

PERSPECTIVE

March 26, 2021

Legislative update: Halfway through the process

After beginning the 2021 legislative session with more than 3,000 bills, fewer than 1,000 bills are still alive with roughly eight weeks left before Sine Die. Next month will bring two more deadlines, as April 8 is the deadline for bills to make it out of the opposing chamber committee process and April 22 marks the deadline for bills to make it off the opposing chamber floor.

All bills must be approved by both chambers and sent to the governor for consideration by no later than 5 p.m. on May 28. OKFB expects the state Legislature to finish the majority of their legislative business by April 22 and spend the following month focused on building and approving the budget for fiscal year 2022 and redrawing House and Senate district maps.

During the first two months of session, the most concerning legislation for Farm Bureau members involved the creation of a new ad valorem tax to fund county hazard mitigation districts. Introduced in both the House and Senate this year, these bills were similar to legislation that was defeated in the 2020 legislative session.

Thanks to the voices of Farm Bureau members around the state, neither bill passed their respective chambers by the March 11 deadline and will not be considered for the remainder of the 2021 session. OKFB has been concerned by the increased amount of ad valorem proposals introduced in recent legislative sessions and the willingness of legislators

to pass legislation with property tax increases. As we move forward, Farm Bureau will continue to educate legislators on the negative impact such tax increases have on farmers and ranchers.

A slate of bills addressing issues related to broadband expansion passed the House and now await committee hearings in the Senate. The seven bills cover a variety of topics such as utility pole attachments, grant programs, rebates for service in unserved or underserved areas, minimum upload and download speeds, and mapping data submissions. Broadband access is a multi-billion-dollar endeavor that will take many years to achieve and will take buy-in from federal, state and local governments, in addition to providers and private citizens. Farm Bureau is appreciative that the state Legislature is making broadband access a priority issue by doing the difficult but necessary foundational work to expand broadband across the state.

As the 2021 session continues, Farm Bureau will continue working with legislators on bills supported by farmers and ranchers such as legislation that prohibits nuisance lawsuits against producers for carrying out normal production practices, protects private property rights by requiring state agencies to enclose their land used for livestock grazing, and removes the burden of posting requirements from landowners.



OKFB supports ag youth at 2021 OYE Sale of Champions

Oklahoma Farm Bureau sponsored the state's agricultural youth by purchasing more than \$40,000 in premiums at the 2021 Oklahoma Youth Expo Sale of Champions on Friday, March 19 at the Jim Norick Arena at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds.

Before the sale started, OKFB was honored as the volume buyer for purchasing the most premiums at the 2019 sale.

OKFB purchased premiums on 45 animals alongside fellow agricultural organizations, as well as individuals.

Additionally, OKFB purchased the chalice for the grand champion steer, shown by Reign Scasta of Marshall County 4-H.

The Oklahoma Youth Expo awarded the top market animal exhibitors with more than \$1.25 million in the premium sale and more than \$300,000 in academic scholarships for their efforts in and out of the ring.



Whitmore named the director of OKFB field services

Oklahoma Farm Bureau recently named Justin Whitmore as the director of field services.

In his new position, he will lead OKFB's field staff as they work to serve members and county Farm Bureau organizations across the state. He will also continue serving as the field representative for the 12 counties in north central Oklahoma including Cleveland, Creek, Garfield, Grant, Kay, Kingfisher, Logan, Noble, Oklahoma, Osage, Pawnee and Payne counties.

"Working with producers is what keeps me going and getting to help them with challenges is rewarding," Whitmore said. "I enjoy seeing what Farm Bureau can do in rural Oklahoma, not only promoting agriculture and helping producers, but also making things better."

Before joining Farm Bureau in 2012, Whitmore served as the farmers market coordinator at Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, where he promoted, created and advanced farmers markets. He then traveled to Iraq with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the Provincial Reconstruction Team to

promote agricultural development.

