

PERSPECTIVE

October 9, 2020



Growing together, no matter how we gather

By Rodd Moesel

I love gathering with our Farm Bureau family.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is a special organization because of the people. Throughout my time as a member, I have met a wide array of folks from across our state and our nation who expanded my horizons, enriched my life and elevated my understanding of agriculture.

As the year 2020 continues to unfold, we have all made changes to our plans, adjusted the way we engage with other people and made sacrifices in the short term that will hopefully get us back to normal as quickly and safely as possible.

One of those sacrifices the OKFB state board of directors made was the decision to cancel our 2020 in-person annual meeting and to hold a virtual business session in its place. The board also voted to pause our grassroots policy development and pick up our policy work again next year.

The decision to cancel our in-person annual meeting, which we have done for decades, and move to a virtual business

session was not taken lightly. It was thoughtfully and thoroughly considered.

As we held this year's August Area Meetings, we asked Farm Bureau members for their input on how we should proceed with our annual meeting. Each member of the OKFB state board visited with members in their district and with their county Farm Bureau leaders to determine the best path forward. I have heard from fellow state Farm Bureau presidents from around the nation and learned about their plans for meetings. Our staff have been in contact with our friends at various groups and organizations in Oklahoma to see how they are conducting their gatherings.

When the OKFB state board sat down to consider a path forward, we laid out all of our options on the table, and chose to hold a virtual business session in place of an in-person convention because we felt it was the best option to conduct our organization's required business while providing for the health and safety of our members and staff.

Personally, I will truly miss the opportunity to meet with our fellow Farm Bureau members face-to-face. Gathering as one voice for agriculture and rural Oklahoma is a highlight of my year, and I know my fellow members feel the same way.

While we may be moving from our normal convention format to our online business meeting, the state board decided to use our successful August Area Meeting model to allow regional gatherings of Farm Bureau members. We will be organizing a central place to meet in each of the nine OKFB districts where members can gather and participate in our virtual business meeting on **Thursday, Nov. 5 at 6:30 p.m.** We will be observing the best practices and safety protocols to ensure these regional gatherings are done safely while still allowing for some of that famous Farm Bureau fellowship.

Details about our virtual business meeting will be announced on our OKFB

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Growing together, no matter how we gather (continued)

website as soon as they become available at okfarmbureau.org/meeting2020.

I want every Farm Bureau member to know that we will continue to work as an organization to advocate for agriculture and rural Oklahoma. The state board has had many discussions with our members, and the general consensus was that our organization's policy positions are strong. For that reason, the board decided to postpone our grassroots policy development process until 2021, when we will pick up where we left off this year. Our staff will continue to monitor any emerging issues, and the state board is committed to providing guidance and direction to ensure our organization continues to stand up for our values. For counties that held their resolutions meeting, please forward those to our home office so we can see the issues that are on your mind.

We will also make sure that we properly conduct the business of OKFB as we hold in-district caucuses for the three state director races this year, along with the three Women's Leadership Committee seats up for re-election. Our WLC will also hold a virtual caucus to elect their state chairperson, and our Young Farmers & Ranchers will caucus to elect their leaders.

Again, this is a situation that none of us ever imagined we would face. But I am proud of the hard work our Farm Bureau leaders have invested in ensuring that we will have a virtual business meeting so that the important work of Farm Bureau continues on in Oklahoma.

And I am looking forward to seeing you in 2021 in Norman as we gather at next year's convention and carry on our important mission.

Locations determined for in-person district caucuses

Members in districts one, four and seven will meet in-person on **Thursday, Nov. 5 at 5:30 p.m.** to elect district representatives to the OKFB board of directors and the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee prior to the in-person district gatherings.

Following the district caucus meetings, OKFB members will join at each caucus location to view the **online business session, which begins at 6:30 p.m.**

The locations of the three district caucuses are the same as the in-person gatherings in order allow OKFB delegates to view our online virtual business meeting.

District One

Fairview United Methodist Church
Hollow EO280
Slapout, OK

District Four

Southern Technology Center
2610 Sam Noble Parkway
Ardmore, OK 73401

District Seven

Autry Technology Center
1201 W. Willow Rd.
Enid, OK 73703

OKFB WLC to host annual business meeting virtually Nov. 5

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee will hold their annual business meeting via Zoom at **12 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 5**, for WLC delegates to conduct business, including the

election of a WLC chair.

