

# PERSPECTIVE

June 17, 2022



**A**fter the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the 2020 and 2021 legislative sessions, lawmakers were back to business as usual in 2022 during the second regular session of the 58th Oklahoma Legislature, running from the first Monday in February to the last Friday in May.

With restrictions lifted and long-awaited building renovations complete, the marble floors of the state Capitol played host to a seemingly endless stream of foot traffic from legislators, staff and visitors from around the state.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau and its members had a strong presence at 23rd and Lincoln throughout the 2022 legislative session. In addition to the efforts of OKFB's public policy team, nearly a dozen county Farm Bureaus took time off the farm and made the trek to Oklahoma City to advocate for farmers and ranchers at the state Capitol.

With thousands of bills up for consideration this year, OKFB was proud to walk away with victories in several priority areas for Farm Bureau members.

## Medical Marijuana

Oklahoma's medical marijuana industry took the state by storm after

the passage of State Question 788 in 2018. With more than 8,000 medical marijuana grows in Oklahoma, the industry has had a significant impact on agriculture and rural Oklahoma. From illegal activity to concerns with herbicide spray drift, Farm Bureau members sought clarity on potential liabilities and improved communications with nearby medical marijuana growers.

One of the highlights of the 2022 legislative session was the passage of **SB 1737** by Sen. Blake Stephens and Rep. Kenton Patzkowsky, which requires all commercial medical marijuana growers to post signage outside their operation and requires them to register with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry as an environmentally sensitive crop. Signage requirements include listing the official license number and valid contact information for the licensee.

Before the passage of SB 1737, many farmers and ranchers had difficulty determining if a neighboring operation grew marijuana and, if so, finding valid contact information for the operation's ownership to have on hand in case of emergencies or before applying herbicides. This bill will help Farm

Bureau members tremendously in the spirit of being good neighbors.

Cracking down on illegal marijuana activity was a high priority for OKFB members coming into the 2022 session. **SB 1543** by Sen. Greg Treat and Rep. Jon Echols establishes the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority as a standalone entity, giving the agency greater freedom in both managing legal marijuana activity and investigating and prosecuting illegal activity.

OKFB also worked with lawmakers to pass legislation that creates a tiered fee structure for marijuana grower licenses, increases penalties for illegal activities, revokes medical marijuana licenses in the instance of improper use and establishes a moratorium on issuing new licenses until OMMA completes all pending licenses, inspections and investigations.

OKFB began the 2022 legislative session tracking dozens of medical marijuana bills. While not all were signed into law, OKFB is pleased with those that did and will continue working on behalf of our members as legislation re-emerges in future sessions.

*(continued on next page)*

## 2022 Legislative Review (continued)

### Landowner Advocacy and Private Property Rights

OKFB has long opposed increases to ad valorem taxes and all forms of county zoning authority. Property tax increases are often considered to help grow government budgets, but they unfairly affect farmers and ranchers who need land and capital to operate, and some of which does not always generate a profit.

Early in the 2022 session, OKFB helped defeat two county zoning bills, including **SB 1182** by Sen. Dave Rader and **HB 2990** by Rep. Carol Bush. Both bills would have allowed counties to create and enforce regulations, codes or policies so long as a state law on the same topic did not exist. This expansion of county authority could have caused significant uncertainty for farmers and ranchers in rural, unincorporated areas of Oklahoma. HB 2990 failed in committee, and SB 1182 was never considered, due in part to the strong opposition from an OKFB-led coalition.

In 2021, Farm Bureau members expressed concern with ad valorem valuation protests by energy companies and the strain it placed on school budgets. When a taxpayer – whether individual or corporation – protests their assessed ad valorem taxes, the protested funds go into escrow during the negotiation process. The money tied up in escrow is therefore not available for use by local school districts who

often rely on ad valorem revenue for their operating budgets.

OKFB and lawmakers engaged in multiple discussions on ad valorem protests with the desire to speed up lengthy negotiations while preserving a taxpayer's right to reasonably protest ad valorem assessments. **HB 3901** by Rep. John Pfeiffer and Sen. John Michael Montgomery and **HB 2627** by Rep. Dick Lowe and Sen. John Michael Montgomery will assist in protest negotiations by speeding up the scheduling process and removing third-party assessors from negotiations.

OKFB also saw legislation on personal property taxes emerge during the 2022 session. Current Oklahoma statute directs county assessors to tax unmanufactured farm products such as stored hay and grain. **SB 192** by Sen. Brent Howard and Rep. John Pfeiffer will remove this section of statute after stakeholders on both sides agreed little revenue would be lost as many counties were not assessing value on such reported items.

