

# Organization of Rural Oklahoma Schools

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## Legislative Report

By: Megan Benn

Bill filing deadline has now passed and we have gone through all of the bills for the next legislative session. To sum it up...it's going to be interesting! There were 2,222 bills and resolutions filed for this session. Right now we are tracking over 310 bills dealing with education, the tax base, or retirement issues: each of which could affect you and your schools in some way. We currently have 49 bills that we have put on our "Critical" tracking list. You can read and check the status of all of these any time from now through the end of session on the OROS website under the Legislation tab. Some of these bills will fall off as session continues and we will be adding other bills to the list as changes are made that make them have a greater impact on our schools.

As has been in the press during much of the interim, there have been many bills dealing with school and administrative consolidation filed. There are several bills which call for outright forced consolidation based on school size. We don't expect those bills to make it through the process. However there are also many bills that deal with administrative consolidation without closing sites, or percentage allocation of administrative costs. From what leadership in both houses are saying, we can expect something in this regard to emerge. We are working closely with CCOSA and others to provide input and clarification on what administrative costs are, how schools are already sharing many administrative services and the actual impact that some of these bills could have on schools and communities. We expect this issue to continue to evolve throughout the legislative session and we will keep you up to date on where the legislature seems to be leaning in this regard.

Because there are so many new members and so many members in new leadership positions, this year it is vitally important for you and your school board members to invite your legislators into your school. Meet with them, answer their questions, and explain to them where education dollars are spent. The saying "All Politics is Local", is so true and can truly benefit you and your school as we go forward. We

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cannot expect all of these members to truly understand what you do and how school finance works unless you and Don and I explain it to them and show how the money they appropriate is being used to educate kids in their districts.

School choice is going to be another big issue this session. It looks like the special needs scholarship bill passed last session may be changed to move it from the school districts writing the checks to the State Department of Education being the primary administrator of the program. This is a positive change for schools. Additionally, the Speaker of the House has now voiced his support for a tax credit/voucher program. We can expect much debate about this issue throughout session.

A few other major education related issues this session will be Teacher Due Process reform, mandating more Math in High School, and further expansion of Charter Schools and what they can do.

On the Fiscal side, it is expected that the state will have anywhere from \$400-600 million less to appropriate this fiscal year. This after we have experienced two very difficult budget years, and now do not have federal stimulus funds and the Rainy Day fund to help lift us out of the hole. Even with the revenue situation being what it is, it looks as though the trigger to lower the State Income Tax rate will go into effect, there are more bills to lower the cap for local property tax, and many other tax credits and giveaways have also been proposed.

So, it looks to be quite an eventful session! We will keep you up to date throughout the session and you can expect many emails asking you to weigh in with your Senator or Representative on bills that will greatly effect education in your districts and across the state. Thanks in advance for all of your assistance and for everything you do for the schoolchildren of this state.

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**Attorney Talk**

**By: Terri Thomas**

**UPCOMING LEGISLATION IN THE SENATE – ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION**

A few days ago I ran across several pieces of new legislation from the Senate that are sure to be of interest to all of you. One deals with changes to the law regarding teacher due process. The other makes substantial amendments and additions to the existing statutes relating to bullying. They’re both doozies in terms of the effects they could have on schools if passed. Another one, a new law entirely, appears to be an attempt to keep younger kids safe from unauthorized people picking them up from school. Yet another new law allows guns in schools—but not in the way you might be thinking!

Subtraction

Let’s look first at the bill that takes something away: Senate Bill 1, authored by Ford, makes substantial teacher due process changes as they relate to termination/nonrenewal hearings by eliminating trial de novo for career teachers. Struck from the law is the entire section dealing with a career teacher pretermination hearing followed by the teacher’s right to petition the district court for a trial de novo if the teacher is not satisfied with the local board’s decision. It’s gone. Then, the section after that, which used to deal with the probationary teacher due process hearing (i.e., the one that’s before the board, the one that’s final and

unappealable), is now applicable to both career and probationary teachers, thanks to the deletion of the word 'probationary' from the first sentence. In other words, all teachers are to be treated equally—regardless of tenure status—with respect to hearings on the termination or non-renewal of their employment.

