

PERSPECTIVE

May 21, 2021



Legislative update: Nuisance, redistricting bills see approval

In the final days of the 2021 legislative session, the focus of lawmakers turned to final work on the state budget. House and Senate leadership, along with Gov. Kevin Stitt, announced on May 13 an \$8.3 billion budget agreement had been reached. Stay tuned for Oklahoma Farm Bureau's full analysis of the budget deal, which will be available on OKFB's website.

Over the past couple weeks, OKFB was pleased to see Gov. Stitt sign into law several bills the organization has worked on throughout the session. Last week, he approved both the House and Senate redistricting bills, giving final approval for new legislative district lines. The state Legislature will reconvene in a special session this fall to draw the state's congressional districts after the U.S. Census Bureau releases final 2020 Census data. Learn more about the redistricting process at okfb.news/redistricting21.

The governor also approved SB 939 by Sen. Zack Taylor and Rep. John Pfeiffer, which prevents cities and municipalities from deeming any action done by a critical infrastructure sector – including agriculture – a nuisance if the entity is following all rules, regulations and laws. Farm Bureau policy strongly supports the ability of farmers and ranchers to conduct normal production practices without being sued for

nuisance. The law ensures farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma will be able to feed and clothe the world without the burden of unnecessary and frivolous nuisance lawsuits.

Farm Bureau leaders and staff have spent the remaining weeks of the session working toward final passage of a bill to provide producers with multiple options to prove eligibility for the agriculture sales tax exemption permit. After hearing concerns from producers across the state who have faced difficulties obtaining a permit, Farm Bureau has worked with the Oklahoma Tax Commission and state legislators to find a solution. In addition to applying for a permit through a county assessor, SB 422 by Sen. Frank Simpson and Rep. Dell Kerbs allows farmers and ranchers to prove eligibility for the permit by providing a federal tax form, a one-page business description, an FSA form or another document created by the tax commission. As of press time, SB 422 had not been considered by the state Senate. Learn more on the next page.

For Farm Bureau's most up-to-date legislative information, watch Lincoln to Local video updates on Facebook and YouTube, tune in to the weekly legislative update call or visit the OKFB website.

Congressman Mullin shares perspective on federal issues with OKFB members

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members heard Congressman Markwayne Mullin's views on issues facing farmers and ranchers in our nation's capital during an online meeting on Wednesday, May 12.

As a rancher himself, Mullin represents Oklahoma's Second Congressional District, which is comprised of parts of eastern Oklahoma.

Rep. Mullin highlighted four topics farmers, ranchers and rural Oklahomans are concerned about during the call.

1. Investigating the cattle market

While discussing the state of the current cattle market, Mullin said he is concerned by meat packers' influence on the market.

"While we don't want hamburgers to be \$25, we have to be able to make a living," Mullin said.

Mullin said he has urged both the current and previous administration's U.S. Department of Justice to continue investigating market manipulation in the beef industry.

2. Bringing broadband connectivity to underserved areas

As the world continues to develop new technologies requiring broadband, many producers in Oklahoma need internet connectivity to keep up with modern-day agricultural practices.

Rep. Mullin said only a small part of the proposed infrastructure bill is set aside for advancing broadband, but the focus of connectivity is more in suburban areas than rural areas.

As a resident of rural Oklahoma, Mullin said he has internet access now because of the electric cooperative that serves his area.

He said he believes the same model that utilized electric cooperatives to bring broadband to parts of eastern Oklahoma should be considered around the U.S. to ensure people can keep up with the ever-changing technology.

3. Predicting the Biden Administration's trade stance

Agriculture, like many other industries in the U.S., relies on trade with foreign

countries to market their products.

Mullin said Biden's strategy on trade remains to be seen because it has not yet been a focus.

"I'll tell you so far, the administration has not looked at changing the Trump Administration's trade policies," Mullin said. "It has not been a hot topic."

Because it is not a focus, Mullin said he does not see any significant changes coming in the near future.

