

PERSPECTIVE

April 9, 2021

Legislative Update: Ad valorem, nuisance, rural doctor legislation advances

The committee process ramped up this week at 23rd and Lincoln as legislators face an upcoming deadline on Thursday, April 8. Several bills of interest to Farm Bureau members were among those receiving approval from their assigned committees.

Farm Bureau members are no strangers to the language found in SB 838, as similar legislation has been proposed over the past five years. If passed, the bill would allow municipalities to create public safety protection districts funded by a new ad valorem tax. While OKFB members have longstanding policy opposing increases in ad valorem taxes, this year Farm Bureau has worked closely with legislators and state leaders to protect farmers and ranchers from new property taxes.

In the version that passed the Senate and has now received approval by its House committee, OKFB helped secure exemptions for all real property zoned for agriculture use and livestock employed in support of the family, as well as implements of husbandry including tractors, combines and sprayers. OKFB also worked to ensure the legislation would require municipalities to receive approval from 60% of voters – the same requirement as school bonds – to create the public safety district. Previous versions only required 50% approval from voters, and Farm Bureau believed the new tax should not be easier to achieve than school bonds. Farm Bureau also argued that a 60% threshold is necessary to buffer the instances in which individuals own land within a municipality and would be taxed but do not live within the municipality and therefore would not be able to vote on the tax increase.

SB 939 would prohibit a county or municipality from constituting any action by a critical infrastructure sector – including agriculture – as a nuisance when they are operating in compliance with all government rules, guidelines or laws applicable to their sector. Farm Bureau policy strongly supports prohibiting nuisance lawsuits against producers when they are conducting normal agriculture practices. SB 939 has received approval from the full Senate body and now only needs approval from the House before going to the governor’s desk for consideration.

The Senate Finance Committee approved House Speaker Charles McCall’s HB 2089, a rural doctor tax credit. The bill would give doctors who have been licensed within the last year and have either graduated from a college of medicine or osteopathic medicine, or have completed residency within the state, a tax credit of up to \$25,000 if they serve in a rural area or a tribal health facility. A qualifying rural area must have a population of fewer than 25,000 people and be further than 25 miles from the nearest community with a population greater than 25,000 people. OKFB policy supports using incentives such as tax credits to encourage doctors to practice in underserved rural areas.

For more information about OKFB’s efforts at the state Capitol, tune in to the weekly member-only legislative update calls every **Friday at 12 p.m.** To participate, contact your district field representative for details.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **April 15-17:** Oklahoma City Farm Show – Oklahoma City
- **April 27-28:** Oklahoma FFA State Convention – Oklahoma City
- **May 3:** Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture application deadline
- **May 5-7:** OKFB Ag Tour
- **May 28:** Oklahoma Legislature adjourns
- **June 14-18:** Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture Conference

Join OKFB at the OKC Farm Show

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are invited to stop by the OKFB booth at the Oklahoma City Farm Show April 15-17 in the Bennett Event Center at the State Fair Park.

Gates will be open to the public Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4

p.m. Admission and parking are free.

Make sure to visit the OKFB booth to enter for your chance to win a Little Giant multi-purpose ladder provided by Grainger, an OKFB member benefits partner, and learn about upcoming OKFB events.

For more information, visit oklahomacityfarmshow.com.

YF&R awards \$1,000 scholarships to nine students

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers committee has awarded nine \$1,000 college scholarships to high school seniors.

Each recipient is a high school senior pursuing a degree in agriculture at an Oklahoma accredited institution of higher learning.

“We are proud to support agricultural youth as they transition into their respective college degree programs,” said Cody Goodnight, OKFB YF&R chair. “As the scholarship recipients embark on becoming professionals in the industry, we hope they will be involved in Collegiate Farm Bureau and Young Farmers and Ranchers.”

The nine scholarship recipients are:

Kale Campbell
Alfalfa County

Addison DeLeon
Beckham County

Hunter Fox
Dewey County

Kent Tripp
Kay County

Braden Burns
Kingfisher County

Sage Borders
Murray County

Colby Erickson
Muskogee County

Austin Hooten
Payne County

Paisley Sturgill
Pottawatomie County

The nine scholarship recipients have a wide variety of career aspirations and have chosen degrees across the agriculture industry including agricultural business, agricultural education, farm and ranch management, agricultural communications and animal sciences.

Students plan to study at higher-education institutions including Northern Oklahoma College and Oklahoma State University.

To learn more about the OKFB YF&R program, contact YF&R Coordinator Zac Swartz at (405) 523-2300.

NEO A&M student awarded inaugural Collegiate Farm Bureau scholarship

Kalley Whitlock, a sophomore at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M college, recently earned the inaugural Collegiate Farm Bureau scholarship presented by the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers committee.

The new scholarship program was designed to assist active and engaged Collegiate Farm Bureau members as they prepare for careers in agriculture.

