

PERSPECTIVE

May 7, 2021

Legislative update: Redistricting, ad valorem and ag sales tax exemption



With most major legislative deadlines now in the rearview mirror, much of the state Legislature's attention now turns to state budget negotiations and final amendments on remaining bills.

As sine die approaches at the end of May, redistricting remains a top agenda item for legislators. After months of work to create the maps, the new districts must now be passed through the state Legislature like a piece of legislation. The bills carrying the proposed legislative district maps were approved by the Senate and House redistricting committees and are now ready for consideration by the full chamber prior to being sent on to the opposite body to continue the approval process.

After a lot of concern about the continued population shift from rural to urban areas over the past 10 years, Oklahoma Farm Bureau was pleased to see rural communities retain significant representation in the newly drawn Senate and House districts. Learn about OKFB's perspective of the new districts on the next page. To view the new maps, visit oksenate.gov/redistricting and okhouse.gov/publications/redistricting.

In the final week of April, Gov. Kevin Stitt signed SB 838 by Sen. Darrell Weaver and Rep. Jadine Nollan, which allows municipalities to create public safety protection districts funded by a new property tax upon approval by voters in the district. After monitoring similar legislation for years, OKFB leaders and staff this year worked to protect farmers and ranchers from increases in ad valorem taxes by ensuring all land zoned for agriculture use, as well as livestock and implements of husbandry, are exempted. OKFB also negotiated the required threshold for approval

by voters from 50% to 60%. School bonds will also require a 60% approval rate, so the added 10% serves as a buffer for landowners that may own property within a municipality, but are not eligible to vote on the proposed assessment.

The same day, Gov. Stitt also signed SB 825 by Sen. Rob Standridge and Rep. Kevin West, which will prevent municipalities that levy a tax approved by a vote of the people for a designated purpose – such as funding public safety – from redirecting those funds without approval by voters. OKFB members have been concerned for many years that cities and towns would assess an additional tax for police and fire and then redirect those dollars to fund other governmental responsibilities. SB 825 will serve as a protection for taxpayer dollars and as an added check on municipal governments.

Legislation seeking to help producers secure an agriculture sales tax exemption permit – SB 422 by Sen. Frank Simpson and Rep. Dell Kerbs – now heads to conference for final negotiations before being considered for ultimate approval from the state Legislature. SB 422 came as a response to a change by the Oklahoma Tax Commission to require a Schedule F alone to prove eligibility for an agricultural sales tax exemption permit, which excluded producers who were eligible by state law. Farm Bureau worked throughout the legislative session with other agriculture groups to find a solution to the issue and will continue to ensure a pathway to a permit for all producers deemed eligible in state statute.

For questions or more information, please contact the OKFB Public Policy division at (405) 523-2300.

OKFB examines rural representation in newly proposed legislative districts

Oklahoma Farm Bureau’s preliminary analysis of the newly proposed legislative districts show they have been drawn to provide fair rural representation, even as the state faces a growing urban population.

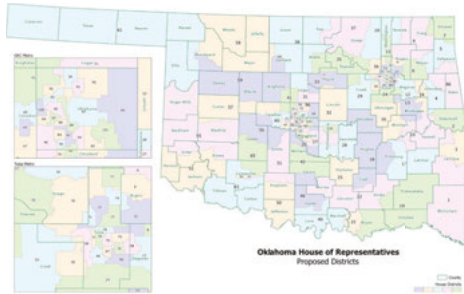
“Our rural communities are essential to the success of our state because of the goods and commodities they produce for the benefit of all Oklahomans,” said Rodd Moesel, OKFB president. “We will continue to be an active part of this process to ensure the voices and perspectives of rural Oklahomans are represented.”

Though many of Oklahoma’s rural communities will see shifts in their legislative districts, OKFB’s review of the proposed maps found that most rural districts will remain predominantly rural.

The new legislative district maps are the culmination of a months-long process undertaken by the Legislature, which involved the input of Oklahoma residents including Farm Bureau members.

“We applaud the state House and Senate redistricting committees for their hard work on the pivotal process of redrawing our state’s legislative district lines,” Moesel said. “The outcome of this process will play a vital role in shaping the future of Oklahoma for the next decade. We are grateful for the state Legislature’s efforts to create an open and transparent process that provided all Oklahomans an opportunity to be involved through public hearings and comments.”

The legislation containing the proposed House and Senate districts will begin working its way through the normal legislative process in each chamber. Now approved by their respective committees, the bills must be passed by the House and Senate and then be signed by the governor.



Members with questions or concerns about the proposed maps are encouraged to contact their legislators or the House and Senate redistricting committees directly. For larger maps, visit oksenate.gov/redistricting and okhouse.gov/publications/redistricting.