Information will be provided to the WLC delegates once available.

For the most current information on the WLC business meeting, visit okfarmbureau.org/meeting2020.

Gather together at one of nine district in-person meetings

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members will gather at locations in each of the nine Oklahoma Farm Bureau districts to watch our virtual business meeting together. Patterned after our successful August Area Meetings, safety protocols will be followed to ensure the health and safety of our members.

District One

Fairview United Methodist Church
Hollow EO280
Slapout, OK

District Two

Tommy Franks Museum - Stanley Building
300 S. Washington St.
Hobart, OK 73651

District Three

Redlands Community College
1300 S. Country Club Rd.
El Reno, OK 73036

District Four

Southern Technology Center
2610 Sam Noble Parkway
Ardmore, OK 73401

District Five

Kiamichi Technology Center
301 Kiamichi Dr.
McAlester, OK 74501

District Six

Northeast Tech - Pryor
6195 W HWY 20
Pryor, OK 74361

District Seven

Autry Technology Center
1201 W. Willow Rd.
Enid, OK 73703

District Eight

Pontotoc Technology Center
601 W. 33rd St.
Ada, OK 74820

District Nine

Central Technology Center
3 CT Cir.
Drumright, OK 74030

In addition to our nine gatherings, OKFB delegates in districts one, four and seven will gather to elect state board members and state Women's Leadership Committee members.

Locations for our virtual meetings are listed below:

YF&R to gather for in-person caucus Oct. 24

Join Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers as they rise to the occasion at their annual caucus **Saturday, Oct. 24** at the Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center Hotel.

YF&R members from across the state are encouraged to attend the event as it serves as an opportunity to fellowship with other agriculturalists and to elect new district leaders to serve on the YF&R state committee.

The evening will begin with the YF&R discussion meet at 5 p.m., followed by dinner at 6 p.m. before attendees begin to caucus.

All districts will caucus that evening, but elections will specifically be held for districts one, four, five, seven and the at-large position.

For more information regarding the caucus, visit okfarmbureau.org/yfr2020 or contact YF&R Coordinator Zac Swartz at (405) 523-2300.

YF&R Discussion Meet

The YF&R Discussion Meet is a panel-type discussion in which YF&R members are judged on their ability to express ideas and opinions on key issues facing the agriculture industry as a whole. Participants pose and answer questions amongst one another with the goal of reaching a solution.

Registration deadline: Oct. 19

YF&R Achievement Award

The OKFB YF&R Achievement Award recognizes one hardworking individual or couple who are involved in production agriculture with a majority of his or her net income subject to normal production risks.

Registration deadline: Oct. 19

YF&R Excellence in Ag Award

An opportunity to recognize one OKFB YF&R individual or couple who do not derive the majority of his or her net income through production agriculture and is not subject to normal production risks.

Registration deadline: Oct. 19

YF&R Excellence in Ag Award

Awarded to one deserving county YF&R chapter, the Charles L. Roff Award recognizes the work county YF&R committees have done to help better their program and to strengthen the Farm Bureau organization while encouraging more participation in state activities.

Registration deadline: Oct. 19

To reserve your room, complete YF&R award applications or to view the list of questions for the YF&R discussion meet, visit okfarmbureau.org/yfr2020.

OKFB's analysis of state questions on November ballot

As Oklahoma voters cast ballots for president, Congress and other state and local elections, they will also be charged with deciding the fate of two state questions.

Below, OKFB has compiled information on each of the state questions, including ballot titles, constitutional language, and how each coincides with the organization's grassroots policy.

State Question 805

Opposed by Oklahoma Farm Bureau

State Question 805 originated as an initiative petition that was placed on the ballot after receiving nearly 250,000 signatures of Oklahomans. The measure would amend the Oklahoma Constitution to prevent a person's former non-violent felony convictions from being used to enhance his or her sentence when convicted of a non-violent felony. The state question would not apply to individuals who have ever been convicted of a violent felony, which are defined in a section of state statute.

Supporters of the state question believe the measure is "common-sense criminal justice reform" that will safely reduce the prison population and save taxpayers an estimated \$186 million.

