

Session Overview

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OF THE 51ST LEGISLATURE

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Speaker Lance Cargill

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Introduction

The Legislature tackled a wide range of important issues in 2007 including tax relief, immigration reform, teacher pay increases, and health care initiatives to name just a few. This *Session Overview* provides a brief summary of the major legislation passed in the First Session of the Fifty-First Legislature.

The tax package included a reduction in the personal income tax, a back-to-school sales tax holiday, and the elimination of the franchise fee for some businesses.

Immigration reform made it more difficult for those illegally in Oklahoma to receive government services or to become employed.

Teachers received an average raise of \$1,000, and contribution rates were increased to shore up the teacher retirement system. Other developments in education included new accountability and performance standards

under OHLAP and the establishment of a voluntary tuition lock program for college students.

Health care coverage opportunities for those currently uninsured were significantly expanded. The use of state funds in abortion procedures was prohibited.

Later this year the 2007 *Session Highlights*, prepared by the House Committee Staff, will be available and provides a complete synopsis of all legislation enacted during the 2007 session.

Agriculture and Rural Development

In the area of agriculture and rural development, **HB 1914** creates the Feral Swine Control Act. This act provides guidelines for the removal of feral swine from both public and private property, to be regulated by the State Board of Agriculture. This bill also requires any person bringing live feral swine into the state to have a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection as well as a transporter license from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. It also requires the swine to be quarantined and tested no earlier than 30 days and no later than 60 days following the date of importation. The exception to the quarantine is those swine going directly to slaughter.

Finally, **HB 1081** permits rural water districts, with the approval of district members, to charge a fee of ten cents or less per 1,000 gallons of water sold. The fee may be included in the water rates for the district and paid by the retail water consumers of the district.

Banking and Finance

Key elements of the omnibus banking bill, **HB 1543**, include authorization of banks and trust companies to increase their investment in public welfare

projects from 10 percent to 15 percent of the bank capital, removal of the prohibition against industrial loan companies or banks establishing branch operations in retail stores, and modification of requirements controlling payable-on-death accounts.

Business and Economic Development

The bills passed by the Legislature relating to business and economic development were varied in their subject matter. **SB 808** captures over \$15 million in federal funds for the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission. The funds were made available by the federal Reed Act distribution and are slated to be expended no later than December 31, 2008. In the workplace, **SB 1028** contains language that strengthens the Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Act by providing guidelines for employers to use when developing their written company policies. These guidelines provide that drug and alcohol tests will be accepted as the primary evidence in any claim brought by the discharged employee.

Finally, **SB 129** enables the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety to establish a procedure for the Department to produce a report identifying policy holders who have incurred violations on their driving records. The bill also allows for the Department to then sell these reports to insurance companies for a fee to be determined by the Department.

Education

Common Education

The 2007 session was marked by concern over our children's wellbeing and health. **HB 1051** includes both of those components. First, students who have been victims of certain felony offenses by other students have the right to be kept separated from the student offender at school and during school transportation. Second, the Diabetes Management in Schools Act is established. A diabetes medical management plan will be developed for each student with diabetes while at school by a personal health care team in order to assist students with the management and care of their diabetes. The bill permits a diabetic student to perform blood glucose level checks, administer insulin, and treat hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia while at school or a school activity. In response to an ever-increasing amount of violence in schools, **SB 103** requires public schools to conduct a minimum of one lockdown drill each school year for the

purpose of securing school buildings in hopes of mitigating injuries or deaths. Finally, **HB 1601** attempts to encourage school districts to enhance physical activity among students in Kindergarten through fifth grade and also creates the Fit Kids Physical Education Task Force.