### Rural Infrastructure

Farm Bureau members strongly support the expansion of high-speed broadband internet and quality mobile phone service in rural areas of the state. As technology advances both at home and on the farm, access to high-speed internet is crucial to continued

prosperity in rural Oklahoma.

In many instances, telecommunications companies aiming to expand to rural areas often request the usage of preexisting utility poles owned by rural electric cooperatives, resulting in disagreement and debate between the two entities on usage fees and guidelines. This year, the legislature passed **HB 3835** by Rep. Ryan Martinez and Sen. Brent Howard, which sets a formula for maximum pole attachment fees. It also incentivizes communications companies to bring broadband internet to underserved areas by lowering the fee to \$1 for the first four years.

Two additional advancements on the rural broadband front include the passage of **HB 3363** by Rep. Charles McCall and Sen. Greg Treat to establish the Oklahoma Broadband Office and **HB 1123** by Rep. Logan Phillips and Sen. Roger Thompson, which appropriates \$2 million from statewide pandemic relief funds to assist in broadband mapping around the state.

For Farm Bureau members, legislative work does not stop with the end of the session. Throughout the summer and fall, OKFB will continue to work hand-in-hand with its grassroots members during the organization's policy development season to ensure farmers and ranchers can continue producing food, fuel and fiber for the world.

### Thank you!

Thank you to all our Oklahoma Farm Bureau advocates who attended a Capitol visit, participated in a local legislative event, subscribed to our action alert system or tuned in to our Friday Zoom updates. Your engagement ensures Farm Bureau members' voices are heard loud and clear each legislative session!

## Reminder: OKFB WLC nurse's scholarship applications due July 1

The application deadline for the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee's Nurse's Training Scholarship is fast approaching.

Completed applications must be submitted by **July 1** along with proof of enrollment and a high school or college transcript. The application form can be downloaded from the OKFB website at [okfarmbureau.org/applications](http://okfarmbureau.org/applications).

Three \$500 scholarships will be awarded to Farm Bureau members

training to be nurses. Applicants must be enrolled half-time or more in a nurse's education or training program at an accredited college, university, vo-tech or trade school.

The scholarship program is sponsored by the OKFB WLC in an effort to ensure access to medical services for all Oklahomans, which is especially critical in rural parts of our state.

For more information on the scholarship, contact Marcia Irvin at (405) 523-2300.



## Nurse's Training Scholarship

Applications Due July 1

# Lawmakers, AFBF express concern over SEC overreach

**A**merican Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall commented May 26 on a bipartisan letter from members of Congress expressing concerns about the Security and Exchange Commission's proposed rule, "The Enhancement and Standardization of Climate Related Disclosures for Investors."

The proposal would require public companies to report on Scope 3 emissions, which are the result of activities from assets not owned or controlled by a publicly traded company

but contribute to its value chain. While farmers and ranchers would not be required to report directly to the SEC, they provide almost every raw product that goes into the food supply chain.

"The Securities and Exchange Commission plays an important role in protecting investors, but its reach has never extended to America's farms," Duvall said in the statement. "The bipartisan letter sent to the SEC recognizes the proposed rule's overreach by an agency whose mission should be focused on Wall Street.

"America's families rely on farmers to put food on their table every day, and farmers are increasingly being asked to answer the growing call for nutrition from families around the globe. Higher costs, liabilities and privacy issues will all create obstacles to reaching those goals.

"We appreciate the lawmakers who have stepped forward to raise concerns about the proposed rule, which has the potential to significantly increase costs and uncertainty for America's farmers and ranchers."

Read AFBF's Market Intel article to learn more about the SEC's proposed climate disclosure rule and how it would impact agriculture

[okfb.news/SECimpact](https://okfb.news/SECimpact)

## Prepare to vote in Oklahoma's June 28 primary election

**O**klahomans will head to the polls for our state's primary election Tuesday, June 28.

OKFB members understand exercising their right to vote is crucial to upholding our rural values and protecting our agriculture industry that so many Oklahomans rely upon.

To help prepare our members and the general public for the 2022 election cycle, OKFB has created an online voter guide as a comprehensive resource for each step of the election process.

The voter guide can be found online at [okfb.news/vote22](https://okfb.news/vote22), and it will be updated with the latest election information as the 2022 cycle progresses.

The guide also includes a list of candidates endorsed and supported by the OKFB Ag PAC. Endorsements are the highest level of support the Ag PAC gives candidates seeking elected office. The Ag PAC also gives financial support to candidates who understand agriculture and our rural way of life.

