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Governor Mary Fallin Marks the End of the 2012 Legislative Session

OKLAHOMA CITY – Today marks the last day of the 2012 legislative session in Oklahoma. Governor Mary Fallin worked with the Legislature this year to deliver a fiscally conservative, balanced budget that includes targeted increases for core services. Additionally, she worked with lawmakers to pass and sign into law key reforms in the areas of government efficiency, energy production, health and human services, transportation, child welfare, gun rights, education and more.

“My priority continues to be the creation of more and better jobs in Oklahoma, as well as the delivery of a more cost-efficient and effective state government,” Fallin said. “The many reforms passed and signed into law this year will continue to build our state’s forward momentum. Whether it’s improving public safety, fixing our roads and bridges, boosting education or raising our health outcomes and indicators, the successes of this session will help to make Oklahoma a better place to live, work and raise a family.”

2012 Policy Highlights

A Fiscally Conservative Budget with Targeted Increases to Core Government Services

The Fiscal Year 2013 budget deal reached by Governor Mary Fallin and state legislators represents a fiscally responsible plan to limit the size and growth of government while increasing funds for certain core areas of government.

Governor Fallin:

“This budget deal is a responsible, fiscally conservative agreement that funds core government services. The targeted increases we are pursuing will help to improve child welfare services, repair structurally deficient bridges, increase access to health care in rural areas, and boost resources for public safety. Additionally, this budget agreement will also ensure the state

supports common education and keeps its promise to teachers by funding health benefits. All of these things will help to improve state government services and make Oklahoma a better place to live and raise a family.”

The \$6.8 billion budget holds the line on spending for most agencies while providing for targeted funding increases, including the following areas:

- **Common Education (K-12):** \$52.4 million annualized funding for teacher health benefits and National Board Certified Teacher bonuses
- **CareerTech Education:** \$1.4 million annualized funding for operations; matching an FY 2012 supplemental measure
- **Higher Education:** \$10 million annualized funding for operations, matching an FY 2012 supplemental measure; transferred the bulk of the \$161 million funding the EDGE program to university endowed chairs program; allocated \$3 million for the Wayman Tisdale specialty health clinic in Tulsa; \$3.08 million for the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine to fund the rural residency program to increase access to health care in rural and underserved areas
- **Transportation:** \$99 million increase to repay FY 2012 fund transfer; ensures eight-year road and bridge plan remains intact and anticipates implementation of the Bridge Improvement and Highway Modernization plan proposed by the governor in future fiscal years
- **Department of Health:** \$1 million increase for infant mortality initiatives;
- **Health Care Authority:** \$57 million for Maintenance of Effort and Growth to support low income and disabled citizens
- **Department of Human Services:** \$25 million to fund Pinnacle Plan reforms designed to enhance child care efforts; \$17 million for Maintenance of Effort and replacement of one-time funding in FY-2012; \$1.5 million for Advantage Waiver Program to provide reimbursement rate increases for home health care providers that serve the elderly; \$1.5 million to provide Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) reimbursement rate increases; \$1 million to reduce the current DDSD waiting list
- **Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services:** \$5.5 million for Systems of Care Grant and for an additional crisis center to assist those with mental health and/or substance abuse and addiction problems; \$667,000 for mental health and substance abuse screenings to determine the risks and needs of each convicted offender
- **Veterans Affairs:** \$1 million increase to expand nursing staff and reduce staff/patient ratios
- **Department of Public Safety:** \$5 million for authorization of an annual trooper academy with capacity for 40 trainees
- **Medicolegal Investigations:** \$1 million supplemental and \$1.5 million annualization of supplemental for personnel, equipment, and infrastructure improvement of the Office of Chief Medical Examiner.

Saving Taxpayer Dollars Through Government Reform and Modernization

As Governor Fallin has continued to say, Oklahoma taxpayers deserve a government that understands customer service, and also understands that the “customer” is the taxpayer. Reforms pursued this year will help to eliminate government waste and improve government services.

Governor Fallin:

