



## 2020 Regional Legislative Agenda

### State Priorities

#### **ENSURING A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY**

##### **Municipal Funding Diversification**

Support legislation that removes barriers to allow municipalities to reduce costs, operate efficiently, and diversify sources of revenue available to municipalities for operating revenue. Key initiatives include diversifying revenue for funding public safety agencies, streets, and other infrastructure improvements; and preserving and strengthening cities' authority to promote economic development activities within their borders.

##### **Economic Incentives**

Support tax credits, exemptions and incentives that provide an economic return to the State of Oklahoma, maintain our competitiveness in business attraction and retention, and increase capital investment. Several programs proposed for review by the Oklahoma Incentive Evaluation Commission are critical to our state's competitiveness and should be protected, including:

- Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit
- All Quality Jobs Programs
- Quality Events Program
- Film Enhancement Rebate
- Automotive Engineering Tax Credit
- Small Business incubator Tenant Credit
- Opportunity Zones
- Oklahoma Seed Capital Fund

##### **Statewide Branding and Marketing**

Provide dedicated funding through the Oklahoma Department of Tourism to implement branding and marketing strategies developed through the statewide branding summit. These strategies may take the form of advertising, marketing, promotional materials, etc., and will target national and international audiences.

##### **Meet the Demands for Research and Development in Leading Industries**

One of the greatest concerns businesses face today is the rapid pace of evolving technology. In order to help our small to medium size companies keep pace with advancing technologies, the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST) offers research and development support but has been unable to meet demands due to inadequate investment by the state. Increased funding for applied research, development and technology transfer for advancing technologies in industry is necessary for Oklahoma businesses to compete in a national and global market. OCAST creates public/private research



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partnerships with focused financial resources on innovation having the greatest potential for commercial success in the shortest amount of time. Additionally, the OneVoice coalition calls on the legislature to study ways to improve Oklahoma's ability to compete nationally in the area of technology transfer in order to meet industry needs for a speed to market environment.

### **Criminal Justice Reform**

Strengthen alternatives to incarceration and support reforms in sentencing, reentry and rehabilitation that safely reduce the prison population and enable nonviolent offenders to reenter the workforce. This should include investments in treatment and early-diversion efforts for individuals suffering from mental illness and addiction, increased access to training, and job placement for those incarcerated or being released, as well as structural changes in the criminal justice system. These smart-on-crime reforms would improve community safety, reduce recidivism, lessen the burden on prisons and safety net programs, and enable more ex-offenders to contribute meaningfully to Oklahoma's economy.

## **EDUCATED AND HEALTHY WORKFORCE**

### **Fund Public Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Invest in Oklahoma Education — Common Ed, Higher Ed, and Career Tech — with a comprehensive, multi-year plan to be a Top 10 state by 2025. Investing in the development of a highly-skilled, well-educated workforce will make Oklahoma more competitive and elevate our state's reputation as a quality place to live, work, raise a family, and build a business.

### **Address the Teacher Shortage**

Improve the ability of Oklahoma's PreK-12 public schools to attract and retain effective career teachers through policies designed to increase the state's pool of qualified teachers and improve teachers' job satisfaction. This should include developing a plan to become the top state in the region for teacher pay; incentivizing aspiring educators by providing full tuition waivers for education majors; and improving teaching conditions by reducing class sizes and increasing the number of education support professionals.

### **Full Medicaid Expansion**

Support Medicaid Expansion that serves the largest number of uninsured Oklahomans in the most cost-effective way while also providing the largest financial return to the State of Oklahoma. OHCA, DHS, OSDH and Mental Health Medicaid services are vital to the health of Oklahomans and our workforce; the survival of nursing homes and rural hospitals; and the vitality of the health care industry, a \$12.5 billion economic engine statewide that employs more Oklahomans in primary jobs than any other private industry.

### **Healthcare Workforce Expansion**

Address current & future health care workforce needs in urban & rural Oklahoma through the following means:

- Use all available state and federal resources to support and expand Teaching Health Center related programs, including by expanding the Oklahoma Hospital Residency Training Act to include community-based training.