The state Ag PAC board will meet again after the results of the June 28 primary election are available to make endorsement and financial support decisions for candidates ahead of Oklahoma's August 23 primary runoff election.

### OKFB Ag PAC endorsed and supported candidates

*(Selections made before the June 28 primary election)*

#### Endorsed Candidates

##### Congressional races

- James Lankford – U.S. Senate
- Kevin Hern – U.S. House District 1
- Frank Lucas – U.S. House District 3
- Tom Cole – U.S. House District 4
- Stephanie Bice – U.S. House District 5

##### State Senate

- Darcy Jech – State Senate Dist. 26

##### Statewide races

- Kevin Stitt – Governor
- John O'Connor – State Atty. General
- Cindy Byrd – State Auditor

##### State House

- Josh West – State House Dist. 5
- Kyle Hilbert – State House Dist. 29
- Kevin Wallace – State House Dist. 32
- Anthony Moore – State House Dist. 57

#### Candidates financially supported by the OKFB Ag PAC

##### Statewide races

- Matt Pinnell – Lieutenant Governor
- Todd Russ – State Treasurer
- Kim David – Corp. Commissioner
- Glen Mulready – Ins. Commissioner
- Leslie Osborn – Labor Commissioner

##### State Senate

- Bill Coleman – State Senate Dist. 10
- John Haste – State Senate Dist. 36
- Brenda Stanley – State Senate Dist. 42

##### State House

- Eddy Dempsey – State House Dist. 1
- John Kane – State House Dist. 11
- David Smith – State House Dist. 18

##### State House (con't)

- Sherrie Conley – State House Dist. 20
- Charles McCall – State House Dist. 22
- Logan Phillips – State House Dist. 24
- Collin Duel – State House Dist. 31
- John Talley – State House Dist. 33
- Ty Burns – State House Dist. 35
- Ken Luttrell – State House Dist. 37
- Chad Caldwell – State House Dist. 40
- Cindy Roe – State House Dist. 42
- Tammy Townley – State House Dist. 48
- Marcus McEntire – State House Dist. 50
- Mark McBride – State House Dist. 53
- Jeff Sawatzky – State House Dist. 55
- Rhonda Baker – State House Dist. 60
- Ross Ford – State House Dist. 76



View the full voter guide  
online to see all our resources  
[okfb.news/vote22](https://okfb.news/vote22)



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## Duvall talks shipping reform and supply challenges with President Biden

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall spoke with President Biden Wednesday, June 8 to discuss several challenges farmers and ranchers are facing and the importance of final Congressional action on the Ocean Shipping Reform Act to address the backlog at our ports.

"I had a good discussion with President Biden today about several issues, including the importance of the Ocean Shipping Reform Act to America's farmers and ranchers," Duvall said in a statement. "He wholeheartedly agreed that we must get past the bottleneck at our ports to get America back on the move and that means breaking the logjam on Capitol Hill. The President thanked farmers and ranchers for weighing-in on the need for reform and I assured him that we will continue pressing hard for passage of a final bill now that both Houses of Congress have cleared versions of it with overwhelming bipartisan support.

"Ongoing supply chain issues and

record-high shipping costs have limited agricultural exports at a time when our trading partners need us more than ever. As I told the President today, estimates suggest we've lost out on more than \$25 billion in agricultural exports over the past six months due to ocean shipping constraints. That's unacceptable.

"America's farmers and ranchers need the House and Senate to work together and get this bill across this finish line and make our ocean transportation system more competitive and efficient so we can continue putting dinner on the table for families in America and overseas.

"We also discussed the uncertainty farmers and ranchers are facing with limited supplies and skyrocketing prices of the fuel and fertilizer needed to grow food. President Biden assured me he knows farmers are hurting and he's interested in learning more. He invited me to bring some folks to the White House so we can roll up our sleeves and work together to address the challenges facing farmers and ranchers."

## Reminder: YF&R Summer Conf. registration deadline July 13

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers have until July 13 to register for the 2022 OKFB YF&R Summer Conference to be held July 29-31 in the Enid area.

The conference will offer YF&R members the chance to meet like-minded farmers and ranchers from across the state, tour local agricultural businesses and enterprises, and learn more about YF&R leadership opportunities and programs.

Registration for the conference is \$20 to be paid at the conference, which includes meals and lodging. Members will stay in the GLo Best Western in Enid.

To attend, please register by filling out the online form available at [okfb.news/YFRConf22](https://okfb.news/YFRConf22) by July 13.

For more information, please contact YF&R Coordinator Zac Swartz at (405) 523-2300.