

PERSPECTIVE

February 26, 2021

Legislative update: New budget numbers emerge, weather impacts progress

Though winter weather created a number of delays over the past few weeks, the state Legislature this week saw its first major deadline as House and Senate bills were required to advance out of committees in the chamber the legislation originated from to remain alive.

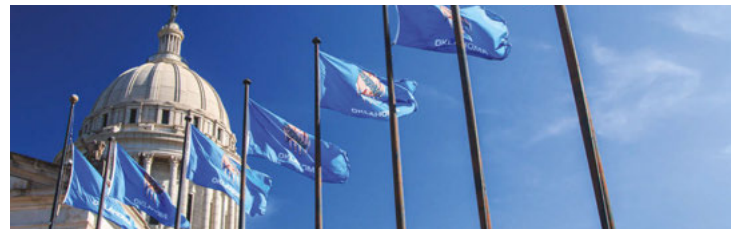
Ad valorem tax proposals continue to be discussed in a variety of capacities at the state Capitol. Legislators this week considered a bill that would allow counties to create a new property tax for the purpose of hazard mitigation. OKFB has expressed concerns over the broad nature of the applicable tax and continues to share with lawmakers the impact of increased ad valorem taxes on farmers and ranchers. Farm Bureau leaders and staff also continue to represent members in discussions with state legislators and other stakeholders on a bill that would allow voters within a municipality to create a Public Safety Protection District to be funded by ad valorem taxes.

OKFB saw progress in its push for improved health care access in rural communities as a bill by Speaker Charles McCall that would create a tax credit for doctors practicing in a rural area advanced out of committee and is now eligible to be heard on the House floor. Doctors that graduated from an Oklahoma medical school or completed residency in the state would be eligible for a tax credit of up to \$25,000 for practicing in a rural area. Farm Bureau

member policy supports measures such as a tax credit which would incentivize doctors to serve and practice in rural communities throughout the state.

Legislators heard good news from the State Board of Equalization on Feb. 16, where the 2022 fiscal year revenue estimate was increased by \$1.2 billion or 13.9% over its December projections. The new number will be used by the state Legislature to craft the coming fiscal year's state budget. Many of Farm Bureau's priority issues such as funding for the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service as well as road and bridge repair could now be more successfully addressed this session.

OKFB continues to monitor a variety of bills that could impact Farm Bureau members. For a more in-depth discussion on OKFB's efforts at the state Capitol, make sure to tune into weekly legislative update calls every Friday at 12 p.m. Contact your field representative for more information.



Disaster assistance now available for Oklahoma ranchers

Ranchers affected by the historic winter weather can now receive assistance through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Livestock Indemnity Program.

The USDA Farm Service Agency program provides benefits to producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather including the recent winter storm.

Payments from the program are equal to 75% of the average fair market value of the livestock.

Producers need to file a notice within 30 days of the loss, then the

rancher must provide supporting documentation to the local FSA office no later than 60 days after the end of the calendar year.

Documentation for the program can include proof of death documentation with photo or video with a time and date stamp, purchase records, production records, vaccination records, bank or other loan documents or third-party certification.

In addition to filing a notice for loss, producers must also submit an application for payments prior to **March 1, 2022.**

For more information or questions,

contact the Oklahoma FSA office at (405) 742-1130.





Days of discouragement, days of encouragement

It all looked so serene. So quiet. So peaceful.

Snow blanketed the fields and pastures of the Neufeld family's farm near Fairview in Major County. Rather than the usual green wheat fields and brown, dormant pastures, the landscape was painted white with a solid layer of snowfall that descended upon much of Oklahoma in February 2021.

In the middle of what seemed like a still, wintry wonderland, Scott Neufeld – like countless other Oklahoma farmers and ranchers – was battling the frigid temperatures and the blanket of snow as his family raced to take care of their cattle in the middle of calving season.

To read the rest of the story, visit okfb.news/neufeld21.

OKFB producers prepare for storms to save livestock



As the temperatures began to drop, Custer County member Lawrence Sawatzky had to break ice to ensure his cattle had access to water.



To help keep his cattle warm, Kay County member Stacy Simunek made sure they had plenty of feed to eat in order to help regulate their body temperature.



With classes canceled for most students across the state and many farm and ranch families working day and night to ensure their livestock were cared for, many pickup trucks became mobile classrooms. It was no different for McIntosh County member Josh Emerson and his family as their children spent extra time in the feed truck.

For more photos of Oklahoma Farm Bureau members facing the storm, visit us on Facebook.

Congressman Lucas shares update on national issues

Congressman Frank Lucas shared a national agricultural policy update with Oklahoma Farm Bureau members in a discussion with OKFB President Rodd Moesel during OKFB's Leadership Week.

Lucas offered insight into the top issues on the horizon for farmers and ranchers including the new administration, climate programs, meat processing capacity, farm income and the future of trade.

Working with new Secretary of Agriculture

With a new administration comes a new leader at the helm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but Agriculture Secretary nominee Tom Vilsack is not a new face to agriculture. The former Iowa governor served as the secretary for eight years during the Obama administration.

Though he has concerns about the secretary's focus on his home state's corn and soybeans industries, Lucas said he is eager to work with Vilsack again.

Lucas worked closely with Vilsack in writing the 2014 and 2018 farm bills, so he is confident in working with the secretary on a number of issues, Lucas added.

Creating climate change initiatives for ag

With a new president in the Oval Office, Lucas mentioned the administration's conversations around new climate programs for farmers and ranchers.

A rancher himself, Lucas emphasized his belief that new climate programs for farmers and ranchers should be voluntary and incentive based.