Whitmore grew up in Coyle, Oklahoma, where his family grows fruits, vegetables and crops in addition to raising cattle. He earned a Bachelor of Science in agricultural business with a focus in marketing and economics from Oklahoma State University.

Whitmore and his wife, Ciera, live in Coyle with their two children, Leo and Milo.



Justin Whitmore

OKFB Ag Tour to be held May 5-7, 2021

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are invited to travel to north central Oklahoma during OKFB's annual Ag Tour May 5-7.

Previously known as commodity tour, the three-day tour will feature history, the way of life, industry and commodities of the north central region.

Buses will load for the tour at the OKFB home office in Oklahoma City and tour attendees will stay two nights in a Perry-area hotel. Meals will be provided during the tour.

The cost is \$200 for an individual or \$250 for two people sharing a room. Space will be limited to 50 members only.

For more information on the event and to sign up, contact Marcia Irvin at (405) 523-2325.



OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

Ag Tour
May 5-7, 2021

OKFB YF&R now accepting applications for Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee is now accepting applications for its Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture program to be held June 14-19, 2021 in Oklahoma City.

OYLA is a unique five-day summer leadership conference designed for high school students completing their junior year in 2021.

The conference will include special leadership classes, exciting speakers, team building and visits to agriculture-related industries. Selected students should be among the top, well rounded students in their class, and should have an interest in furthering their education at the post-secondary level.

OYLA participants will stay in Oklahoma City with conference activities located at the OKFB home

office and around the Oklahoma City metro area.

All costs for the conference are covered by the OKFB YF&R Committee. Applicants are not required to be Farm Bureau members.

Applications for the conference are available at county Farm Bureau offices or may be downloaded at okfarmbureau.org/applications. To be considered for the program, applications must be completed and postmarked to Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Attn: Zac Swartz, YF&R Coordinator, 2501 N. Stiles, Oklahoma City, OK 73105 or emailed to Zac Swartz by May 3, 2021. Only one student per school will be accepted.

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



Noble County member recognized nationally for ag lessons

Congratulations to Noble County Farm Bureau member Tammy Will for earning the National Agriculture in the Classroom 2021 National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award.

Tammy is an eighth- through 12th-grade science teacher at Morrison High School, where she incorporates agriculture into her lessons.

OKFB Women's Leadership Committee is proud to support the Ag in the Classroom program in Oklahoma.



OKFB WLC participates in media training session

The OKFB Women's Leadership Committee recently had the opportunity to learn how to better share their passion for agriculture with friends, consumers and the media during a media training session with

OKFB's communications staff.

The committee members learned about the different ways to share their story, how to prepare for a media interview, and even participated in a mock video interview.



Karen Dodson, District Three WLC member, asks a question during a media training opportunity for OKFB WLC members.



District Six OKFB WLC member Kelly Blair participates in a mock interview during a recent media training opportunity at the home office.

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Counties continue to participate in Community Food Assistance Matching Program

County Farm Bureau's across the state continue to participate in Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Community Food Assistance Matching Program, an

opportunity to help community-based organizations across the state.

OKFB has pledged to match any county donation to a local food bank,

food pantry or other food assistance program up to \$100.

To learn more about the program, visit okfb.news/CFAMP.



Garfield County Farm Bureau President Joe Peeper, Women's Leadership Committee Chair Mary Jo Peeper and agent Mark Martin presented a check to Our Daily Bread, a volunteer based soup kitchen serving those in need within the Enid community.



Craig County board member Jerry Goins and agent Brad Cook recently presented \$500 to Fern Green of Neighbors Helping Neighbors. The donation was made in memory of Marilyn Spence, a long-time Craig County Farm Bureau member.



Canadian County Farm Bureau President David VonTunglen and Agent Manager Larry Hays presented \$100 to Nikki Pruitt of The Lord's Harvest, an organization that provides food and care to those in need. As a part of CFAMP, Executive Director Thad Doye presented OKFB's \$100 match.