“As collegiate members are pursuing their degrees in agriculture, we are proud to support them on their journey to becoming professionals in the industry by presenting the first Collegiate Farm Bureau member scholarship,” said Cody Goodnight, OKFB YF&R chair. “We look forward to the work these members will continue to do in YF&R, Farm Bureau and agriculture.”

Whitlock is pursuing an Associate in Science with a focus in agricultural business and animal science.

She is the president of NEO A&M Collegiate Farm Bureau and is active in other campus organizations including Aggie Society, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and an agricultural ambassador.

With six chapters across Oklahoma, Collegiate Farm Bureau is an on-campus club designed to introduce young agriculturalists to the Farm Bureau organization early in their careers. To learn more about Collegiate Farm Bureau, contact YF&R Coordinator Zac Swartz at (405) 523-2300.

Grady County Farm Bureau hosts area legislators at legislative dinner

Grady County Farm Bureau hosted a legislative dinner on April 1 featuring Sen. Lonnie Paxton, Rep. Brad Boles, Rep. Dick Lowe and Rep. Brian Hill. Members had an opportunity to hear an update on the legislative session and share their top concerns with their state legislators.



PPP deadline extended to May 31

The deadline for the second round of Paycheck Protection Program loans has been extended to May 31, from its original March 31 deadline.

The PPP Extension Act was passed by Congress recently and signed by President Joe Biden on March 30.

“The existing March 31 deadline does not allow enough time for newly eligible farmers and ranchers to apply, nor does it adequately account for the required eight-week waiting period between first draw approval and second draw applications,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall in a letter sent to Congress.

The PPP is a low-interest Small Business Administration loan program that helps small businesses keep employees on their payrolls, which includes farmers and ranchers. If the funds distributed by a small business are used for eligible expenses and employee retention criteria is met, the SBA will forgive the loans.

American Farm Bureau continues work with Congress and the SBA to ensure all self-employed farmers have access to the program.

Producers interested in participating can visit the SBA website to begin preparing their application.

OKFB members can now save at Riversport Adventures in OKC

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members now receive discounts on day and season passes at RIVERSPORT Adventure Parks.

Conveniently located in Oklahoma City’s Boathouse District, the park offers a variety of outdoor adventures for the whole family.

Members can receive up to **30% off** a day pass, which includes access to whitewater rafting, surfing, tubing, kayaking and paddle boarding, the adventure course, scooter and bike park, and Basecamp Nature Center at the discounted rate of \$35.99. Discounted 2021 season passes are also available to Farm Bureau members.

To take advantage of this new member benefit, visit riversportokc.org/epass and use code **OKFARM**.



USDA announces additional COVID-19 aid for producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture this week announced its plans to distribute more than **\$12 billion** under a program called Pandemic Assistance for Producers, which includes aid that had been put on hold as well as funds newly allocated in the Consolidated Appropriations Act.

The program expands assistance to farmers helped by existing programs and assists farmers and ranchers who previously did not qualify for COVID-19 aid. Farmers will need to sign up only if they are applying for new programs or if they are eligible for CFAP assistance and did not previously apply.

“We appreciate Secretary Vilsack’s action to release funds and expand eligibility for farmers hit hard by the

devastating effects of COVID-19,” said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. “USDA’s decision to distribute aid based upon previous applications will help deliver assistance quickly.”

The funding includes \$5.6 billion that will be directed to formula payments to cattle producers and eligible flat-rate or price trigger crops. Another \$6 billion will be used to develop new programs or modify existing proposals using remaining discretionary funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The USDA expects these efforts to include assistance for euthanized livestock and poultry, personal protective equipment and other protective measures for food and farm workers,

improving the resilience of the food supply chain and other uses.

In addition, \$500 million in new funding is included for existing programs such as the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Farmers Opportunities Training and Outreach Program, Local Agricultural Marketing Program, Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Agricultural Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Economic Adjustment Assistance for Textile Mills Program.

Sign-ups for the new program began **April 5, 2021**.

To read more details about the program, visit okfb.news/31cUq3v.

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Families in need benefit from Pottawatomie County Farm Bureau donation



Pottawatomie County Farm Bureau President John Grundmann, left, presents a \$2,000 check to the Our Community Market of Pottawatomie County March 31 as a part of OKFB's Community Food Assistance Matching Program. The Community Market serves the citizens of Pottawatomie County and partners with other food pantries, community, civic, and faith-based organizations to help meet the overall health and wellness needs of a person's spirit, soul, and body.

Tillman County Farm Bureau gives back to community with donation to food bank



Tillman County Farm Bureau donates a check to the Tillman County Food Bank as a part of OKFB's Community Food Assistance Matching Program. Tammy Schrick, Tillman County Food Bank assistant director, and Julane Whitworth, Tillman County Food Bank director, receive Tillman County's donation from Micah Treadwell, Tillman County Women's Leadership Committee chair, and Clay Hart, agent. The Tillman County Food Bank works to feed and care for the needs of their community.