

OEA

An affiliate of the
National Education Association

In this issue

**General
Election
Primer**

Pages 7-10

Also Inside...

**Page 3 – Union's James
Kerr Named State
Teacher of the Year**

**Page 4 – Teacher of the
Year Finalists are
OEA Members**

**Page 7 – ESP Locals Win
Bargaining Elections**

Periodical
Post Paid at
Okla. City, OK

The Education Focus
OEA's all-member publication

The Education Focus

For the membership of the Oklahoma Education Association

November 2002

A Call To Arms

Budget Crisis Requires Immediate Action

By Stacy Martin

Education is at a crossroads, gripped by a budget crisis that demands answers, now.

Education absorbed \$35 million in cuts last year and another \$119 million so far this year. This has set off a chain reaction of slashed school employee positions, frozen salaries, bigger classes, curtailed bus services and reduced extracurricular activities.

Some teachers are being asked to perform janitorial duties, while others have to ask parents to furnish necessary classroom supplies.

"This cannot go on – teachers cannot maintain high educational standards in the current environment," said Carolyn Crowder, president, Oklahoma Education Association.

Educators are understandably concerned about what to do and what to expect.

OEA has been closely monitoring and analyzing the problem from every angle. An action plan has been developed on behalf of members. It is already being executed, with the goal of bringing relief both immediately and in the future.

OEA marshaled all available resources to develop the action plan addressing this emergency. The theme is "Save Our Schools! S.O.S!"

It calls for mobilizing staff to provide support for members, a public relations effort illuminating the crisis' scope and, finally, an aggressive po-

litical action plan aimed at convincing state leadership to find funds. While OEA's work will be critical, member involvement will be just as vital to the effort's success.

"First, we are calling on Gov. Frank Keating to convene a special session of the Legislature," said Crowder. "The goal will be to find a way to increase revenues for education."

If for some reason that does not occur, OEA will continue escalating efforts to compel lawmakers to act. OEA will inform members through
See Crisis on Page 6

OEA-PAC Recommends Brad Henry

November's general election will be one of the most important elections for public education, say Oklahoma Education Association leaders. With the current financial climate hitting schools hard, education friendly candidates must be elected.

In light of the importance of the governor's race, OEA's Political Action Committee (OEA-PAC) has recommended to its members the election of Democrat Brad Henry.

"Brad comes from a family of educators," said OEA President Carolyn Crowder. "His wife is a teacher and his children attend public schools, which gives him a good understanding of the needs in our public schools."



Catoosa 6th grade teacher Sheryl LaCroix vacuums her room while students work after school. In response to the budget crisis, some districts are cutting support staff and asking teachers to pick up the slack.



Democrat Brad Henry, who has received the OEA-PAC's recommendation for governor, poses during Convention with OEA's newest NEA Director, Linda Hampton of Pleasant Grove (Seminole).

For a complete look at all the races and OEA-PAC recommendations, turn to page 7 for a look at the OEA General Election Primer.

Ground Hog Day

By Carolyn Crowder, OEA President



Remember the movie “Ground Hog Day”, starring Bill Murray? It’s about a weatherman who lives the same day over and over again. No matter what he does – he can set the place on fire, drive his car off a cliff – the next morning the alarm goes off and he finds himself stuck in Ground Hog Day.

Lately, I have felt “stuck” back in time. Remember the 80s? Schools were cutting budgets, positions and programs. Class sizes were climbing. Teachers were asked to do more with less – and we did.

In the movie, Bill Murray eventu-

ally changed his situation by realizing the repetitive days were not a curse, but an opportunity. An opportunity to get it right. And when he figured out how to live that day the very best he knew how – he finally woke up in a different world.

That’s what I want to do – wake up in a different world! I’ve done the 80s. We can’t go back there!

Changing our situation will mean getting involved like never before! This publication features two major involvement opportunities. First, all OEA members **must** take part in the November elections. Please use the

OEA primer (Pages 7-10) to help you vote for candidates who will have the courage to bring education out of this crisis! Second, there is a place for **everyone** in the OEA “Save Our Schools” action plan! We will be trying to force a legislative special session, pack school board meetings, hold an education summit, lobby, lobby, lobby and, when the time is right, close down schools to rally at the state capitol. We’ve done these things before but never all in one year.

Together we can turn this challenge into an opportunity. An opportunity to get it right this time – and wake up in a better world!

TRS Web Site Offers Online Calculations

Oklahoma education employees can now calculate their retirement benefits online and get quick answers to retirement planning.

The Teachers’ Retirement System of Oklahoma (TRS) recently updated its Web site, and it now features a retirement benefit calculator that instantly computes projected benefits based on user input or processes formal estimates that can be sent through an online request service. Before the site was launched, members

had to call TRS for all benefit projections, which sometimes took several days to fulfill.

Employers of Oklahoma’s public school educators will be able to instantly upload benefit contribution reports to TRS in a matter of seconds. The old system of reporting educator benefits involved reams of paper that were often mailed to the TRS office. Agency employees were needed to sift through the materials, and significant storage space was required to

house the thousands of pounds of paper files. With the online service, this information can be received, processed and archived electronically.

The service is available at www.trs.state.ok.us and is a result of a public-private partnership between the agency and YourOklahoma, the official state Web site that is managed by eGovernment firm NIC, Inc..

“The goal with this site was to create a place where we could be easily accessible, and better communicate

with members, employers, legislators and citizens,” said Tommy C. Beavers, TRS executive secretary.

For more information, contact Jacqueline Scott at TRS, 405/521-2387 or mail@trs.state.ok.us.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

(Required by 39 USC 3685)

The publication’s title is The Education Focus (Publication No. 1092-8650). The filing date of the statement is October 2002. It is published monthly, with the exception of three issues which are published bimonthly. Nine issues are published annually, in September-October, November, December-January, February, March, April, May, June-July and August. The annual subscription price is \$5.00. The complete mailing address of the known office of the publication and of the General Business Office of the Publisher is: Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. Doug Folks (phone number 405/528-7785) is the contact person. The publisher is the Oklahoma Education Association, P.O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154. Doug Folks is the Editor and Lela Odom is the Managing Editor. Owner of the publication is the Oklahoma Education Association, P.O. Box 18485,

Oklahoma City, OK 73154. There are no bondholders, mortgagees, or other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax have not changed during the preceding 12 months. The name of the publication is The Education Focus. The issue date for the circulation data which follows is August 2002. The data is classified as follows: a. the average number of copies of each issue during preceding 12 months, and b. the actual number copies of the single issue published nearest the filing date. Total number of copies: a. 25,980; b. 25,200. Paid or requested circulation through (1) outside-county mail subscriptions stated on Form 3541: a. 25,684; b. 24,731; (2) in-county subscriptions: a. none; and b. none; through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-

USPS paid distribution: a. none; b. none; (4) other classes mailed through the USPS: a. none; b. none. Free distribution by mail for (1) outside-county: a. none; b. none; (2) in-county: a. none; b. none; (3) other classes mailed through the USPS: a. none; b. none. Total free distribution outside the mail: a. 1,196; b. 369. Total distribution: a. 25,880, b. 25,100. Copies not distributed (office use, left-overs, spoiled): a. 100; b. 100. Total printed: a. 25,980, b. 25,200. Percentage of paid and or requested circulation is a. 95.4% and b 98.5%. The statement of ownership will be published in the November 2002, issue of the publication. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions. Doug Folks, Editor.

OEA

The Education Focus

Volume 20, No. 2
A production of OEA’s
Communications Center

Carolyn Crowder, President
Roy Bishop, Vice President
David DuVall, Executive Director
Lela Odom
Associate Executive Director

Doug Folks, Editor
Contributing Editors
Marty Bull
Stacy Martin
Jeff Savage
Bruce Treadaway
Patti Razien
Marty Hart, Graphic Artist
Maureen Peters, Center Assistant

The Education Focus (ISSN 10928650) is published nine times annually with issues in September/October, November, December/January, February, March, April, May, June/July and August for \$5 by the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. Periodicals postage paid at Okla. City, OK, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to
The Education Focus
PO Box 18485
Oklahoma City, OK 73154

Teacher of the Year James Kerr Begins Yearlong Wild Ride

By Marty Bull

Tulsa Union's James Kerr talks excitedly about the process that took him from his eighth grade classroom to being named Oklahoma's State Teacher of the Year.