Join Congressional Conversation with Rep. Markwayne Mullin

Join Oklahoma Farm Bureau Wednesday, May 12 at 4 p.m., for our second congressional conversation with Rep. Markwayne Mullin from Oklahoma’s second congressional district.

Through a series of Zoom meetings with Oklahoma’s congressional delegation, members have the chance to tune in and learn more about the leading issues facing agriculture and rural Oklahoma in the nation’s capital.



Rep. Markwayne Mullin

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Beckham County Farm Bureau members share concerns with legislators

Rep. Todd Russ, left, addresses members of Beckham County Farm Bureau April 29 in Sayre along with Sen. Darcy Jech, right. Members had a chance to voice a variety of concerns including rural electricity options and foreign land ownership. Through gatherings like this, Farm Bureau members continue to build strong working relationships with state legislators for the betterment of Oklahoma’s farmers, ranchers and rural communities.



Farm Bureau members share concerns with Rep. Cole during online meeting

Some of the leading issues facing farmers and ranchers in the nation's capital including tax increases, climate policy, trade policy and the McGirt ruling were highlighted during Oklahoma Farm Bureau's recent online meeting with Rep. Tom Cole held Thursday, April 29.

Representing Oklahoma's Fourth Congressional District across parts of southwest Oklahoma, Rep. Cole shared his perspective on current and upcoming policy discussions that could impact many of the state's agricultural producers.

Tax increases on farmers and ranchers

Many Farm Bureau members are concerned by a number of proposals that could result in significant tax increases for farmers and ranchers. The proposed tax policy changes include the repeal of stepped-up basis and increases in the capital gains and income tax rates, which could threaten the livelihoods and long-term economic sustainability of Oklahoma family farms and ranches.

Cole said he does not support increasing taxes, especially to those transitioning their farms and ranches to younger generations. With the proposed tax increases, many Oklahomans inheriting the operations will not be able to pay the taxes.

"Anyone involved in business knows how challenging it is to transfer a business generationally," Cole said. "If you have a business, farm or ranch and

as long as your children want to do it, they should not be penalized. It is not as if we have not been paying taxes all along, we have."

The role of farmers and ranchers in climate discussions

As farmers and ranchers understand the need to care for the environment, they continually find ways to implement conservation practices on their operations because they rely on the soil, air and water to produce a high-quality crop.

"There are not better people who are stewards of the land and water than people in agriculture," Cole said. "Their livelihood depends on conservation and the appropriate development of resources."

While many conversations at the Capitol have been centered around climate programs, Cole said he believes the programs will be most successful if participation is incentivized rather than mandated.

"If we incentivize good behavior, we will receive it," he said. "If we try to regulate it or legislate it, you won't receive it."

The Biden administration's approach to trade

Because Oklahoma farmers and ranchers produce agricultural products for consumers across the nation and around the globe, Farm Bureau members always are concerned with the status of open trade to other markets.

Though unsure of the president's

strategy on trade, Cole said he understands the importance of open markets and will continue to share the voices of his constituents to ensure commodities can be exported around the world.

The impact of the McGirt ruling

Last year's U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the McGirt v. Oklahoma case has created confusion and uncertainty surrounding state and tribal jurisdiction in criminal, regulatory and taxation issues. OKFB supports working cooperatively with state, federal and tribal leaders to address the issues created by the ruling.

Cole said he thinks the state and the tribes of Oklahoma need to work together in an effort to create jurisdictional boundaries.

"I think the people in Oklahoma sometimes look to Congress, but really what we need is an agreement in Oklahoma," Cole said. "This is one where Congress is not likely to act if the tribes and state governments don't agree."

He added Oklahoma's delegation has been communicating with tribal leaders and law enforcement to resolve the continual questions created by the ruling.

The meeting with Cole was the first in a series of OKFB meetings with Oklahoma's congressional delegation. For more information on the congressional conversations, visit okfb.news/CongressConv21.

OKFB proud to support Oklahoma FFA State Convention



Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel addresses attendees of the Oklahoma FFA State Convention April 28 and applauds members for their continued efforts to lead and serve despite the challenges faced in the past year. OKFB is proud to continue supporting Oklahoma agricultural youth as a diamond level sponsor of the event. While on stage, Moesel presents a check to the Oklahoma FFA Foundation on behalf of OKFB.

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Payne County YF&R hosts cattle clinic for ag youth

Members of Payne County Young Farmers and Ranchers hosted Payne County Palooza on May 1, a cattle showmanship clinic for local ag youth.

Attendees of the event had the opportunity to learn about selecting the right animal, how to feed, what to wear in the ring, ways to prepare for an upcoming show, best-practices for clipping their animal and concluded the event with a showmanship class.