4. Continuing advocacy efforts on all levels

Mullin thanked Farm Bureau members for their advocacy efforts for farmers and ranchers across the state.

"I appreciate Oklahoma Farm Bureau's advocacy efforts," Mullin said. "Politics affect all of us. I don't care if you do or don't like them, it is affecting your life."

He urged members to continue to be involved from their local communities all the way to the national level.

OKFB joins ag groups to urging support of ag sales tax exemption

Oklahoma Farm Bureau, along with 10 other statewide agriculture organizations, called on the state Legislature to approve Senate Bill 422 by Sen. Frank Simpson and Rep. Dell Kerbs.

Representing thousands of farmers and ranchers across the state, a coalition including American Farmers and Ranchers, Oklahoma Agribusiness Retailers Association, Oklahoma Agriculture Cooperative Council, Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, Oklahoma Cotton Council, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Oklahoma Grain and Feed Association, Oklahoma Pork Council, Oklahoma Sorghum Association, Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association and Oklahoma Panhandle Agriculture Irrigation Association urged the state Senate to advance the bill to provide options for producers to secure a state agriculture sales tax exemption permit.

"SB 422 is vital to the livelihoods of many farmers and ranchers across Oklahoma," said Rodd Moesel, OKFB president. "By providing a number of

options for ag producers to prove their eligibility for the ag sales tax exemption, the bill will ensure Oklahoma farmers and ranchers – who are already eligible for the exemption by state statute – continue to have access to the critical business tool. Since our organization's beginning, Farm Bureau members have labored to ensure Oklahoma farmers and ranchers have access to the critical ag sales tax exemption. We urge our state senators to support agriculture producers and agribusiness by voting yes on SB 422."

Many of the groups have heard a number of concerns from producers who have faced difficulties obtaining an agriculture sales tax exemption permit.

SB 422 would give flexibility to farmers and ranchers who are applying for or renewing an agricultural sales tax exemption permit by providing options to show proof of eligibility. In addition to applying for a permit through a county assessor, the bill also allows applicants to qualify for the exemption by providing

documentation from one of four categories including a federal tax form, a business description form, a USDA FSA program form or an Oklahoma Tax Commission-created form to verify they are involved in production agriculture.

In addition to joining other agricultural organizations, OKFB sent an Action Alert to all members urging them to contact their senator to vote YES on SB 422.

Without the timely passage of SB 422, ag producers with permits that expire on June 30, 2021 could face a much more difficult process than ever before. Some farmers and ranchers who have responsibly obtained and utilized this permit for decades could now be denied unless action is taken.

As of our print deadline, SB 422 had not been considered. For the latest information about the bill, visit OKFB's social media pages or okfarmbureau.org/news.

OKFB to host Lucas for congressional meeting

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are encouraged to attend a congressional meeting featuring Congressman Frank Lucas on Thursday, May 27 at 6 p.m. at the Southwestern Oklahoma State University Pioneer Cellular Event Center in Weatherford.

While the ongoing impacts of the pandemic prevent members from traveling to Washington, D.C., to visit Oklahoma's congressional delegation, the meeting with Rep. Lucas will provide members the opportunity to discuss the leading issues in our nation's capital affecting farmers, ranchers and rural Oklahomans.

A farmer and rancher from Cheyenne, Lucas represents the Oklahoma's Third Congressional District, the state's largest district, covering the northwestern and western part of the state. He serves as the ranking member on the House Science, Space and Technology Committee and is the senior member of the House Financial Services Committee.

Dinner will be provided. State legislators from the Weatherford area also will attend and provide brief remarks on issues in Oklahoma.



Join in-person
Thursday May 27
6 p.m.
Southwestern Oklahoma
State University
Pioneer Cellular Event
Center
Weatherford
Dinner will be provided.
State legislators will
share information on
issues in Oklahoma.

OKFB member appointed to state board of ag

Washita County Farm Bureau member Nocona Cook was recently confirmed as the newest member of the State Board of Agriculture.