"It's been like a roller coaster ride," said the 10-year teaching veteran. "The interview was the anticipation you feel as you're going up – then my name was called and whoosh – it's been a wild ride ever since."

The "wild ride" for the earth science teacher began Sept. 24 at a ceremony held in conjunction with the State Fair of Oklahoma. Kerr and 11 other finalists were interviewed a week earlier by a panel of journalists and community and business leaders.

"Meeting the other finalists will always be a high point of my career," said the Ohio native. "The fact that they were all such outstanding teachers makes my selection even more thrilling."

As Oklahoma's Education Ambassador, Kerr will spend the next year traveling across Oklahoma talking with school employees, students and community and business leaders. He also will represent Oklahoma for National Teacher of the Year.

"I want to share my passion for teaching with everyone I come in contact with – especially when it comes to adolescents," said Kerr. "These students need a support mechanism that will help them see the importance of making a positive contribution to society."

After attending undergraduate school on a music scholarship in Ohio, Kerr came to Oklahoma to enter Oral Roberts University's pre med program. Forgoing medical school, he

remained at ORU, first as a school recruiter then as a swimming coach. In 1993, he became a full-time classroom teacher at Union's Eighth Grade Center. He knew he'd found a home.

"I've been preparing as a teacher since I was president of my high school Future Teachers of America chapter," said Kerr. "I may not have taken the straightest path to get here, but I know that teaching is where I want to be."

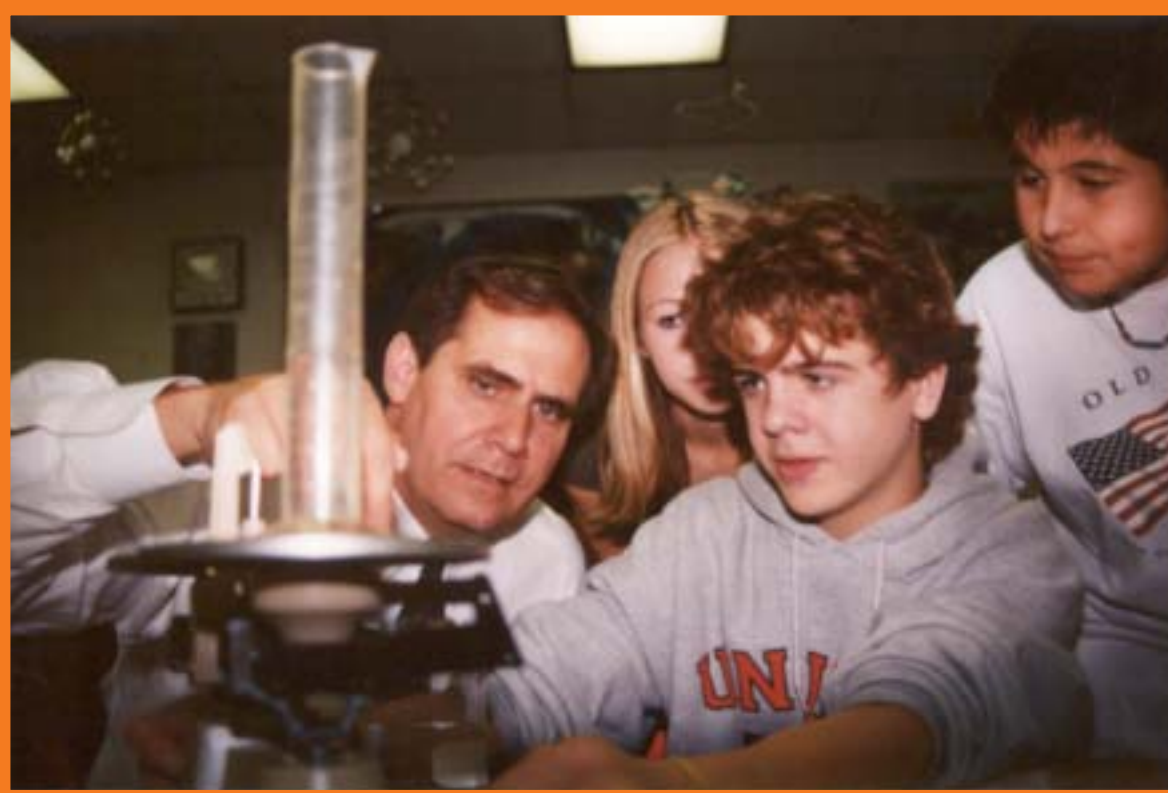
Student Stephanie Lay said she knew that Kerr would be named Oklahoma's top teacher. "He knows how we feel," said Lay. "He's always willing to help you if you need it. He's a great teacher."

Amy Collingwood has discovered a new interest in science since entering Kerr's Honors Earth Science class. "I never really liked science, but he is so enthusiastic about it, he makes me want to know more. I've wanted to be a teacher since the fourth grade and now I know I want to be the kind of teacher he is."

Kerr signed up for OEA membership his first year at Union.

"My mother, Delta Kerr, was a teacher and an NEA member in Ohio," he said. "She told me I should join the union and I'm glad I did."

Kerr credits OEA for the improvements made over the past few years. "Our profession needs a unified voice and the union gives us that voice."



Tulsa Union's James Kerr says he has been preparing to become a teacher since high school, and now he's recognized as Oklahoma's top educator. (Top) OEA Vice President Roy Bishop makes a presentation to Kerr at Teacher of the Year ceremonies at the State Fair of Oklahoma. (Middle) Kerr helps students with an experiment and (bottom) lectures during class at Union's Eighth Grade Center.

OEA Members & State Teacher Of The Year Finalists



Chris LeGrande

Teaching Assignment: Guthrie Junior High, 8th grade integrated science, plus coaching assignments for 8th grade football and basketball and 9th grade baseball.

Years Teaching: 12, all in the same classroom

Favorite Lesson Plan: Inflatable planetarium. Working in the cafeteria or the gym, the class tapes together large strips of thick black plastic purchased at a hardware store. A box fan is fitted to a hole in the plastic “room” and inflates it. Stickers are used to create constellations around

the room, which is large enough for 30 kids to walk around in.

Teaching Hero: “My 7th grade science teacher, Mrs. Peggy Momsen. She went out of her way to make every student successful. She always gave three different tests to meet each individual student’s needs.”

Favorite Classroom Quote: “Good enough never is.”

What Inspires Your Students: “A genuine concern for the student. When a teacher cares about a student ... a teacher can reach a student.”



Teresa Billy

Teaching Assignment: 1st grade at Dierks Elementary in Broken Bow.

Years Teaching: 26

Favorite Lesson Plan: “What I love to do is to combine art with literature. David McPhail is my favorite author. I use his books many times to combine sight reading with language arts. I use manipulatives, such as cereal and candy, when we deal with subtraction and addition. That way, when the students are finished, they can eat their work.”

Teaching Hero: “My mentor when I started teaching kindergarten was Sally Webb. She taught me a great deal. Broken Bow had one of the first kindergarten programs with the center approach and early learning techniques. I have always been proud when we go to other schools and say, ‘We’re already doing that.’ Mrs. Webb was a big proponent of the center approach and early learning techniques, and I owe her a great deal.”

Favorite Classroom Quote: “Otto von Bismarck said, ‘You can do anything with children if you only play with them.’ When you’re playful, it lets children know you like them.”

What Inspires Your Students: “When they never know exactly what’s going to happen tomorrow. Sometimes I say, ‘We’re going to chew gum for an hour.’ Little things like that give them a lift. When they are successful, they get ice cream floats. There should be rewards from time to time just for being in my room.”



Earl Dalke

Teaching Assignment: AP Psychology, AP Human Geography, and World History and Geography at Davis High School. Also teaches American Government night classes at Murray State College.

Years Teaching: 10

Favorite Lesson Plan: Cartouche Maps. Students draw maps of a region and then add drawings that represent political features of the region. For instance, in a unit about native animals, a map of America could include drawings of a buffalo in Oklahoma, an elk in Colorado and an alligator in Florida.