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- Support the Physician Manpower Training Commission.
- Allow nurse practitioners and physician assistants with appropriate levels of training and experience to practice to the full extent of their licenses.
- Support reimbursement for approved programs that use technology to provide a collaborative model of medical education and care management to empower primary care clinicians in rural and underserved communities to provide specialty care to patients.
- Support and incentivize graduate medical education and fellowships in underserved specialties, including psychiatry.
- Request the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education seek funding to address the gap in the number of health care practitioner and health care support occupations needed throughout the health systems of the state.

### **Mental health treatment and support**

Expand behavioral health and substance use disorder services to help more Oklahomans gain access to the treatment and support they need to live healthy, productive lives. This will improve the economy, increase workforce efficiency and support public safety. To accomplish this goal, Oklahoma must:

- Continue to increase appropriations for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Oklahoma Health Care Authority to perform prevention, early intervention, and treatment services.
- Reverse cuts in provider rates and restore reimbursements for behavioral health and addiction treatment providers.
- Provide financial support for screenings, programs, and trainings that ensure earlier detection of mental illness and appropriate evidence-based treatment in primary care settings throughout Oklahoma.
- Treat federal mental health parity laws as minimum standards.
- Identify and fill any state-level gaps that prevent system-wide parity.
- Support the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority in seeking federal waivers, which provide more and better options for inpatient and outpatient behavioral health and substance use disorders treatment.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Support programs and funding to improve resilience and treat behavioral health conditions that often arise from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). To improve long-term educational and workforce outcomes, policymakers should invest heavily in evidence-based practices around:

- Social-emotional learning in schools.
- Early screening and intervention for students.
- Community-based treatment, including for substance use.
- Crisis care services.
- Training and support for mental health integration in family practice and pediatric care.
- Comprehensive postpartum mental health care for parents up to a year after birth.



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### **BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE CRITICAL TO BUSINESS**

#### **Support Critically Needed Transportation Funding**

Continue to improve our roads, bridges and return our streets and highways to a state of good repair by fully funding the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's Eight Year Plan and the County Improvement for Roads and Bridges Five Year Plan. Initiate the programming and funding for the next phase of major regional roadway projects, including high capacity expressway to expressway interchanges between I-44, US-169, and SH-51; I-44 and SH-66 (near Catoosa); and capacity expansion of U.S. 169 to six lanes from 66th St North to SH-20; State Highway 20 bypass in Claremore; and expansion of US-75 to six lanes from I-244 (Red Fork Expressway) to SH-67.

#### **Eliminate Exemptions to 811 One Call Program**

Support the elimination of all exemptions to Oklahoma's One-Call Program (Call 811 Before You Dig). Eliminating the exemptions to the One-Call Program strongly promotes pipeline and underground utility safety. In previous years, the legislature removed the exemption for cities and counties. However, railroads, certain agencies and other stakeholders utilizing mechanized excavation equipment and other digging devices are still exempt from contacting the One-Call Program before they dig. Exemptions from the One-Call Program contribute to underground utilities incidents, threatening the safety and welfare of our fellow Oklahomans. This is especially important for the safety of the workers who are excavating without prior knowledge of what is below the ground.

#### **Support Regional Water Policy**

Treat reliable water supply as the major driver for economic development that it is. Reliable water supply is based on both water quantity and water quality, and improvements in both of these areas help large and small communities. Strongly encourage the governor, the legislature, and the Oklahoma Water Resources Board to reinstate Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) grants for the consolidation of water systems where needed and add grants for the interconnection of water systems to increase reliability across the region. Show strong support for the implementation of the Tulsa Regional Water Plan that will preserve Oklahoma's population growth and economic development goals. Additionally, support cooperation between the point source discharge and non-point source discharge communities because improvements to our regional water quality can only be achieved if everyone works together.