Opponents of SQ 805 have expressed concern that the measure would prevent prosecutors from seeking higher sentences for offenders with a history of criminal activity and restrict the authority of district attorneys, judges and juries by placing guidelines in the state's constitution.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau has joined a coalition opposing the measure, as the organization's grassroots member policy calls for stricter punishment of agricultural crimes and believes that a person convicted of repeated offenses should be punished accordingly.

OKFB policy reads, "We recommend that perpetrators of felonies should be punished no matter the age of the offender and their records should follow them into any other court proceeding."

State Question 814

Supported by Oklahoma Farm Bureau

A measure created by the state Legislature under SJR 27 by Sen. Kim David and Rep. Kevin Wallace, State Question 814 would amend a section of the Oklahoma Constitution that directs the proceeds from the state's settlements with tobacco companies to the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Fund, or TSET Fund.

Oklahoma receives money each year under a 1998 multistate legal settlement with tobacco companies. Currently, the constitution mandates that 75% of those dollars be placed into the TSET Fund to be used for tobacco prevention programs and other health programs. The remaining 25% of the proceeds are directed to a special fund called the tobacco settlement fund that may be appropriated by the state Legislature.

SQ 814 would reduce the amount of funds directed to TSET from 75% to 25%, directing the remaining 75% to the state Legislature's tobacco settlement fund strictly for the purpose of securing federal matching dollars for the Medicaid expansion program approved by the state's voters with State Question 802 in June.

As of publication, no formal groups have filed to oppose or support SQ 814.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau supports the measure, as it will help fund the newly-passed Medicaid expansion program without forcing deeper cuts to other state services – especially as the state is expected to face a budget deficit following the impacts of the coronavirus.

OKFB does not have existing policy on the issue.

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OKFB members urged to encourage census participation as deadline extends

Time is running out for rural Oklahomans to stand up and be counted in the 2020 Census.

As the final census deadline continues to fluctuate, OKFB members are encouraged to make sure their family, friends and neighbors have completed the census. From securing federal dollars to impacting rural representation, an accurate and complete count of rural

Oklahoma is critical for the future of the rural way of life.

The 2020 Census can be completed online by visiting my2020census.gov or over the phone by calling **844-330-2020**.

While **60.8%** of Oklahomans have self-responded to the census, a total of **99.6%** of Oklahoma households have been counted as of Oct. 5, 2020.

Top 10 Oklahoma counties for response rates, as of Oct. 5

1. Canadian County, 72.4%
2. Cleveland County, 70.0%
3. Rogers County, 69.8%
4. Wagoner County, 68.5%
5. Washington County, 67.7%
6. Tulsa County, 67.3%
7. Logan County, 66.2%
8. Oklahoma County, 65.9%
9. Garfield County, 65.8%
10. McClain County, 64.5%

Bottom 10 Oklahoma counties for response rates, as of Oct. 5

1. Marshall County, 31.1%
2. McIntosh County, 32.3%
3. Cimarron County, 33.8%
4. Pittsburg County, 38.3%
5. Beaver County, 38.7%
6. Adair County, 39.0%
7. Pushmataha County, 39.3%
8. Caddo County, 39.6%
9. Ellis County, 40.0%
10. Dewey County, 40.7%

Complete the census online today by visiting my2020census.gov or over the phone by calling **(844) 330-2020**.

OKFB releases final ag fund enforcements for Nov. 3 election

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag Fund, the organization's state-level political action committee, has endorsed 12 candidates and financially supported 52 candidates running for election in statewide, state Senate and state House races in 2020.

The OKFB Ag Fund board, comprised of farmers and ranchers from each OKFB district, donated a total of \$77,750 to candidates over the course of the election cycle.

Candidates in the Nov. 3 general elections who are endorsed by the OKFB Ag Fund include **Todd Hiatt**, Corporation Commissioner; **Greg Treat**, Senate District 47; **Rick West**, House District 3; **Dell Kerbs**, House District 26; **Kyle Hilbert**, House District 29; **Jay Steagall**, House District 43; and **Jon Echols**, House District 90.

Visit okfarmbureau.org/vote for a full voting guide to the 2020 elections.