"Use the carrot to encourage good things, do not use the stick to try to beat the people economically into submission," Lucas said about creating climate legislation.

As the new administration looks to create climate solutions involving agricultural producers, Lucas reassured Farm Bureau members that Vilsack understands farmers and ranchers' need for incentive-based programs.

Expanding meat processing capacity

The fire at the Tyson plant in Holcomb, Kansas, along with disruptions in the meat industry during the COVID-19 pandemic drove Lucas and Rep. Collin Peterson to author the RAMP-UP Act, a bill to help expand processing capacity by making a path for smaller meat processing plants to move to the federal inspection process and sell products across state lines.

Lucas said having USDA food safety stamps will allow for more trade opportunities across state and international lines, which expands Oklahoma's marketability of meat.

Forecasting commodity prices and payments

Over the past two years, a large part of U.S. farm income has been derived from various government payment programs including the Market Facilitation Program and Coronavirus Food Assistance Program.

Though Lucas said he hopes farmers and ranchers will not have to rely on these payments for much longer as commodity prices increase, he reiterated the critical role of farm programs for Oklahoma producers who often face weather extremes.

"I have tried to explain to my colleagues that sometimes, as in the early part of the last decade, it did not matter that calves were worth \$1,300 per head and did not matter that wheat was at a record high," Lucas said. "If you do not have anything to sell, it does not help. We still like to have that safety net there."

Predicting the future of trade

Lucas said he is hopeful the Biden administration will continue to focus on international trade to open more markets for America's many high-quality agricultural commodities.

"USDA is still about making sure we have the ability to raise the food and fiber in this state and country and the ability to sell our surplus into world markets," Lucas said.

Register for 2021 FUSION Reimagined Conference

Mark your calendars for March 11-13 the 2021 Farm Bureau FUSION Reimagined Conference. There will be great speakers, breakout sessions and evening events to bring together volunteer leaders from the Promotion & Education, Women's Leadership and Young Farmers & Ranchers programs.

Conference Highlights

- Virtual tours from around the country
- Collegiate discussion meet
- Engaging learning discussions
- Evening entertainment

To register, visit okfb.news/FUSION21.

Visit OKFB at the Tulsa Farm Show Feb. 25-27

As the official sponsor of the 27th annual Tulsa Farm Show, make sure to stop by and visit with more than 380 companies Feb. 25-27 at the River Spirit Expo Square. Displays will include tractor, sprayer, tillage, harvest equipment, cattle management products, and more.

While you are there, make sure to stop by the OKFB booth to learn about the latest Farm.

REMINDER: OKFB YF&R scholarship opportunity

Deadline: March 1

Oklahoma high school seniors and Collegiate Farm Bureau members now have their chance to receive a \$1,000 scholarship from the OKFB Young Farmers & Ranchers.

Nine \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to graduating high school seniors and one \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a Collegiate Farm Bureau member.

For more information on YF&R scholarship opportunities, visit okfarmbureau.org/applications.

Stay up to date with the latest state and national legislative affairs by visiting okfarmbureau.org/news or visiting our Facebook page.

**PUBLISHED BY
OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU**

Postmaster:

Send address corrections to:

Perspective
P.O. Box 53332,
Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3332

STAFF DIRECTORY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thad Doye
(405) 523-2438

**VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Dustin Mielke
(405) 530-2640

DIRECTOR OF MEDIA RELATIONS

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(405) 523-2346

PUBLICATIONS SPECIALIST

Brianne Schwabauer
(405) 523-2325

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Rebekah Nash
(405) 523-2457

Oklahoma Farm Bureau
2501 N. Stiles
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3126

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Texas County Farm Bureau partners with AirMedCare Network

In honor of Farm Bureau Week, Texas County Farm Bureau and agent Cory Winters partnered with AirMedCare to ensure lifesaving measures are available to all athletes at Guymon, Yarbrough, Hooker and Tyrone Public Schools. All athletes, including coaches, cheerleaders and opponents if injured on-site will now receive life-saving air transportation at no out of pocket expense.



Members of Texas County Farm Bureau and AirMedCare Network present staff of Guymon Public Schools with a certificate, ensuring they will be available to provide life-saving measures to student athletes and coaches.

OKFB ranchers brave winter storm

'I Don't Remember It Being This Cold This Long': Oklahoma Rancher On Bitter Cold Weather Challenges

By SETH BODINE • FEB 16, 2021
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Even the hardiest cattle need to be managed with cold weather in mind.
TODD JOHNSON / OSU AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES



A massive winter storm immobilized the southern plains, Oklahoma prepares for second wave

Tuesday, February 16th 2021, 2:56 PM CST

A massive winter storm has immobilized the southern plains, leaving producers working to livestock protected.

[Another round of winter weather is set to mov](#)

Morning Edition
Oklahoma Farmers And Ranchers Struggle Through Deep Freeze

By SETH BODINE • 1 HOUR AGO
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TODD JOHNSON / OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

The cold weather gripping Oklahoma and a larg swath of the United States is creating headach for farmers who are working day and night to

With historic low temperatures and two snow storms, farmers and ranchers across the state were busy in the last few weeks as many entered the beginning of calving season, rushing to save newborn calves.

As the weather became state and national news, so did the efforts of several of our members. Consumers right here in Oklahoma and across the nation heard from Cleveland County member Paten Calvert, Comanche County members Cody and Kara Goodknight, Comanche County member Myuil Morris, Cook and McCurtain County member Brent Bolen, Kingfisher County member Kyle Glazier, and Washita County member Nocona Cook.

To read the stories in full, visit okfb.news/StormStories21.