#### **McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System Infrastructure Revolving Fund**

Request funding for the newly created "McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System Infrastructure Revolving Fund" at a minimum of \$4 million for the purpose of supplementing and pooling all monies received by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation from appropriations, dedicated revenues, federal funds, private contributions or other sources authorized by law dedicated to the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS). This funding will create state-level support for the efforts at the federal level to address the critical maintenance backlog and emergency repairs on the system's locks and dams, as well as future projects to expand service on this critical transportation asset.



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### Federal Priorities

#### **ENSURING A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY**

##### **Support Funding for Critical Economic Development Programs**

Strongly support (or oppose efforts to cut) targeted economic development funding for programs that have proven to be effective and beneficial to the Tulsa Region. These include the Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants for infrastructure and planning and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), a program under the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology. MEP partners with the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance (OMA) to help small and medium-sized manufacturers create and retain jobs, improve overall business resilience and increase bottom line performance. The program returns \$65 for each \$1 invested in new sales for Oklahoma manufacturers, and OMA ranks in the top three MEP centers in the United States. Assure OMA funding remains at current levels or higher in its partnership with MEP.

##### **American Indian Lands Tax Credit**

Encourage the long-term extension of the Federal American Indian Lands Tax Credit. The American Indian Lands Tax Credit is a key economic development tool for Oklahoma, allowing both the accelerated depreciation of investments made on former reservation land, and employment tax credits when employing tribal members or their spouses. Oklahoma has the largest percentage of American Indian population in the country, and more than two-thirds of the state qualifies for this incentive. Extending the credit, and ensuring its benefits are retroactive to its expiration, is critical in fostering continued business investment in Oklahoma.

##### **Eliminate Barriers to Greater Use of Natural Gas**

Support measures to reduce or eliminate barriers to greater use of American-produced natural gas, including CNG, LNG, GTL, and NGLs. Oklahoma is the third largest producer of natural gas in the United States, and the Department of Energy should facilitate full development of this resource to strengthen our national security, economic outlook, and geopolitical position in the world. DOE action on this initiative has the potential to significantly increase our region's job creation in the production and manufacturing sectors.

##### **Small employer health care concerns**

Minimize the regulatory burden on small and medium employers under the Affordable Care Act and support efforts to reduce these employers' cost of providing health care. This should include reducing legal and administrative barriers to the creation of association health plans, such as those once housed by



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chambers of commerce; making permanent the repeal of the Health Insurance Tax; and exploring ways to avoid applying large-employer health insurance requirements to small-scale owners who operate separate small businesses in good faith.

### **Extend the Federal Investment Tax Credit**

Encourage the long-term extension of the Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for solar energy, energy storage, and all other technologies historically included in this incentive. Oklahoma continues to develop and utilize wind energy to maintain some of the lowest electricity rates in the country. Extension of the Federal ITC for solar and energy storage systems builds on that success and continues to place our state at the forefront of new technology in the energy sector.

## **EDUCATED AND HEALTHY WORKFORCE**

### **AmeriCorps Funding**

Protect funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service, which supports local schools and non-profit organizations with vital resources and manpower through AmeriCorps programs. Each year, these programs leverage \$35 million in federal and local funding to deploy approximately 1,000 AmeriCorps members in over 50 school districts and 100 nonprofits in Oklahoma to supplement school services and provide unique educational experiences to local children.

### **IDEA Funding**

Reauthorize and fully fund federal mandates under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and pass the appropriation bill for the discretionary funding.

### **Support Training of Middle-Skill Workers**

Support efforts to meet current industry needs for middle- skill workers eligible for jobs that require training beyond high school. This includes:

- Funding the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act at the level recommended by Congress as reauthorized in 2014.
- Providing dedicated support for partnerships between industry and those that provide post-secondary credentials.
- Increasing funding for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and expanding this program's support to include apprenticeships and other work-based learning.
- Expanding alternative pathways to employment, including apprenticeships, to allow for greater flexibility in learning opportunities.