Cook was appointed to the board by Gov. Kevin Stitt and confirmed by the state Senate to serve the southwest district of Oklahoma.

As a fifth-generation farmer on his family farm near Cloud Chief, his operation consists of wheat, alfalfa and cotton along with a commercial cow-calf operation and custom swathing and hay business.

He serves as a member of the OKFB Young Farmers and Ranchers committee and previously served as the OKFB YF&R chair alongside his wife, Jordan.

Cook serves on the Washita County Farm Bureau board, Washita County Cattlemen's Association board and Cordell Public Schools Board of Education. He is also the president of the Washita County Fire Association and the Cloud Chief Fire Department fire chief and EMT.

Three other Farm Bureau members were confirmed to statewide boards.

Grady County Farm Bureau member Ron Justice was confirmed to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Texas County Farm Bureau member Dan Herald was named Area I Commissioner on the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, and Garfield County Farm Bureau member Brady Bond was confirmed to the Oklahoma State Fire Marshall Board.



OKFB YF&R selects students to participate in OYLA

Congratulations to the 18 students selected to participate in Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Youth Leading Agriculture Conference. The students from across the state will have the opportunity to hear from exciting speakers, participate in leadership classes, complete team building exercises and visit agriculture-related industries in June.

Students participating in OYLA include Sofey Burnett, Makenna Fishgrab, Landry Freeman, Kenda Harris, Josie Hayes, Hannah Johnson, Macy Koch, Callie Langerman, Kyler Miller, Wyatt Miller, Kara Miner, Gage Nance, Garrett Nivens, Hadon Wade, Trinity White, Tyler York, Rylee Young.



Madelyn Murphy, Gage Nance, Garrett Nivens, Hadon Wade, Trinity White, Tyler York and Rylee Young.

OKFB to host FFA reporters conference

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is excited to host the first-ever FFA Reporters Conference to be held Thursday, July 15, at Redlands Community College Conference Center in El Reno. Students will have the opportunity to learn basic communication skills including social media, photography, videography, graphic design and writing.

Visit okfb.news/FFAReporters21 for more information.

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OKFB members visit north central Oklahoma during OKFB's Ag Tour

During a three day tour, 50 Oklahoma Farm Bureau members explored north central Oklahoma during the 2021 OKFB Ag Tour May 5-7.

Members learned more about production agriculture in the region by visiting Diamond K Seeds, a Red Rock-based seed and agriculture chemical company; Hoffman Pecan Farm, a third-generation pecan orchard in Stillwater; Pfeiffer Farms, a show goat operation in Orlando; and Guthrie Greenhouses, a contract grower of bedding plants, vegetables and groundcovers.

Members toured several of the area's manufacturing facilities including Crownline Truck Beds, a manufacturer of steel truck beds and storm shelters; the

Ditch Witch Museum, commemorating the accomplishments of Ditch Witch and original machinery; and Larry's Machine Shop, a shop specializing in gun drilling, hole boring and repairs.

The Oklahoma State University Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources provided insights on the institution's research advancements through tours of the Totusek Arena, the Cline Equine Teaching Center, the Ferguson Family Dairy Center, the Sheep and Goat Center, the Swine Research and Education Center, the Willard Sparks Beef Center, the Purebred Beef Center and the Botanic Garden.

Members also visited other notable destinations in the area such as the

Cherokee Strip Museum in Perry, a museum dedicated to communicating the history of the Cherokee Outlet; a speech from former Noble County Sheriff Charlie Hanger, the officer responsible for the arrest of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bomber; and the Oklahoma Farm Bureau/Oklahoma 4-H ATV Training Facility in Guthrie, a program of OKFB safety services and OSU Extension to teach students about ATV safety.

Meals during the tour were sponsored by Noble County Farm Bureau, Bolay Farms, Payne County Farm Bureau, Oklahoma Ag Credit and Helena.

View all of the photos from OKFB's Ag Tour at okfb.news/AgTourPhotos21.