The Legislature also focused on curriculum issues and upgrading certification standards for school administrators. **HB 1476** creates the Passport to Financial Literacy Act. Personal financial literacy education will be provided in the public schools with an emphasis on such topics as understanding credit card debt, responsibilities of renting or buying a home, retirement planning, bankruptcy, balancing a checkbook, borrowing and investing money, insurance, taxes, and identity theft. **SB 17** establishes Celebrate Freedom Week in the public schools the week of November 11 in order to educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom on behalf of this country. This requires schools to incorporate instruction concerning the importance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution in social studies classes. **HB 1477** incorporates certification requirements for school superintendents. These include: (1) certification as a school principal; (2) completion of a program in education administration approved by the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation with an emphasis on district-level leadership skills, education finance, education law, risk management, collaborative and community leadership, and ethical leadership; (3) any other professional education requirements fixed by the State Board of Education; (4) a passing score on the subject area competency examination; and (5) a minimum of two years of administrative experience in public or private schools accredited by the Board. **SB 921** creates the Achieving Classroom Excellence II Task Force to study such issues as: (1) comparison of the Priority Academic Student Skills with other states' curricular standards; (2) alignment of the Priority Academic Student Skills with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) standards; (3) feasibility of realigning the state performance level standards to NAEP performance level standards; (4) differences in achievement levels among states based on exclusion rates on the NAEP; and (5) feasibility of aligning the cut scores on state-mandated tests to NAEP cut scores.

Other common education issues addressed by the Legislature this session focused on charter schools and rewarding outstanding achievement among schools and teachers. **HB 1589** attempts to expand charter school opportunities in Oklahoma City and Tulsa by removing

barriers to sponsorship by institutions of higher education, Career Tech and local school districts. **HB 1593** expands the Academic Achievement Awards program by providing cash bonus rewards to teachers and administrators in schools that have seen the most improvement on test results or are consistently high-performing. The bill raises the cash prizes to \$3,000 in the state championship for academics for both the top-performing school and for the most improved school in the state. The legislation also expands the program to provide cash bonuses to more schools. The Academic Achievement Awards program is based on the Academic Performance Index (API), a comprehensive measure that examines schools' performance.

Finally, **HB 1134** provides for a raise program for all certified teachers. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience will receive a \$600 raise, regardless of the teachers' education level. Teachers with 10 or more years of experience are given pay raises ranging from \$1,025 to \$2,300 per year based upon the type of degree the teacher possesses.

Higher Education

The Legislature was also concerned about our higher education students. **HB 2103** establishes a guaranteed tuition cap and attempts to control the escalating costs of textbooks. Beginning with the 2008-2009 academic year, each institution within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education will offer to resident students enrolling for the first time as a full-time undergraduate a tuition rate that will be guaranteed for a period of not less than four consecutive academic years at the comprehensive and regional universities and for not less than two consecutive years at the two-year institutions. Students will have the option of participating or not participating in the guaranteed tuition rate program but must indicate their election at the time of enrollment. In regard to higher education textbooks, it prohibits books from being packaged with CDs, workbooks, and other ancillary material and requires publishers and bookstores to inform professors of textbook prices and the changes made to new editions. **SB 496** prohibits institutions within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education from selling student data to any creditor for purposes of marketing consumer credit to students.

SB 820 attempts to provide a permanent funding source for the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program and implements new accountability and performance standards for the scholarship program. First, the legislation limits scholarship eligibility to U.S. citizens or other individuals who are legally present in

the country. Second, children who are home schooled would be eligible for the program for the first time under the bill if they meet all other requirements and score a 22 or higher on the ACT test. Third, the legislation extends the "good conduct" requirements throughout a student's college years. Finally, SB 820 will require OHLAP students to maintain the minimum GPA required by the State Regents for Higher Education during their freshman year, with a 2.0 minimum imposed during the sophomore year and at least a 2.5 GPA required for classes taken during the junior and senior years.

Arts and Culture

HB 2192 establishes membership criteria for the metropolitan library commission in counties with a population of at least 600,000. The bill requires that commissions in these counties consist of 16 members, plus one member from each municipality in the county that has a library or library extension within the boundaries of the municipality and is a part of the metropolitan library system.

HB 2104 establishes one day per week in which minors will not be charged admission to sites and museums under the purview of the Oklahoma Historical Society. The measure also creates the Oklahoma Arts Council Arts Education Revolving Fund, which authorizes the Oklahoma Arts Council to distribute incentive grants to school districts for the establishment of visual arts programs.

Elections and Ethics

SB 990 creates a task force to study judicial and district attorney redistricting. Judicial district lines were last redistricted in 1980. The task force will report on the need to redistrict by November 30, 2008.