### **Support Pell Eligibility for Short-Term, Industry-Driven Training**

Expand Pell Grant eligibility to short-term, industry-driven training at post-secondary institutions. Pell Grant eligibility is currently limited to programs covering two-thirds of an academic year, 16 credit hours, or 600 contact hours. This restriction was established before shorter-term credentials were as imperative for



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industry as they are today. Removing this restriction would help to build a much-needed worker pipeline for Oklahoma's companies. In addition, continue support and recommend permanently reinstating Second Chance Pell funding.

### **Strengthen federal physician training programs**

Through long-term funding authorization, fully fund existing HRSA Teaching Health Center programs at \$157,000 per resident and allocate additional resources for residency programs at new or existing sites. This will allow for training more homegrown physicians, including 45 to 60 full-time-equivalent positions in Oklahoma, strengthening the most effective tool for improving Oklahoma's physician shortage. In addition, secure additional federal funding to encourage expansion of tuition reimbursement and loan deferral programs to expand the healthcare workforce.

### **Remove Barriers to Needed Inpatient Treatment in Oklahoma**

Open doors for recovery through repeal of the federal Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) Exclusion policy for Medicaid payments and the 190-day lifetime limit for inpatient treatment of Medicare recipients. Require the appropriate Oklahoma agencies to take immediate steps with the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services for a Section 1115 Waiver to permit a demonstration eliminating the IMD Exclusion for Medicaid payment for behavioral health and substance use disorder inpatient services in Oklahoma.

## **BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE CRITICAL TO BUSINESS**

### **Tulsa's Levee System**

Continue to support addressing the critical infrastructure needs with Tulsa's aging levee system, the need of which was dramatically evidenced by extended Spring 2019 releases of water from Keystone Dam and the resulting downstream flooding. Complete the feasibility study currently underway by the Corps of Engineers in the most expeditious manner and secure appropriations for needed improvements. The Corps of Engineers has designated the Tulsa Levees as one of the five percent highest-risk levee systems in the country. Federal legislation has authorized the Corps to develop a plan for addressing the structural deficiencies but securing funding should remain a top priority. If one levee fails, it would be catastrophic for homeowners, nationally strategic oil refineries, multiple industries currently protected by the system, and have devastating environmental impacts for our region.

### **McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System**

Increase Congressional appropriations to address the approximate \$250 million in the backlog of critical maintenance on the MKARNS. Failure to do so continues to put the system at risk of a long-term navigation shutdown due to failure of waterway infrastructure such as locks and dams. Support and fund the on-time completion of the White River Entrance Channel Cut-off PED (Preconstruction, Engineering, and Design phase) in the US Army Corps of Engineers' Work Plan, at a cost of \$5.7 million per year for the next two years. The PED is the last hurdle before the project can be fully funded and constructed. Unaddressed, this problem, caused by the tendency of the White and Arkansas Rivers to merge together during flooding, will



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lead to a loss of navigation on the entire system. Finally, continue to support efforts to deepen the MKARNS to its 12-foot authorized depth, thereby increasing barge productivity by up to 40 percent.

### **Upgrade Infrastructure at Tulsa International Airport**

Strongly encourage Congress to allocate funding for a new control tower at Tulsa International Airport. The current tower was built over 60 years ago, and modernization is critical to meet today's needs. Ensure any comprehensive federal infrastructure package includes funding for this issue. Funding with only local dollars would increase the cost per enplanement at the airport, which could negatively impact airline growth in Tulsa.

### **Support Federal Infrastructure Investment**

Support timely reauthorization of the FAST Act which authorizes federal surface transportation programs and is due to expire in 2020. The economic success of our region and country relies upon the strength of our transportation infrastructure. A coordinated federal-state-local based decision-making process, building on the flexibility of previous multi-year transportation reauthorizations, and a reinvigorated, robust and sustainable funding source—similar to the original Highway Trust Fund—is necessary to enable the country, state and region to achieve much needed progress in addressing critical infrastructure needs, including our regional priorities.