Teaching Hero: “Tom Colley, a world history teacher in Yukon. He is probably the most charismatic teacher I have ever met. He’s been teaching for probably 25 years and he still works hard.”

Favorite Classroom Quote: “‘Be just and fear not,’ from Shakespeare. It means to stand up for what you believe in.”

What Inspires Your Students: “Success. Once you have tasted success, you’re inspired to continue. That’s why it’s important to give students lots of opportunities to be successful.”

Diane Reese

Teaching Assignment: Kindergarten in the morning, 5th and 6th grade science in the afternoon at Bokoshe Elementary.

Years Teaching: 24 (14 years in primary school and 10 years in high school, all at Bokoshe.)

Favorite Lesson Plan: “Any hands-on activity. It gets students enthused. I love laughter and when light bulbs are going off in my classroom.”

Teaching Hero: “I began my edu-

cation in a one-room school called Conley. I was there for seven years

and Ms. Binzat was my teacher. Others come to mind, but she stands out.”

Favorite Classroom Quote: “Never, never give up,” Winston Churchill.

What Inspires Your Students: “My attitude. If I like what I’m doing, it comes across to my students. At some time during the year, some of my students say that they’d like to be science teachers. That makes me feel good because I think it’s a direct result of my enjoying my work.”



Susan McLemore

Teaching Assignment: Physical Education at Ralph Downs Elementary in Putnam City.

Years Teaching: 17

Favorite Lesson Plan: Field Day. At the end of each year, each Ralph Downs class develops a team identity along a theme. The Olympics served as a theme in 2001 and each took a country, made a flag and marched into the competition in a Parade of Nations. Each year is a different theme, with classes competing in a variety of physical contests.

Teaching Hero: “My mother, Betty Lou Patterson, was my first teacher (as a parent). She knew what I needed (to be a good teacher).”

Favorite Classroom Quote: “If you can’t make a mistake, you can’t make anything.”



What Inspires Your Students: “The activity, mostly. The movement. When they have success, they want to learn more, do more, progress more. Also, as a PE teacher, I can make some different connections than what classroom teachers can make.”

Lynette Balch

Teaching Assignment: 1st Grade at Woodward's Horace Mann Elementary

Years Teaching: 23

Favorite Lesson Plan: Spiders. Since Woodward no longer celebrates Halloween in the schools, Balch still uses "creepy" stuff to engage her students. She turned her own fear of spiders into a learning unit where the students study various spiders such as fiddle backs, black widows and tarantulas. They make spiders in art, study nocturnal animals such as bats, write stories about spiders, incorporate great literature selections, make "spiders" to eat, and act out plays. They even have "Spider Pals" where they bring their own spiders to school in glass jars. Poisonous spiders are not allowed, but invariably a student brings one by mistake.

Teaching Hero: Her father, retired Judge Jack Bradrick. As a science and math teacher in Kansas, Mr. Bradrick also found time to coach all



sports at the small school in Burr Oak. "The kids always loved him. They always came back years later to talk to him. He's fun, he's great, and he just never seems to age."

Favorite Classroom Quote: "What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for others?" by George Elliot.

What Inspires Your Students: "My enthusiasm and attitude for whatever I'm teaching."

Julie Wallis

Teaching Assignment: 11th Grade AP Language/Composition and Yearbook at Bixby High School.

Years Teaching: 26

Favorite Lesson Plan: *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom. "The life lessons involved in this book set the mood for the whole year."

Teaching Hero: "My teaching hero is my Uncle Pete (Tolbert). He gave me my first teaching job as a substitute, and before the week was over I knew I wanted to be a teacher."

Favorite Classroom Quote: "'Build thee more stately mansions, oh my soul,' by Longfellow. Every thing that happens in our life – good or bad – teaches us something. I want my students to be aware that



we learn something every day and to use it to build a better understanding of the world around them."

What Inspires Your Students: "When students feel loved, they do everything they can to succeed. I treat all my students equally. They know they are loved."

Toni Pantier

Teaching Assignment: Gifted and Talented 5th and 6th Graders at Mid-Del Schools' Academic Center for Enrichment.

Years Teaching: 20

Favorite Lesson Plan: "There are so many, but one is roller coaster physics. It fascinates the students."

Teaching Hero: Dr. Diane Montgomery, Oklahoma State University education professor. "She models what she teaches and really challenges everyone to think. I really admire her."

Favorite Classroom Quote: "From a student, 'Oh, this is math class? I thought it was science class.' When students are so en-



grossed in something that they don't even realize what the subject is, something is working."

What Inspires Your Students: "Hands-on learning experiences."

Kathleen Blake

Teaching Assignment: Edmond Memorial High School, AP Studio Art I and II, Art II, Painting and 3D Construction.

Years Teaching: 28

Favorite Lesson Plan: Perfectly Straight, Charcoal Lines. Students are asked to draw, freehand, a perfectly straight line with one stroke, using charcoal on a piece of white paper. The teacher may reject the line, and the student is allowed to erase and start over. This, of course, smudges the line. Next, students add a horizontal line to their drawings, with the same possibility of having it rejected. Through the week, students critique the work and add to it. Students learn that mistakes can be good; their work is not sacred; and they have to step back and be objective of their own work.

Teaching Hero: "Annette Pate. She taught me more about educating



students than anyone."

Favorite Classroom Quote: "Art is experimentation involving the invention of a language at the same time you are using it."

What Inspires Your Students: Senior art student Keegan O'Keefe says he is inspired by, "The fact that Ms. Blake asks you to draw from your own life and not some textbook."



Ginger Mendenhall

Teaching Assignment: Self-contained 5th Grade at Marshall Elementary, Tulsa Public Schools.

Years Teaching: 9

Favorite Lesson Plan: The American Revolution. "I've done a lot of research on the American Revolution and share things that you don't get in the average textbook. It really brings it home to them."

Teaching Hero: "My daughter and her friends always congregated at our house. In fact, our house became the homework place. I held class at the dining room table for years. After several other occupations I went back to school and became certified so I could teach full time."

Favorite Classroom Quote: "'See three before me.' I ask my students to consult at least three other students with help on assignments be-

fore they come to me. This way they become their own problem solvers and become more independent, which helps prepare them for middle school."

What Inspires Your Students: "The teacher can make or break a classroom. I greet my students every morning with a smile, a handshake, a high five or a hug. An enthusiastic teacher sets the atmosphere and is as important as any curriculum."

our Web site (www.okea.org) and through this publication. Additionally, OEA staff members are on call to assist members with questions or unique problems.

In the meantime, members can increase our success by providing support in the field, including the following:

Protect the Present

- On Nov. 5, vote for friends of education. These leaders will determine our future.
- Get a copy of your contract so you know the facts regarding its provisions.
- Understand school district obligations. School districts must pay contract employees all of their pay, their \$3,000 raise and their health insurance flexible benefit allowances.
- Work with school districts to find budget cut alternatives other than those directly impacting education, teachers and support employees.

Plan for the Future

- Build coalitions at the local level. There is strength in numbers.
- Develop and publicize local impact statements detailing budget reduction hardships. Share those stories with your school board, the public and the media.
- Use the Save Our Schools (S.O.S.) theme to bolster recognition and support. A copy of the logo is available by contacting OEA's Stacy Martin at smartin@okea.org or at 800/522-8091.
- Support the call for a Legislative special session. Get involved in the campaign to gain signatures supporting it.
- Pack November school board meetings and speak out. Seek a board resolution asking for a solution from the state.
- Prepare to rally and lobby at the Capitol. Details will be available at a later date.

All the Time

- Include the budget crisis in all agendas of education meetings.
 - Work to attract new OEA members. This is a time when all educators need the protection and advocacy that only OEA can provide. It's essential that we strengthen our voice. The louder we are, the greater our chances of being heard!
- If we work hard and pull together, we will get through this. And remember, that OEA is standing up for you – and beside you – during this difficult time.



Sherry Ashbaugh is a 7th grade science teacher at Catoosa Wells Middle School with 25 years experience. She's now being asked to help keep her room clean as her school district fights the budget shortfall by reducing the janitorial staff.