HB 2110 accomplished the most significant ethics reform in over a decade. The measure provides for the following:

- Requires contributor statements to indicate the contribution is for a campaign in Oklahoma;
- Prohibits making or accepting contributions in the State Capitol Building, and provides for return of contributions delivered in the mail to an address in the Capitol;
- Allows candidates to have only one active candidate committee at any time;
- Requires out-of-state committees and persons to make independent expenditures and electioneering communications from a segregated account which contains only contributions made in compliance with

Oklahoma law, and requires campaign depository information to reflect the segregated accounts;

- Provides that contributor statements are not required for funds accepted by out-of-state committees or persons or advocacy corporations which make independent expenditures or electioneering communications if the committee, person or corporation does not coordinate with a candidate, committee or agent;
- Requires out-of-state committees to report contributions on a last-in-first-out basis and all Oklahoma contributions;
- Requires itemization of contributors making contributions over \$200 (rather than \$50) for out-of-state and federal committees;
- Requires registered committees to report last-minute independent expenditures, and requires other persons to file the same report for all independent expenditures; and
- Limits honoraria in the form of cash, checks or cash equivalents for elective officers to those not related to holding public office.

Also, the bill requires the Ethics Commission to conduct annual ethics training for members of the Legislature.

Energy and Technology

The Legislature enacted two pieces of legislation pertaining to storage tanks this session. **SB 102** modifies the Storage Tank Advisory Council by altering the membership of the Council from nine to eleven members. The additional two members are specified to be one operator or agent for an agricultural cooperative and one county commissioner or petroleum storage tank operator. The Council serves to recommend ideas to the Oklahoma Corporation Commission relating to the Oklahoma Storage Tank Regulation Act. Fuel storage facilities and associated equipment used in wholesale activities that are supplied by a pipeline and from which fuel may be removed at a rack have been exempted from the Storage Tank Regulation Act with the passage of **HB 1396**.

SB 734 creates the Joint Electric Utility Restructuring Task Force, which is composed of both House and Senate energy committee members and the chair of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission or a designee. The Task Force is charged with the responsibility to study the issues surrounding municipal

annexations into previously unincorporated territory and the ability of such municipalities to provide electric power in such areas. The Legislature also created the Oklahoma Renewable Energy Transmission Advisory Task Force with the enactment of **HB 1764**, which is charged with the responsibility of studying and evaluating the transmission requirements needed for the reasonable development of renewable resources. The Task Force is required to submit its findings no later than January 31, 2008.

The Legislature also passed legislation pertaining to the operations of the Grand River Dam Authority this session. **HB 1034** allows the GRDA Board to lease shorelands for longer than two years and areas larger than one-fourth mile of lake front and also allows private property to be mortgaged and sold on leased shoreland. **SB 407** allows GRDA to enter into financial instruments intended to manage interest rate costs. The bill also creates the Joint Legislative Task Force on the Grand River Dam Authority, which is given the responsibility of oversight into the financial dealings and procedures of the agency.

The enactment of **HB 1490** creates the Eucha-Spavinaw Management Act, which essentially codifies a legally reached agreement pertaining to the impact of waste on the Eucha-Spavinaw Watershed. The Act calls for the Department of Agriculture to administer its various aspects.

Finally, **SB 136** provides for a modest fee increase for the Commission on Marginally Producing Oil and Gas wells.

Environment and Wildlife

For purposes of clarification, new language adopted in **SB 709** defines manure and stipulates that manure will not be defined as a hazardous substance or hazardous waste.

Study of the Waste Tire Recycling Act will be conducted by the task force created in **SB 747**. The task force will review the fee structure and compensation criteria for waste tire activities and make recommendations that would enhance the ability of the state to provide for the efficient and effective recycling of all waste tires in the state.

HB 1520 addresses fire-fighting education and emergency response. Included in the measure is the Oklahoma Controlled Burn Indemnity Fund, which allows landowners who suffer property damage caused from a controlled burn gone awry to be eligible for financial assistance.

General Government and Transportation

Governmental efficiency and accessibility to the public was a major goal of the Legislature this session. **SB 1** creates the Taxpayer Transparency Act by requiring the Office of State Finance to develop and operate a free searchable website containing information on state revenues, expenditures, incentive payments, and other state tax exclusions and credits. The website is envisioned as a “Google-like” system that will provide the interested public with access to a user-friendly vehicle to examine the manner in which state revenues are expended, **HB 2111** eliminates 19 defunct and obsolete task forces and commissions from the rolls of the state statutes.

HB 1686 requires persons under 18 years of age to wear a helmet while operating an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) on public lands. The measure also prohibits the operator of an ATV from carrying passengers unless the ATV is designed by the manufacturer to carry passengers.