### Addition

Another bill of interest, Senate Bill 152, authored by Rice, calls for major additions to our current bullying and harassment laws. The term "cyber-bullying" has been added to the law, because apparently the author felt that the existing language describing bullying, including its electronic forms, wasn't quite clear enough. Now it should be crystal-clear. The bill goes on to enumerate various specific areas in which a kid might be bullied, such as "ancestry or ethnicity" and "gender identity and expression" and details what types of electronic communication might be used for cyber-bullying (blogs, online games, social media and websites, just to name a few). Of particular interest in this bill is the law's applicability to cyber-bullying "whether or not the conduct or communication originated at school or with school equipment or within official school hours." As we all know, it's challenging for districts to impose discipline for off-campus behavior, so that will be something to think about.

This bill also imposes numerous additional recordkeeping and reporting requirements on school districts, including new policy language, new publication requirements, provisions for immediate notification (whatever that means) to the parents of the alleged perpetrator, requiring twice-annual detailed statistical reports on bullying at each school to be provided to the board, and mandating annual training for faculty and staff, as well as prevention programs for students and the community. This bill now includes tech centers in addition to comprehensive schools. Like I said before, it's a doozy. The question is, will it help eliminate bullying?

Senate Bill 64, authored by Garrison, calls for the addition of a new law. It would require schools to keep and maintain a roster of any and all people who are authorized to pick up a kid in grades K through 8 (I wonder why they left out Pre-K?) from school. Prior to releasing the student, the school would have to verify that the person was on the list, and would have to confirm the person's identity through a state-issued photo ID. It's up to the parent to let the school know of any changes to child custody arrangements. This sounds good on its face, but in my opinion has the potential to be a logistical hassle for the schools trying to enforce it. How, for instance, is the school going to know if a seventh-grader sees non-custodial dad's car in the line of vehicles waiting to retrieve kids after school, runs out to the car, gets in and they take off? If the father isn't on the list, will the district face repercussions? Is there going to have to be a monitor checking every single car that arrives at the end of each school day? It's one thing to check against a list if an individual arrives in person in the office asking to take a child out of class, but another thing entirely to try to manage names and faces during the mass exodus each day when the bell rings.

*"PULL!"*

Finally, Senate Bill 174, authored by Fields, allows school districts to offer an elective course in sporting clays to students in grades nine and above. I've always wanted to try that. If this passes, and your school begins offering such a course, can I come over?

### OROS APPROVES 2011 LEGISLATIVE GOALS

1. Oppose legislation mandating consolidation or combining of administrative units based on number of students, number of districts, and/or size (square miles) of a district.
2. Support legislation that leads to greater student achievement and higher graduation rates.
3. Support legislation that provides additional funding to common education and increased flexibility enabling school districts to better meet the learning needs of Oklahoma school children.
4. Support legislation that will further allow school districts to cooperate and share services in order to reduce their administrative costs.
5. Oppose legislation that reduces or limits growth in Ad Valorem or any other segment of the tax base for public schools.
6. Support efforts to critically analyze all existing state tax credits and exemptions to review their effectiveness compared to cost
7. Support removing the requirement of a 60% supermajority for passage of school bond issues.

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**Sexton & Sexton School Supplies**  
P.O. Box 346  
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**Mass Group Marketing**  
HC 79 Box 459  
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**Okla. School Assurance Group**  
P.O. Box 18858  
Oklahoma City, OK 73154  
800-699-5905

**Midwest Bus Sales**  
P.O. Box 338  
El Reno, OK 73036  
405-262-1044

**The Learning System**  
3501 NW 63, Ste. 115  
Oklahoma City, OK 73116  
800-7363658

**ARBO Enterprises, Inc**  
5017 N. Rockwell  
Bethany, OK 73008  
405-787-3902

**American Fidelity Assurance**  
7510 N. Broadway Ext. Ste 202  
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405-416-8810

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**ADPC**  
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**Document Imaging Solutions**  
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Tulsa, OK 74147  
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Municipal Accounting Systems  
P.O. Box 1325  
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Blunck Studios, Inc.  
228 West Main  
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405-794-7748

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OK Association for Pupil Transportation  
P.O. Box 1626  
Guthrie, OK 73044  
405-514-4606

Professional Oklahoma Educators  
P.O. Box 667  
Norman, OK 73070  
405-321-3175

The Interlocal Purchasing System  
P.O. Box 1894  
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75456  
866-839-8477

Twotrees Technologies  
7701 E. Kellogg Drive, STE 610  
Wichita, KS 67207  
918-270-7122