From Your Counsel

What Happens If My School Runs Out of Money?

With the ubiquitous talk of state aid cuts, questions arise as to what will happen to teachers' pay if a district runs out of money. There are several possibilities in the event of a budget shortfall.

One possibility, if a district does not have sufficient funds in its bank account to cover the cost of a check, is a district issuing a nonpayable warrant. A nonpayable warrant has the same value to an employee as a regular school check. Although the warrant says nonpayable, it can still be submitted to a bank for deposit.

The district makes arrangements with a bank to issue nonpayable



*Brandon Webb
OEA Attorney*

warrants. The bank agrees to issue funds to an employee to cover the amount of the warrant. In return, the district promises to pay the bank back

in the future the cost of the warrant plus interest.

Another more complex scenario involves filing a lawsuit against a district. If a district is out of funds yet owes money for services already performed, the employee can take legal action against a district, which is sometimes referred to as a "friendly lawsuit."

In this instance, a lawsuit must first be filed on behalf of the employee. Next, a court must rule that the district owes the employee money. Finally, once a court issues a judgment in favor of an employee, state law mandates that the only way

a district can pay the judgment is through the district's sinking fund.

While an employee can be paid quickly through a nonpayable warrant, receiving money through a court order sinking fund judgment is a lengthier process due to the legal action involved. Moreover, state law allows a district to pay off a sinking fund judgment over a three-year period. However, sinking fund judgments can be assigned to financial institutions. When a judgment is assigned, the financial institution can pay the employee the full amount owed at one time.



General Election Primer

Pull out this section and take it with you to the polls.

VOTE

Tuesday,
November 5

Lt. Governor

***Laura Boyd** Democrat

I will promote public education by using my office as a bully pulpit to praise educators and students. I will lead the charge for increased appropriations for education that will be used to increase salaries and pay health insurance premiums. I also believe that Oklahoma needs to help fund before and after school programs and other programs designed to raise student achievement. I will propose loan forgiveness programs for educators who will work in hardship areas of our state. I will also be a watchdog of taxpayer dollars to insure that precious tax dollars are not wasted.



Laura Boyd's voting record and service on the Oklahoma Education Coalition prompted the OEA-PAC to recommend her for Lt. Governor.

Mary Fallin (I), Republican

Oklahoma's future depends on how well we educate our youth.

Tomorrow's leaders are sitting in classrooms today. They deserve a first class public education system. This begins with safe schools, rigorous curriculums, and



character education programs. Teachers and parents are the authoritative source on the educational needs of children, not the government. We also have to make teaching more attractive in Oklahoma. Merit pay, enhanced pay for teachers with advanced degrees in their subject areas and other incentives should be on the table.

Billy Maguire, Independent

I would ask the Governor to form a committee of 15-20 members from all organizations that represent education. This committee would identify the problems we currently face and make recommendations for the legislature. I am very interested in pre-school training and early reading programs. The current dropout rates also are very disturbing to me.

Elmer E.Z. Million, Independent

Oklahoma Education Association/7

Gubernatorial Candidates



***Brad Henry**

Democrat

"My grandmother and my mother were teachers. I will treat education and educators with respect. Education will be the number one funding priority in a Henry administration. An Education Lottery is needed to provide the funding for our schools. If passed, I will ensure that all lottery proceeds go to education with no reduction in education's current appropriation level."

The OEA-PAC cites Sen. Henry's strong voting record for education in making its recommendation.



Steve Largent

Republican

"As governor I will promote education by supporting and elevating education professionals in our state. I will not micromanage from Oklahoma City. I believe the "School Law Book" stands in the way of getting to educational excellence. It's time to allow local school boards and administrators the flexibility to run their schools. Teachers' salaries must also be improved to be competitive."



Gary Richardson

Independent

"I will extol the virtues of education, not run it down. Education has many challenges and I believe my plan will meet these challenges. My plan includes a Lottery to help increase funding for our schools and to provide needed scholarships for our colleges and universities. I believe that teachers should be subject to performance reviews and rewarded on their performance. We cannot pay good teachers enough and we shouldn't be paying bad teachers at all."

State Superintendent of Instruction Candidates

* **Sandy Garrett** (I),

Democrat

I pledge to continue to work closely with Oklahoma teachers building on the progress of the past decade. Together, we have made some wonderful progress: class sizes are smaller, dropout rates have declined, ACT scores that lead our region, and more health insurance coverage for school employees. There is still much work to be done. My number one goal will be to provide teachers with a competitive salary. Oklahoma must get its priorities in order.



Sandy, a longtime OEA member, impressed the OEA-PAC with her longstanding record and commitment to improve public education in Oklahoma

Lloyd Roettger,

Republican

My top priority is people, not power or politics! We must provide better funding for teachers and students not bureaucrats and boondoggles. Better funding for teachers can be achieved through greater accountability for education programs. As your next state superintendent, I pledge to find ways to bring salaries and benefits to a level above the regional average within the first 30 months of my term. My aim will be to improve student learning.



* *Denotes OEA-PAC recommendation.*

EVERY VOTE COUNTS

What difference will *one* vote make?

- ✓ One vote per precinct would have elected Richard Nixon rather than John Kennedy president (1960).
- ✓ One vote made Adolph Hitler head of the Nazi Party (1923).
- ✓ One vote made Texas part of the United States (1845).
- ✓ One vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment (1868).
- ✓ One vote changed France from a monarchy to a republic (1875).

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES

District 1

- ** Doug Dodd, Democrat

Serving on the Tulsa School Board for over eleven years, I experienced first hand the issues that face our schools. In Congress I'll extol the virtues of our public schools from early childhood programs through Career Tech. I'll work to keep our public schools safe, open and technologically advanced at all levels. I'll work with other members of Congress to oppose voucher programs and work to provide our schools with every tool they need to succeed.



- John Sullivan (I), Republican

"Since being first being elected to the state legislature in 1995, I have been an ardent supporter of public education. It is a simple fact that every child deserves a quality education. We must strive for constant improvements in our education policies, our schools and our students. I have voted consistently to increase funding for education programs.



I am proud to represent the First District of Oklahoma, where I know teachers place a premium on children. I look forward to working with the Oklahoma Education Association as we build a better future for Oklahoma's children."

- Joe Cristiano, Independent

Corporation Commissioner



Keith Butler, Democrat



*Jeff Cloud, Republican

Roger Bloxham, Independent

State Auditor and Inspector



*Jeff McMahan, Democrat



Gary Jones, Republican

District 2

- ** Brad Carson (I), Democrat

I am deeply aware that our future depends on improving America's schools. Education is the answer to almost every long-term problem facing Oklahoma and the nation. My top three educational priorities in Congress are to continue to improve the educational opportunities offered by rural schools, increase Impact Aid to local school districts and fight for a school construction bill. In Congress over the last two years I am proud of the votes I have taken to move our schools forward.



- Kent Pharaoh, Republican

As the former President of the Henryetta Board of Education, my commitment to education is strong and unwavering. As a candidate for federal office, I will strongly support legislation that will require the U.S. Department of Education to spend at least 95 percent of every dollar in the classroom. Congress must also fully fund (IDEA) initiatives. Why is the federal government involving itself in curriculum and other matters that should be locally controlled? We must do better.



District 3

- Frank Lucas (I), Republican

Education is first, last and always about our children's future. Every child, regardless of family income, should have access to a quality education. We need to increase the role of parents and decrease the role of Washington. We must increase our investment in education and get the dollars to the classrooms and out of the bureaucracy. We need to give our schools and teachers greater flexibility to implement local reforms to meet the needs of each child. We must also increase our investment in special education. Teachers are integral to our future and deserve our respect and support.



- Robert Murphy, Independent

* Denotes Recommendation by OEA-PAC
 ** Recommended by The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education
 (I) Incumbent

District 4

- ** Darryl Roberts, Democrat

As a United States Congressman, I will work to enhance Oklahoma's and the nation's schools. I will work to make sure that all federal mandates are fully funded. I have always recognized the importance of the classroom and those who work in our schools. That is why as a State Senator, I fought for passage of HB 1017 and authored the legislation that created the Flexible Benefit Allowance. During the time I chaired the Senate Education Appropriations Subcommittee, common education received its greatest share of the state budget. I will oppose any scheme such as vouchers that attempts to take money away from the public schools.