Reducing the amount of time Oklahoma trucking companies spend waiting for permits was addressed this session by **SB 410** which establishes a dedicated revenue stream to be used for motor carrier permitting, safety, and enforcement. Beginning in July 2008, the bill directs that monies derived from the Department of Public Safety issued size and weight permits in excess of \$1,216,000 be deposited in the Weigh Station Improvement Revolving Fund. The Weigh Station Improvement Revolving Fund was traditionally used to construct, equip, and maintain Oklahoma weigh stations. With the enactment of SB 410, the fund can also be used to enhance the permitting process.

Government Modernization, Agency Review, and Administrative Rules

A number of important bills passed by the Legislature relate to government reform, agency review, and administrative rules. **HB 1384** requires institutions or agencies of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education to keep confidential all information pertaining to donors and prospective donors. To maintain public health infrastructure and preparedness, **SB 639** allows the State Department of Health and city-county health departments to enter into service contracts at any time with various medical professionals.

Other legislation focuses on state agency vehicles. **HB 1383** exempts the OSBI from the oversight of the Department of Central Services Fleet Management Division because of their need to have specialized crime-fighting equipment in their automobiles. **HB 1707** allows the Department of Corrections to use unmarked vehicles.

Finally, in recognition of the importance of the watermelon to the state of Oklahoma, **HB 1669** designates the watermelon as the official vegetable of the state of Oklahoma.

Health and Human Services

Health Care

The Legislature took action on two measures, **HB 1225** and **SB 424**, in an attempt to further reduce the number of uninsured persons in Oklahoma. **HB 1225** authorizes the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) to seek approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to expand the premium assistance program to include employers with 250 or fewer employees and to include employees whose income does not exceed 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Currently, only employers with 50 or fewer employees and employees whose income is less than 185 percent of the FPL qualify to participate in the program. **SB 424** directs the OHCA to establish a voucher or subsidy program to provide medical coverage assistance to children, 18 years or younger, whose family incomes are between 185 percent and 300 percent of the FPL. To be eligible for the program, the child must:

- Be a lawful resident of the state;
- Be ineligible for the state Medicaid program; and
- Have been without health insurance coverage for at least six months during the first month of operation of the program, with certain exceptions.

The measure also authorizes the OHCA to offer partial or limited coverage to children covered by high-deductible health plans or who have private plans that do not provide certain benefits and to impose certain cost-sharing requirements.

Consumer-driven health care is an emerging policy issue that is garnering attention across the states. The core value of a consumer-driven health care system is that transparency and value-based competition enable individuals to make better informed decisions about the health care they purchase. **HB 1884** establishes the Healthcare Consumer Transparency Task Force for the

purpose of studying and making recommendations regarding a system for hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, and physicians to disclose to consumers the average charges for the treatment of common medical diagnoses and procedures.

Abortion

The Legislature took additional action this session to strengthen the state’s abortion laws. **SB 139** prohibits state employees and resources from being used to perform an abortion not necessary to save the life of the mother unless the pregnancy was the result of forcible rape or incest. The measure also:

- Compels physicians to comply with the state’s informed consent and parental consent requirements by reporting certain information to the State Department of Health; and
- Prohibits health insurance policies issued in this state from providing coverage for elective abortions except by an optional rider for which there is an additional premium.

Elderly/Long-Term Care

In a continuing effort to protect the health, safety and welfare of seniors in Oklahoma, the following measures were enacted:

HB 1510 authorizes the Commissioner of Health to waive provisions of the Nursing Home Care Act and related administrative rules under certain conditions for the purpose of developing nursing facilities that adhere to the “greenhouse” concept. “Greenhouse” facilities are designed similar to a private home housing a maximum of 12 individuals.

HB 1580 requires agencies that provide companion or sitter services—which are non-personal care services that enable persons to remain in their own homes—to be licensed by the State Department of Health.

SB 738 would permit individuals living in assisted living facilities to receive home care, nursing care and hospice services through a home care agency. The measure provides that if a resident of an assisted living facility develops a condition that would qualify them to be discharged from the facility, a plan of accommodation may be developed that will allow the resident to remain in the facility as the least restrictive environment. Other provisions of the measure include:

- Establishing a pilot program of alternative informal dispute resolution for nursing facilities that have been cited for a deficiency and wish to dispute the citation that utilizes an impartial decision-making panel rather than a single impartial decision maker;

- Allowing long-term care administrators to be the administrator of record for more than one facility under certain conditions; and
- Prohibiting the Oklahoma State Board of Examiners for Long-Term Care Administrators from posting on its website a complaint against an administrator unless the complaint has been found to have merit.

