GIT) Oklahoma's Department of Corrections seemingly found 79 empty beds Monday when department staff members outlined their findings in a recently conducted capacity study.

The findings, which must be reviewed internally before being accepted by the Board of Corrections, were the result of a study requested by board chairman Michael Roark, who asked that department staff review the board's so-called certified capacity number.

The results, Roark and other board members admitted Monday, were both confusing and disturbing.

Using a formula specified in state statutes in combination with the administrative code produced by the Department of Central Services and a nationally-accepted fire and safety code, David Miller, chief of state and operations, told the board that the department has the capacity to house 11,619 inmates. That number, Miller explained, was based on an assumption present in the fire and safety code which required 120-square-foot or gross floor area per person.

However, Miller noted, the standard outlined in the code is often exceeded because the department cannot refuse to accept offenders sentenced to its custody. Working with regional directors, facility wardens and superintendents, the director of the department has established another number reflective of the ability of each facility to take in inmates above the 120-square-foot standard. That figure, Miller told the board, is 15,011 inmates.

Roark summarily rejected the first number, saying its foundation — the 120-square-foot requirement — was unrealistic. The board chairman said he placed greater faith in the second number, which reflected the department director's and facility wardens' hands-on determination of facilities' capacity.

Other members, too, expressed reservations about accepting the first number, citing the 120-square-foot requirement.

Board member Calvino Muse, Sr., however, warned his fellow board members not to look only at the numbers as a solution to the department's problem.

Roark said the study was important to establish credibility with the governor and the legislature, noting that the board and department had talked of overcrowding while the study revealed that more beds were available than previously assumed. Referring to Friday's population count of 14,932 inmates in department facilities, Roark said the new figure means there are 79 empty beds available. Miller noted, however, that more than 300 inmates are awaiting transfer from county jails to department facilities at the present time.

Board member Beverly Young asked whether the department had the staff to adequately supervise the higher number of inmates. Miller and interim department director James Saffle said it did not, saying that the department would ask the legislature to fund an additional three percent of its approved FTE, bringing that funding to 97 percent, and to add and fund 693 correctional officers to its FTE.

Saffle said the department "cannot continue to pack people in its prisons," and that something more than "dropping down" the number of square-feet per inmate would have to be considered. Saffle also said the department was not saying that 15,011 inmates were easy to handle, "but based on the situ-

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