- Tom Cole, Republican

As a former educator, I understand the needs and importance of our public education system. I believe that our local school districts, with teachers, parents and administrators working together are best suited to decide how education dollars should be spent. I believe that the federal government should provide block grants to state government to administer. I will fight to make certain that every federal mandate is met with appropriate federal funding. I will work hard to do what I can to make our public schools vibrant and effective.



District 5

- ** Lou Barlow, Democrat

I plan to improve education in three ways. First, I will support legislation to provide additional funding and more effectively target current funding into the classroom. Next, I will be an outspoken advocate for public education. Finally, I will oppose all efforts to reduce education funding or divert it to other government agencies or institutions. Education must be a funding priority for our Congressman.



- Ernest Istook (I), Republican

- Donna Davis, Independent

Commissioner of Labor



Lloyd Fields, Democrat



Brenda Reneau Wynn (I), Republican

Insurance Commissioner



Carroll Fisher (I), Democrat



Doug Barry, Republican

State Attorney General

- *Drew Edmondson (I), Democrat

I received my teaching degree from Northeastern State (Tahlequah) and taught speech and debate at Muskogee High School.

I continue to work for schools. I was instrumental in establishing the Oklahoma Education Technology Trust out of a settlement with Southwestern Bell.



On the State Equalization Board, I make certain that property is fairly and appropriately assessed.

There is no more important task available to a society than the education of its children. I pledge the continued efforts of this office toward that end.

- Denise Bode, Republican

I understand the important effect that Attorney General opinions have on education law. As Attorney General, I will issue opinions regarding education law expeditiously, so that matters affecting our education system are resolved as quickly as possible.

Another important job of the Attorney General is protecting the most vulnerable in our society. I want our children to feel safe at school. I want parents to feel good about sending their children to school. I will prosecute any threat to school safety sensibly, and to the full extent of the law.



OEA-PAC Statement

The Oklahoma Education Association-Political Action Committee (OEA-PAC) has selected candidates to recommend to OEA members. Incumbent political candidates earn the OEA-PAC recommendation automatically if they have a proven record of support for educators and/or public education. Examples might be voting for legislation to increase school funding or the recent education health insurance bill.

New candidates are selected for recommendation through an interview process that determines the candidate's support for educators and public education. Educators and education support professionals comprise these interview teams. Interview questions deal only with education is-

ssues. Interview teams then make their recommendations to the OEA-PAC Council, which is also made up of members like you.

This election Primer was put together to help our members make informed voting decisions. As a result, information is provided for all candidates in key races. Candidates recommended by the OEA-PAC and /or the NEA Fund For Children and Public Education are highlighted with red asterisks.

No members' dues or other OEA funds are used to make direct contributions to political candidates. Only voluntary contributions collected through OEA-PAC are used to monetarily support political candidates.

Nine Referendums to Appear on November Ballot

SQ 687 would ban any staged fights between birds, making the practice a felony and making spectators of cockfights subject to a misdemeanor penalty.
The OEA Board of Directors took no position on this question.

SQ 693 would allow local governments to issue bonds, with voter approval, for economic or community development and authorize the assessment of a special sales tax, not to exceed one cent per dollar, for repayment of the bonds.
The OEA Board of Directors took no position on this question.

SQ 696 would exempt from property taxes up to 100 square feet of property used as a storm shelter against tornadoes.
The OEA Board of Directors took no position on this question.

SQ 697 would authorize counties, upon voter approval, to use a portion of previously exempt business property taxes for the purpose of economic development.
OEA Opposes – This proposition would lower local revenues to schools.

SQ 698 would increase the minimum number of voters required to propose a change in laws regarding hunting, fishing, trapping or occupations dealing with animals.
The OEA Board of Directors took no position on this question.

SQ 701 would limit annual expenditures from the state's Tobacco Settlement Fund to a percentage of the fund's earnings.
OEA supports this question. It would allow larger expenditures from the fund for programs including those in public schools. This would free up local funds that are presently being used for those programs.

SQ 702 would permit the abatement of property taxes under specified conditions of hardship.
The OEA Board of Directors took no position on this question.

SQ 703 would allow the Legislature to pass laws permitting state entities to limit contractual liability on information technology goods or services to at least the equivalent of the contract amount.
The OEA Board of Directors took no position on this question.

SQ 704 would authorize school districts to use monies in their building fund for county assessor inspections for ad valorem revaluation purposes.
OEA supports this question. It would free up general fund monies for programs and salaries.

U.S. SENATE CANDIDATES



**** David Walters, Democrat**

As Governor, I was a champion for public education, and as Senator I will take the fight for Oklahoma public schools to Washington. Each day that children are provided the opportunity to learn and better themselves strengthens our country. I believe that our school buildings are in need of repair and I will support Federal efforts to enable local districts to have the money needed to provide modern, safe school buildings. Today, our schools are being required to spend much needed state and local revenue to fund special education mandates from Washington. This must stop.

I am the only candidate who is willing to take on the big drug companies to help hold down the cost of prescription drugs. If these are issues that you believe will help improve our schools and state, I ask that you stand with me.



Jim Inhofe (I), Republican

Thank you for the work you do as an educator in Oklahoma. Quality education for every student is critical to America's future, and cannot be achieved without quality teachers. Oklahoma loses too many good teachers to surrounding states that invest more in their educators than Oklahoma. We must improve. I have supported reforms such as the No Child Left Behind Act 2001. This act offers greater local control and fewer mandates from Washington, along with more accountability for schools. I also believe that Impact Aid should be improved and teachers should be protected from lawsuits as a result of exercising discipline in their classrooms.

James Germalic, Independent

Statewide Judicial Retention Ballot

The following is a complete list of statewide judicial candidates to appear on the November ballot for retention in their respective offices. If the Judge or Justice receives a majority of "Yes" votes, then the individual will retain his or her position for another six-year term. If the Judge or Justice receives a majority of "No" votes, then the individual will not be retained, and the Governor will appoint a new judge to fill the vacancy.

OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT

District 1	Justice Robert E. Lavender	District 6	Justice Daniel J. Boudreau
District 5	Justice James R. Winchester	District 9	Justice Joseph M. Watt

With few exceptions, the Oklahoma Supreme Court is not favorable towards teacher rights and other education issues. Justice Lavender, with rare exception, consistently votes against teacher rights issues and has historically not supported other education issues that have come before the Court. Justice Watt, Justice Winchester, and Justice Boudreau are relatively new to the Court and there have not been a significant number of teacher rights issues before these Justices since they were appointed to their respective positions on the Court. Justice Boudreau was previously a Judge on the Court of Civil Appeals where he was favorable to teacher rights and other education issues.

OKLAHOMA COURT OF CIVIL APPEALS

Division 2	Judge Tom Colbert	Division 2	Judge W. Keith Rapp
Division 2	Judge Jerry L. Goodman	Division 4	Judge John F. Reif

As a general rule, the Court of Civil Appeals has been more favorable with regard to teacher rights and other education issues than the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The judges slated for retention on the November statewide ballot generally receive good reviews with regard to teacher rights issues.

OKLAHOMA COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

District 2	Judge Charles A. Johnson
District 3	Judge Gary L. Lumpkin

Defense attorneys who practice before the Court of Criminal Appeals generally provide reasonable reviews of Judge Johnson. Judge Lumpkin is generally referenced as a more conservative jurist, favoring prosecutorial rights over defense rights.