International, Federal, and Tribal Relations

A couple of issues were addressed in the area of international, federal, and tribal relations. **HB 1708** authorizes the Office of the Oklahoma Secretary of State to serve as the Oklahoma Chief International Protocol Office with regard to international diplomats and officials in order to ensure that the growing numbers of international officials traveling to Oklahoma are warmly received.

SB 938 allows for an Indian tribe in this state that operates a child care facility to enter into an agreement with the Department of Human Services, the State Department of Health, and the State Fire Marshal to allow the state to conduct any inspections of the facility necessary to comply with the licensing provisions of the Oklahoma Child Care Facilities Licensing Act.

Insurance and Retirement

Legislation passed under **HB 2070** extends the provisions of the Oklahoma Legislation Actuarial Analysis Act passed in the 50th Legislature to include the Oklahoma Firefighters Pension and Retirement System, the Oklahoma Police Pension and Retirement system, the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Retirement System and any new retirement system established by law not in existence as of December 31, 2006. Inclusion of these retirement plans under the Actuarial Act enhances the actuarial soundness of the three retirement systems by preventing changes to a plan that are not concurrently funded by legislative appropriations.

SB 63 strengthens the financial soundness of the county and county officer’s retirement system by increasing the annual funding level of employer and employee contributions from the current 10 percent to 16.5 percent over a four-year period.

An increase in the contribution funding rates for the Teachers’ Retirement System of Oklahoma will be phased-in from the current 7.05 percent to 8.75 percent in 2010 and beyond at an annual cost of \$48.2 million in 2010 under **SB 1092**. The contribution rate increases will only take effect if appropriation levels to participating employers are increased so the additional

employer contribution obligation is funded by an increase in appropriations and not paid from the employer's existing budgetary resources.

HB 1928 addresses the high cost of health care for Oklahomans by increasing the maximum contributions which an individual can deposit to a health savings account from the current \$2,600 for an individual and \$5,150 for a family policy to the maximum amount allowed under Section 223 of the Internal Revenue Code. In 2007, the new limits are \$2,850 for an individual and \$5,650 for a family policy. Additionally, individuals 55 and older can contribute an extra \$700 per year. Furthermore, the legislation authorizes The State and Education Employees Group Insurance Board to make available to state employees who participate in a health savings account, a high deductible health plan no later than January 1, 2009.

Judiciary and Public Safety

Judiciary

As is often the case, the bills that passed out of the Judiciary Committee varied immensely. Two measures were passed that focused on courtroom policies and procedures. **SB 868** requires a court to permit members of the immediate family of a murder victim to wear buttons containing a picture of the victim as a symbol of grief in a trial. **SB 145** permits district judges, upon obtaining a concealed handgun license, to carry a gun into the courthouse.

Other topics focused on crimes and corrections. **SB 371** makes it a felony to knowingly and willfully file a false Amber Alert. Previous violation of this law was a misdemeanor. **HB 2101** creates an 11-member Reentry Policy Council to review corrections policies, procedures, and programs pertaining to reentry, and to evaluate future reentry policy and practices. It also creates a Transformation Justice Interagency Task Force to coordinate the reentry programs of the state, which will help inmates find jobs, housing, substance abuse treatment, medical care, and mental health services after release from incarceration.

HB 1927 prevents a court-appointed special advocate employee/volunteer from being assigned a case without first having undergone a criminal history background check. If the person subject to the background check has lived in Oklahoma for less than one year, it is required that criminal history records of the previous state of residence also be obtained.

SB 158 states that if the custodial parent of a child is required to be separated from the child due to military service, a court must not enter a final order modifying an

existing custody order until the parent has completed the term of duty requiring separation.

Finally, **SB 930** provides protection from lawsuits for medical professionals who donate their services to medically indigent people.