Treat's Solutions, Inc.  
300 E. Arlington  
Ada, OK 74820  
580-332-8861

Parsons Commercial Roofing, Inc  
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Waco, TX 76702  
254-881-1733

Government Capitol Corp.  
345 Miron Drive  
Southlake, TX 76092  
800-883-1199

J & J Educational Services  
30742 S. Lona Valley  
Kinta, OK 74552  
918-469-2656

OASIS  
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Muskogee, OK 74401  
918-465-7001

Southern Financial Group, Inc.  
301 West Main Street, Ste 520  
Ardmore, OK 73401  
580-490-9094

Boynton Williams & Assoc's., Inc  
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Norman, OK 73072-4187  
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Ross Transportation, Inc  
2500 South Meridian Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73108  
405-681-6691

Lierman Graduate Services/Josten's  
5829 N.W. 40<sup>th</sup> Street  
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405-789-2052

BRB Roofing & Mfg.  
1726 N. Green, Ste 900  
Purcell, OK 73080  
405-527-2726

Primary Insurance for Education  
P.O. Box 190  
Paris, TX 75461  
903-783-1400

Service & Funding Group, Inc.  
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Ardmore, OK 73401  
580-490-9094

American Bus Sales  
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Romaine Companies  
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Cadiz, KY 42211  
270-522-7818

Burggraf Disaster Restoration  
400 South Rockford Ave.  
Tulsa, OK 74120  
918-584-3737

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## Perry Willis Comments

Don't forget the deadline for the OROS scholarships. All applications must be postmarked by March 1, 2011. To make the application process a little easier, we have added the option of downloading a form, filling it out on your computer, typing the essay on your computer, printing all of it, and then mailing it to the OROS office. **After printing it, the student needs to sign it, and then have it signed by the principal before mailing it. You can access this form from our web page at orosok.org. Click on the scholarship link on the left side of the home page and that will take you to the form options. Follow the instructions under each option.**

The legislative session is just around the corner and it appears this is going to be an interesting session. Several bills dealing with administrative cost, consolidation etc. have been filed and are getting the attention of school administrators and others in our rural communities. **I attended a meeting of school people this week and they have suggested that we begin meeting with our communities**

**and start a grassroots effort of organizing them for the consolidation fight. If these efforts materialize and is in fact what we decide to do, I will inform our membership through e-mail with all notifications and information regarding this.**

We will again track all the school related legislation during the session and all these bills that we are tracing can be found on our web site. Go to our web site (orosok.org), on the left side of the home page click on the "Legislation" link, after reaching that page, click on "Education Bill Status Report" link. That will take you to a list of all the bills that we are tracking. You can read the entire bill by clicking on the bill number. The first tracking list is already available at this time. It is very easy to overlook a bill and if you notice an important bill missing from the list, let me know and I will pass the information on to the appropriate people.

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### **The Oklahoma Schools Property and Casualty Report**

**By: Lee Roy Pettyjohn, Director**

It's never too early to start thinking of your Property and Casualty coverage. The Oklahoma School Property Casualty Coop is once again offering comprehensive property casualty coverage to Oklahoma School Districts. Of course, this coverage includes all auto and professional liability. The OSPCC is off to a great start, with total insured values exceeding three hundred million dollars. We are looking forward to helping meet your Property/Casualty needs once again.

OROS is proud to sponsor this program because it offered a substantial savings to the majority of school districts who requested a quote. In addition, with OSPCC providing another option, it has helped reduced the cost of insurance for many school districts across the state.

Be watching for upcoming information on how to get a quote from the OSPCC.

June Board meetings will be here before you know it. In order to provide you the best quote possible, OSPCC will need some detailed information from you. Although this isn't a time consuming process, it is something that needs to be tended to as soon as possible. The more information received from each district in a timely manner, in turn will allow OSPCC to provide you with the best quote possible.

Any School Districts with an anniversary prior to July 1, should contact Lee Roy Pettyjohn as soon as possible.

Please direct any questions to:

Lee Roy Pettyjohn, Director of OSPCC

580-920-4572, leeroy@redriverok.com

## **OROS Calendar**

### **OROS Board of Directors Meeting**

**February 16, 2011**

**OSSAA Building**

**Oklahoma City, OK**

**10:00 A.M.**

### **OROS Scholarship Application Deadline**

**March 1, 2011**

### **OROS Board of Directors Meeting**

**March 3, 2011**

**OSSAA Building**

**Oklahoma City, OK**

**10:00 A.M.**