STATE HOUSE

Dist. 1
Democrat
*Jerry Ellis
Republican
Wenda Blankenship
Independent
Bill Kysar

Dist. 5
Democrat
*Joe J. Hutchison (I)
Republican
Stan Driver

Dist. 6
Democrat
*Joe Eddins (I)
Republican
Chris Moore

Dist. 9
Democrat
Roger Goins
Republican
Tad M. Jones (I)

Dist. 10
Democrat
*Gary S. Taylor (I)
Republican
Jim Woody

Dist. 13
Democrat
Kendall D. Fulbright
Republican
Stuart Ericson (I)

Dist. 18
Democrat
*Terry Harrison
Republican
Angela Hendrix

Dist. 19
Democrat
*Randall Lee Erwin (I)
Republican
Patrick K. Miller

Dist. 20
Democrat
*Paul Roan (I)
Republican
Tom Stephens

Dist. 21
Democrat
*John Carey
Republican
Todd Sisk

Dist. 24
Democrat
*Dale Turner (I)
Republican
Billie Fox

Dist. 27
Democrat
*Dale Smith (I)
Republican
Shane Jett
Independent
Pete Pendley

Dist. 28
Democrat
David Daniel Boren
Republican
*Mike Ervin (I)

Dist. 30
Democrat
*Mike Tyler (I)
Republican
Lou Martin

Dist. 32
Democrat
Danny Morgan
Republican
Kent Friskup (I)

Dist. 33
Democrat
*Dale W. Wells (I)
Republican
Ron Markum

Dist. 36
Democrat
*Joe Sweeden (I)
Republican
Brinton Skalnik

Dist. 37
Democrat
Chris Hand
Republican
*Jim Newport (I)

Dist. 39
Republican
Wayne Pettigrew (I)
Independent
Richard P. Prawdzienski

Dist. 42
Democrat
*Bill Mitchell (I)
Republican
Greg Dixon

Dist. 44
Democrat
*Bill Nations (I)
Republican
Chris Kannady

Dist. 45
Democrat
*Wallace Collins
Republican
Thad Balkman (I)

Dist. 47
Democrat
Ryland Rivas
Republican
Susan Winchester (I)

Dist. 48
Democrat
Correna F. Wilson
Republican
Greg Piatt (I)

Dist. 52
Democrat
*David B. Braddock (I)
Republican
Mike Schulz

Dist. 53
Democrat
*Michael Ridgeway
Republican
Carolyn Coleman (I)
Independent
Robert Bruce

Dist. 56
Democrat
Ron Langmacher (I)
Republican
Phil Richardson

Dist. 57
Democrat
*James E. Covey (I)
Republican
Rick Koch

Dist. 61
Democrat
*Rick Kibbe
Republican
Gus Blackwell

Dist. 62
Democrat
*Abe Duetschendorf (I)
Republican
Suzanne Hogan

Dist. 63
Democrat
David Butler
Republican
Don Armes

Dist. 64
Democrat
*Ron Kirby (I)
Republican
Nathan Johnson

Dist. 65
Democrat
Joe Dorman
Republican
Ray Merchant

Dist. 66
Democrat
*Lucky Lamons
Republican
Neil Mavis

Dist. 68
Democrat
O. M. Bud Sanders Jr.
Republican
Chris Benge (I)

Dist. 69
Democrat
John Acken
Republican
Fred Perry (I)

Dist. 71
Democrat
Roy McClain
Republican
*Chad Stites (I)

Dist. 73
Democrat
*Judy Eason McIntyre
Republican
Brigitte Harper

Dist. 75
Republican
*Dennis Adkins (I)
Independent
Dustin Toler

Dist. 77
Democrat
*Keith Cale
Republican
Mark Liotta (I)

Dist. 78
Democrat
*Mary Easley (I)
Republican
Don Newberry

Dist. 80
Democrat
Norman T. Pruitt Jr.
Republican
*Ron Peterson (I)

Dist. 81
Democrat
Warren Adam Nolan
Republican
Ray Vaughn (I)

Dist. 84
Democrat
Ronald E. Wasson
Republican
Bill Graves (I)

STATE SENATE

Dist. 2
Democrat
*Stratton Taylor (I)
Republican
Carol Hall

Dist. 4
Democrat
*Kenneth Corn
Republican
Thomas E. Lannigan

Dist. 6
Democrat
*Jay Paul Gumm
Republican
Stuart Rustin

Dist. 10
Democrat
*J. Berry Harrison (I)
Republican
Ron Z. Dobbs

Dist. 14
Democrat
*Johnnie C. Crutchfield (I)
Republican
Amy Stewart-Smith

Dist. 18
Democrat
*Kevin A. Easley (I)
Republican
Neil Jensen

Dist. 20
Democrat
Tom Leonard
Republican
David Myers
Independent
Den Coates

Dist. 85
Democrat
*Bob Lemon
Republican
Odilia Dank (I)

Dist. 87
Democrat
*Alex Greenwood
Republican
Robert D. Worthen (I)

Dist. 92
Democrat
*Bill Paulk (I)
Republican
Trey Palmer

Dist. 93
Democrat
*Al Lindley (I)
Republican
Rafael Hedrick

Dist. 24
Democrat
*Daisy Lawler
Republican
Carol Martin (I)

Dist. 28
Democrat
*Jim Walker
Republican
Harry Coates

Dist. 34
Democrat
*Mary Jane Tinkler
Republican
Randy Brogdon

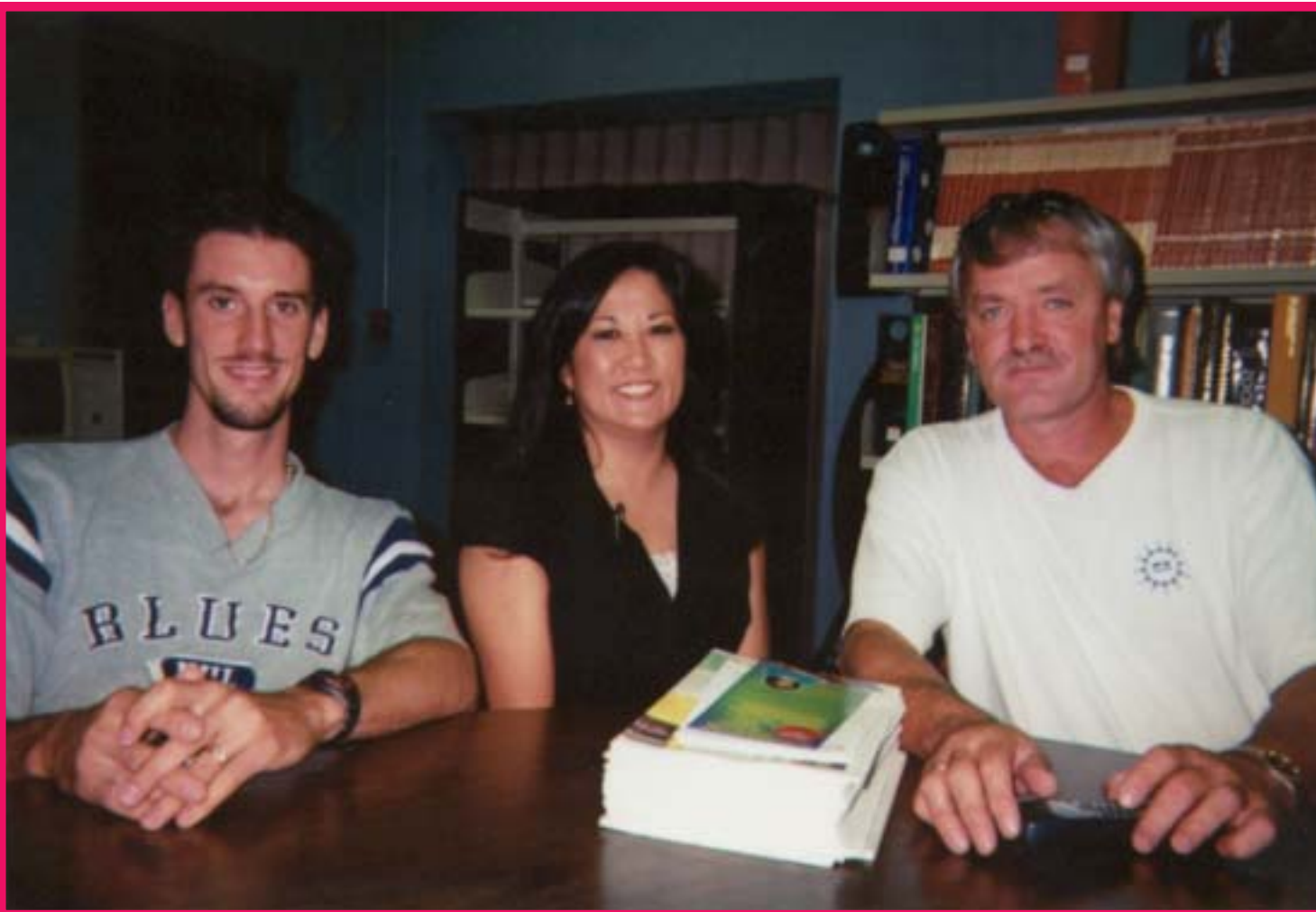
Dist. 40
Democrat
*Steve Harry
Republican
Cliff Branan