Public Safety

Several measures were enacted this session to enhance the protection of the citizens of Oklahoma. Issues relating to sex offender registration, crimes against children, and immigration were major topics of discussion during the legislative session. Numerous changes were made in **HB 1760** to move the Oklahoma Sex Offender Registration Act into compliance with new sex offender registration requirements being implemented by the federal government in the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act (Public Law 109-248). **HB 1760** creates a three-tiered evaluation system to allow the state to identify and categorize sex offenders based upon the risk to the community. Level one offenders would be considered low risk offenders and would be required to register for a period of 15 years. Level two offenders are those that pose a moderate risk and would be required to register for 25 years. Level three or high risk offenders are required to register for life. The assessment of the offenders and assignment to a risk level will allow law enforcement and social services to provide appropriate monitoring and assistance to offenders and the public. The bill also modifies the penalties of the crimes which subject a person to the Oklahoma Sex Offender Registration Act by requiring every person convicted of a sex crime who is sentenced to prison for two or more years to serve a minimum term of three years of post-imprisonment supervision. The post-imprisonment supervision will enhance the ability of the state to monitor and assist offenders as they return to society. In a related matter, **SB 1130** requires the Department of Corrections, in conjunction with the Pardon and Parole Board, to implement a method for tracking the success and recidivism of persons who have been convicted of violent offenses for the first three years following their release from incarceration or release to parole. Another measure, **HB 1714**, allows the court to prohibit persons subject to the Sex Offender Registration Act from accessing or using Internet social networking sites which could give the offender access to children. The measure allows the court to require the offender to register any electronic mail address or Internet identity used by the offender.

Punishing those who prey upon children was the impetus behind **HB 1816** which establishes minimum

mandatory prison sentences for those who commit sex crimes against children under the age of 12. The bill establishes a mandatory 25-year prison sentence for persons convicted of the following crimes:

- Child sexual abuse;
- Child sexual exploitation;
- Lewd exposure in a public place;
- Downloading of obscene material or child pornography;
- Distribution of obscene material or child pornography;
- Soliciting a child to perform in child pornography; and
- Distributing to a child any obscene material or child pornography.

Few measures received as much attention this session as immigration reform. **HB 1804** replicates in state law the federal statutes making it a crime to move, transport, conceal, harbor, or shelter from detection persons known to be illegal aliens within Oklahoma. The measure provides an exception for the transportation or harboring of illegal aliens if it is associated with the provision of any benefit guaranteed to illegal aliens by federal law or regulated public health services provided by a private charity with private funds. The bill requires all state agencies or entities and businesses that contract with a state agency or entity to register and participate in one of two federally implemented verification systems to verify federal employment authorization of new employees.

The bill also:

- Restricts eligibility for state driver licenses and identity cards to citizens, nationals, and legal immigrants;
- Requires jail officials to attempt to verify the citizenship or immigration status of any person arrested or confined through the federal Law Enforcement Support Center operated by U.S. DHS;
- States that it is a discriminatory practice for an employing entity to discharge a US citizen or legal resident alien while retaining an illegal alien, hired after July 1, 2008, in a comparable job as the discharged employee. In order for such a discharge to be considered a violation of this section, the employer had to know, or reasonably should have known, that the retained employee was illegal; and
- Authorizes the State Attorney General to negotiate a memo of understanding between

Oklahoma and the Department of Justice or Homeland Security regarding enforcement of federal immigration law in Oklahoma.

Issues related to law enforcement also received much attention this session. The number of training hours necessary to become a peace officer was increased by **SB 920**. The bill incrementally increases the Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET) basic academy hours from an initial 375 hours for those graduating before December 31, 2007, to 600 hours for those graduating after July 1, 2009. Another important provision of the bill allows counties with a population of more than 500,000 and cities with a population of more than 65,000 to provide their own basic law enforcement academy after making application and receiving approval from CLEET.

Revenue and Taxation

For the third consecutive year, the Legislature passed significant tax reductions. **SB 861** accelerates the previous reductions in the top marginal individual income tax rate from 5.65 percent to 5.25 percent over a two-year period, provides an alternative child credit for taxpayers with children not choosing the child-care credit, provides an exemption for franchise tax filers with a tax liability of \$250 or less, and provides for a sales tax holiday for back-to-school clothing and footwear.

SB 806 provides targeted sales tax exemptions for nonprofit organizations and an income tax deduction to encourage critical donations of living organs to Oklahomans.

Tourism and Recreation

In the area of Tourism and Recreation, **SB 293** allows residents of the State of Oklahoma who are sixty-two years or older and their spouses to be admitted into any state-owned or state-operated park free of charge.