Dist. 42
Democrat
*Joe P. Smith
Republican
Cliff Aldridge

Dist. 48
Democrat
*Angela Monson (I)
Republican
Revanelle Earnest

** Recommended by OEA-PAC
(I) Incumbent*

* Denotes Recommendation by OEA-PAC (I) Incumbent



Checotah and Okmulgee support professionals each won challenge elections last year and earned the bargaining rights in their respective school districts. Checotah ESP's officers are (from left) Jimmy Flud, vice president; Diann Bell, secretary; and Wally Frost, president.

A Tale of Two Locals

By Bruce Treadaway

Charles Dickens said, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." That phrase could describe last year for two blossoming education support professional locals in Okmulgee and Checotah.

The worst of times arrived a year ago when the organization representing them in negotiations failed to respond to their requests for assistance. When Checotah's Wally Frost and Okmulgee's Ken Titsworth began to question what was going on, they began to look for another organization to represent their members. They didn't have to look far, because the OEA and its southeast advocate, Jackie Davis, were ready and waiting.

"We couldn't get any help before. I've now met with Jackie several times, and the OEA service has been excellent," said Frost, Checotah ESP's president. "I'll talk with any ESP group anytime about the benefits of belonging to the OEA. Anytime we need Jackie, she's there."

Okmulgee ESP President

Titsworth added, "We never could get any representation. We never felt like our former organization did a good job of bargaining. We weren't getting a good shake from them, and our ESP membership had dropped."

This year, after going through the process of changing bargaining representatives, both locals had fruitful bargaining sessions.

Frost said, "We got our step raise, another 25 cents an hour increase, an added step and when the administration wanted to remove extra duty of the superintendent's secretaries from the contract, we wouldn't let them. We didn't expect much of a raise, but it averaged out at 57 cents per hour."

Titsworth mentions similar success for Okmulgee. "We got a 12-cents-an-hour raise and an increase in our attendance incentive. We're still

discussing one item, but we're ready to start a new year."

In addition to Titsworth, the new Okmulgee ESP local is led by Patti Robertson, vice president; Dave Brandenburg, financial secretary; and Dell Six, bargaining chair.

Checotah's Frost is joined by vice president Jimmy

Flud and secretary Diann Bell. Frost will be leaving in April because of a back injury, but he knows the local will be in good hands.

"We've got a good crew. Jimmy has just started and hopefully will step right in when I leave. Whoever

our new president is, I'm confident that the OEA will be there to help every step of the way."

When the bargaining elections took place last spring, the results were overwhelmingly in favor of the two new OEA locals. Checotah enjoyed a 4-to-1 ratio, and Okmulgee carried by a 3-to-1 margin. Davis, OEA advocacy specialist, was there to help with both elections. OEA printed the ballots and absorbed all the costs. The elections cost the locals nothing.

"Those who don't belong should join," Okmulgee's Titsworth said. "We're tired of getting what's left over. Our next step is to negotiate at the same level as the teachers. This year the paid negotiator for the district had the best attitude he's ever had."

Both of these ESP locals are examples of what education employees can accomplish when they work together and strengthen themselves with OEA-NEA membership.



Okmulgee ESP President Ken Titsworth

Bishop Unopposed for OEA President

OEA Vice President Roy Bishop will run unopposed for the office of OEA President, but races for vice president and NEA Director have drawn three and five candidates, respectively.

Members will receive ballots in February for the three offices. The new president and vice president will take office in July 2003 while Oklahoma's junior delegate on the NEA Board of Directors will begin his or her term in September.

Bishop, an eighth grade geography teacher on leave from Stillwater Public Schools, was the only person to file for the seat to be vacated by Carolyn Crowder. She is completing the final year of her second three-year term as OEA's president. Likewise, Bishop is in the last year of his



President-Elect Roy Bishop

second term as vice president.

Candidates for vice president are Roma Clark, Moore; Becky Felts, Tahlequah; and Greer Nichols, Broken Arrow.

NEA Director candidates include Shelly Cherry, Oklahoma City; Karen Dawson, Tulsa; Greg Johnson, Mustang; Marilyn Jackson, Okmulgee; and Vicki Vaughan, Putnam City.



Artistic Performance Opens Convention

Artist Richard Hight opened the 2002 OEA Convention by creating a chalk drawing while patriotic and inspirational music played and attendees entered the Assembly Hall. More than 4,000 teachers attended the event at the Tulsa Convention Center, participating in professional development workshops and hearing keynote speakers such as Democratic nominee for governor Brad Henry, motivational speaker Troy Evans and champion of education Frosty Troy, editor of "The Oklahoma Observer."



2001-02 OEA Audit Report





The financial statements of the Oklahoma Education Association for fiscal year ended August 31, 2002, were audited by Luton and Co. An unqualified opinion was issued by the accounting firm stating that the financial statements present fairly the financial position of the OEA. A brief summary of the 2001-02 financial reports follows:

CURRENT ASSETS	\$3,243,321
FIXED ASSETS	
LESS ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION	2,098,504
OTHER ASSETS	<u>3,100</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$5,344,925</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$ 916,648
LONG-TERM OBLIGATIONS	1,994,979
NET ASSETS:	
UNRESTRICTED	
Undesignated	498,728
Designated for building	
Related expenses	300,518
Invested in fixed assets	1,459,184
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	<u>174,868</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>\$5,344,925</u>
REVENUE:	
MEMBERSHIPS	\$5,304,261
NEA SUPPORT	1,196,162
OTHER	<u>624,160</u>
TOTAL REVENUE	7,124,583
EXPENSES	<u>7,082,258</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	<u>\$42,325</u>

Earn Professional Development Credit Online!



Teacher Enhancement Program

-  Only \$90 per credit hour; includes all course materials
-  Convenient anytime / anywhere learning
-  Use technology to learn technology
-  Enroll now and take up to six months to complete

Designed specifically to meet credit requirements for salary advancement and professional development

Sample Courses include:

- ◆ Using the Internet in Teaching and Learning
- ◆ Presentations using PowerPoint
- ◆ Computer Hardware in Education
- ◆ Word Processing with Word



For more information or to order a catalog, call Outlook Interactive:

Toll Free: 1-877-537-7277

Visit our website: <http://avila.outlookinteractive.com>

Speech Team Earns National Reputation

Middle school speech and drama students in Ardmore are making a name for themselves nationally, thanks to the dedication of OEA member Anson Shuman.

Last spring, Ardmore students became the first Oklahomans to win national championships in Lincoln-Douglas debate, Cross Examination debate and Dramatic Duet. As a team, the Ardmore squad finished fourth nationally.

“When they hired me, they said they wanted to see how well we could do in competitions around the state,” said Shuman. “But I wanted to see what we could do nationally.”

Ardmore’s middle school team dominates in Oklahoma. Over the last three years, the team has finished no worse than second at any tournament.

The squad was started in 1993-94 as one debate class with 12 students.

In that first year, the team didn’t fare well; gaining just one win in poetry interpretation.

“That summer, I enrolled myself at Cameron University,” Shuman said, “and that summer proved to be very beneficial to not only myself but also to future teams.”

With a new understanding of how to prepare his teams, things began to turn around for Ardmore in the second year. The team placed third at the Putnam City West tournament and one of Shuman’s seventh graders won the state debate championship. She went on to win three straight championships.

The program has blossomed. It now has a travel budget of more than \$5,200 with 115 students enrolled.

“The benefit from this program



Ardmore Middle School's Anson Shuman has taken the school's speech team from 20 students in one class to 115 kids and a travel budget of more than \$5,200. The team was the first Oklahoma squad to win national championships in debate and drama.

greatly exceeds the medals and trophies,” Shuman said. “It teaches self-reliance, self-confidence, being able

to do what they need to do to obtain a job, and reasoning without emotion.”

Norman Avoids Impasse With Settlement

By Doug Folks

Norman teachers averted an impasse hearing in mid-October by agreeing to a last-minute settlement with the Norman Board of Education. The agreement imposed a salary freeze on Norman teachers but leaves the door open for discussions about granting step raises if reductions in state aid are restored.

The Professional Educators of Norman (PEN) had accepted the board’s declaration of impasse in late August when PEN refused to accept a salary schedule that included no step movement for its teachers. Unfortunately, thanks to the state budget shortfall and the Norman district’s dangerously low fund balance, PEN found itself in a no-win situation.

“After the state further cut school appropriations on Sept. 11, it became clear the district literally had no money for teacher raises,” said PEN President Sheri Childress. “Still, the

entire situation is extremely frustrating. Norman has some of the best teachers in the state and we can’t pay them what they are worth.”

Leading up to the impasse, PEN provided the district with a number of suggestions of how to save money. But the Board’s team felt its only option was to cut payroll. Norman cut more than 40 positions before this school year, pointing to overstaffing as rationale. But by the time school started in August, most of the teachers on temporary contracts who were not renewed at the end of last year were rehired.

Still, attrition accounted for at least 24 lost teaching positions.

“We understand the district’s financial position, but we are not happy with this settlement. It is just a fact of life,” Childress said. “Budget cuts in Norman have fallen too heavily on teachers and their classrooms. If the budget situation continues to worsen,

our district must take a long, hard look at other areas for cuts, including administration.”

Norman entered this school year with a fund balance of only 1.7 percent, and state cuts in August and September further depleted that pool of money. Just four years ago the fund balance was at 8.46 percent.

Norman teachers need not feel alone; the state budget shortfall has

hit all districts hard. Tulsa Public Schools has significantly reduced its transportation and is at impasse with Tulsa CTA because the Board wants to freeze salaries and not reinstate a stipend, which will mean a \$500 salary cut for 750 teachers. In Putnam City, the board withdrew its offer to provide step increases for teachers and rescinded its agreement to give support professionals a raise.

A Full-Time Advocate, A Lifetime Cause!

Vote

Becky Felts

For OEA Vice President

Paid for by The Committee To Elect Becky Felts OEA Vice President

However Poorly Written, This Moment Works

By Steve Stockley
Tulsa CTA Vice President

While it is true that SB 815 was a poorly disguised effort by certain political forces to sneak government prayer into the back door of the classroom, I'm actually very pleased that it passed. As an active Southern Baptist (ordained deacon, licensed minister, Sunday school teacher, etc.), prayer is a vital part of my private and cooperate spiritual journey.

But the thought of government

prayer is anathema to me as it was to Thomas Jefferson. And it is true that media preachers have fattened their coffers and lengthened their mailing lists as they promise to correct every social wrong from drug addiction and teen pregnancy to low test scores and irregularity once they have "gotten prayer back into the classroom."

Still, SB 815, however poorly written it was, does accomplish several very good things. First, it demonstrates that a moment of silence is constitutional. There is no need to violate the Bill of Rights by adding a government prayer amendment. Second, I have seen the minute of silence monitored very effectively to quiet the class at the beginning of the day. It is even more effective at bringing quiet to 25 squirming 13 year-olds than scowls, two fingers in the air or flick-

ing the light switch.

The teacher just says, "You must be silent now, it's the law." (I am personally lobbying for a bill that requires that students come to class with a notebook, pencils and homework.)

The bill further gives teachers the opportunity to demonstrate that a moment of silence can be many things. One teacher I saw opens a small self-help book and reads a thought for the day. Another teacher silently takes roll. I know of other teachers who look at a picture of their retirement date, the mountains or sit and do a quick breathing exercise. They model many thought-gathering techniques.

The loss of 60 seconds is neither the best, nor worst, instance of governmental intrusion on the classroom. SB 815 did, however, avoid the debacle of a government prayer man-



date by demonstrating what truly spiritual people have known all along. Ever since the invention of the math test and the cafeteria's Tuesday meat loaf, prayer has been a regular, legal part of every child's school day.



By Sandy Bahan
Norman High School History Teacher

The "moment of silence" mandated by the legislature last spring is an unnecessary intrusion of the school day. Moreover, by requiring schools to impose on students a minute of forced silence to "meditate, reflect, pray or engage in other silent activities" we have diminished the impact and meaning for future "moments of silence" that our society uses to remember important events and individuals.

Just as the Pledge of Allegiance has become an essentially meaningless exercise for most of our students, the moment of silence will become

Another Mandate With No Relevance to Teaching Kids

another of those pointless parts of the school day that take away from instruction without adding anything meaningful to the school experience.

Certainly there are students who will use the moment of silence to pray, or catch their breath and mentally get organized for the day. And there will be students who will benefit from that enforced moment of silence to "settle in" to the day. But for too many students the required moment of silence has already become and will continue to be just one more of the long list of activities that the school requires of them for no "good" reason that they can identify.

Whatever the intent of the legislature may have been with the passage of this legislation the reality is that students perceive it to be a "moment of prayer" and they find that to be intrusive. Many feel that this places them in an uncomfortable position, being judged by their peers for the way in which they use this moment. Others see it as one more reason to be defiant and to test our resolve to "make" them be silent for 60 seconds.

Students did not ask for this. School officials did not ask for this. The moment of silence is yet another example of a mandate from the state that bears no rational relation to the business of educating students.

Next Issue's Question –

Some school employees have been asked to reopen their contracts to take cuts in benefits and pay, give back raises, clean their own classrooms and reduce their personal and sick leave days in order to prevent reductions in force. Do you agree or disagree with these requests during the current budget crisis?

E-mail your responses to Patti Razien at prazien@okea.org or mail them to her at OEA Northwest Office, 2315 Downs Ave., Woodward, OK, 73801. The deadline is Jan. 6.

The Magic of Flight and Photography Earn NFIE Grants for Oklahomans

OEA members at Mustang and Bridge Creek have been awarded \$2,000 Innovation Grants by the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE).

At Mustang Valley Elementary School in Mustang, third grade teachers Robin Combs, Connie Graham, Sue Ann McGowan-Miller and Shereen Rasor will use their NFIE grant to

celebrate the 100th anniversary of aeronautics on May 3. They will be working with the 99s, the women's aeronautics association, to provide hands-on experiments and to share experiences of women in flight.

"The purpose of our grant is to encourage more girls to take an interest in science," said Combs.

Bridge Creek Elementary's Annette Dake, Tammy Long and Rachell



The Mustang Valley Elementary team of (clockwise from top left) Shereen Rasor, team leader Robin Combs, Connie Graham and Ann McGowan-Miller want to encourage more girls to enter the field of science with their centennial celebration of aeronautics.

and have a class visit from a professional photographer. Beyond the photo essay, students will practice writing skills to develop an accompanying narrative for their photographs.

The Innovation Grants were first awarded in 2000 to promote collaborative education innovations that lead to student achievement of high standards. In addition to funding up to 250 Innovation Grants per year, NFIE awards up to 75 Learning & Leadership Grants



Bridge Creek Elementary's Annette Dake, Rachell Skeen and Tammy Long will bring the world of photography to fifth graders with their NFIE grant.

Skeen are developing PhotoPlay, a 5th grade program that uses photography to introduce art concepts and incorporates writing and math skills. Students will learn how to operate traditional 35mm cameras and digital camera technology. They will create traditional photo essays and a digital essay, take a field trip to a photo lab

for professional development to improve classroom practice.

Applications for Innovation and Learning & Leadership Grants may be submitted at any time. To read about other grantees' projects, or to apply for your own grant, visit www.nfie.org/programs/howtoapply.htm or call 202-822-7840.