“Government can always find ways to save taxpayer dollars by operating more efficiently and effectively. The reforms we continue to pursue on a state level will help to produce more flexible and responsive state agencies, eliminate government waste and save money. Meanwhile, the balanced budget amendment we passed this year sends a clear signal to the United States Congress: we do not approve of you piling irresponsible debt onto the American people.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Savings through Energy Efficiency**
 - **SB 1096:** Directs all state agencies and higher education institutions to achieve at least 20 percent improvement in energy efficiency and conservation by the year 2020. **Estimated savings to taxpayers range from \$300 to \$500 million over eight years – money which can be used instead to fund core government services.**
- **Government Modernization and Consolidation Efforts:**
 - **SB 1797:** Consolidates existing public education accountability and teacher preparation entities into a single Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) in order to save taxpayer money while streamlining existing education accountability initiatives.
 - **House Bill 3053:** Consolidates the Oklahoma State and Education Employees Group Insurance Board and the Oklahoma Employees Benefits Council to produce cost savings. Additionally, establishes performance metrics to be used by OSF “Performance Teams” to work with agencies to improve processes used to manage organizational performance, budgeting and forecasting, strategic planning and management, and metrics used to measure performance against strategic and operational goals. Performance Teams will also work on future statewide initiatives to increase government efficiency and effectiveness.
 - **Information Technology consolidation initiatives** continue this year due to policies proposed and signed into law by Governor Fallin in 2011. IT consolidation efforts are estimated to save the state of Oklahoma \$180 million over seven years. Currently, 90 percent of agencies are participating in the state consolidation plan, resulting in a 25 percent reduction in IT costs. Additionally, the Office of State Finance has also consolidated several agencies, for an actual savings of \$4.2 million.
 - **Higher Education CIO:** Governor Fallin and higher education officials agreed to establish one unified Higher Education Chief Information Officer to be housed under the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The Higher Education

CIO will be tasked with improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of IT services within higher education. **The higher education community has currently reached \$40 million in technology cost savings; total savings over a five year period are expected to reach \$347.1 million.**

- **Cabinet Flexibility**

- **HB 2834:** Creates the Government Modernization Cabinet Flexibility Act, which allows the governor to modify her cabinet at anytime, subject to Senate confirmation.

- **Federal Balanced Budget Amendment**

- **SCR 33:** Requested for and supported a resolution calling on Congress to amend the U.S. Constitution to require balanced budget.

Energy: Supporting American Made Energy Production and Energy Efficiency

A series of bills signed into law this year by Governor Fallin work to encourage the use and production of American-made energy like natural gas while increasing safety by requiring the public disclosure of chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.

Governor Fallin:

“With over 300,000 Oklahoma jobs supported by the energy industry, oil and natural gas production will remain key partners as we work to grow the state’s economy. Initiatives pursued this year at the state Capitol support the growth of Oklahoma’s energy companies and ensure the state continues to play a prominent role in energy-related job creation and American energy security.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Natural Gas Vehicles and Infrastructure Development**

- Developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 13 states outlining our pursuit of a multistate contract for natural gas vehicles (NGV). The MOU is an appeal to the auto industry to manufacture an affordable and functional NGV, available to both states and the general public. Oklahoma will be the lead state in a 13-state request for proposal in which the states will go to market to fulfill the MOU. **Converting state fleets to natural gas vehicles will save taxpayer dollars by reducing fuel costs and help the environment by using a cleaner type of fuel. It will support the natural gas industry, which is vital to Oklahoma’s economy and future job growth in the state. Additionally, it will help to reduce America’s reliance on foreign oil.**

- **Advancing Research and Development**

- **SB 1627:** Creates the Oklahoma Energy Initiative, which will serve as a strategic program designed to create, advance, and promote new and existing energy research and development efforts in Oklahoma.

- **Supporting Oklahoma Energy Producers**

- **HB 2654 and SB 1665:** Creates the Energy Litigation Reform Act, an agreement by Oklahoma's oil-and-gas industry and royalty owners to reduce frivolous lawsuits that jeopardize the future of the oil-and-gas industry in Oklahoma. These bills clarify state law and ensure our state remains open to business and industry while also protecting surface and royalty owners.
- **Transparency and Accountability**
 - Governor Fallin requested and later approved rules by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission requiring the disclosure of chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.

Transportation, Roads and Bridges

As Governor Fallin outlined in her State of the State address, Oklahoma has lagged behind when it comes to the maintenance and repair of its roads and bridges. Actions taken in 2012 put Oklahoma back on the right track, as the budget signed by Governor Fallin ensures that the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's eight-year construction plan remains on schedule. Additionally, funding was improved to begin implementation of Governor Fallin's Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan to repair all 706 currently identified structurally deficient highway bridges.

Governor Fallin:

"Having a safe, reliable and modern transportation infrastructure is important for Oklahoma's economy and important for the safety of our citizens. Our new Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan will ensure that Oklahoma's poor rankings on national transportation issues become a thing of the past. By the end of this decade, Oklahoma will be one of the top five states in the nation for well-maintained highway bridges."

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Improving Oklahoma's Roads and Bridges**
 - **HB 2248:** Supports the Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan introduced in 2011 by Governor Fallin. The plan repairs all 706 of Oklahoma's currently identified structurally deficient highway bridges. HB 2248 calls for the annual increase in the ROADS fund to be boosted from \$41.7 million to \$59.7 million. The bill directs the ROADS fund to continue receiving an additional \$59.7 million each year until the total increase equals \$575 million.
 - **HB 2249:** Also supports the Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan introduced in 2011 by Governor Fallin. Ensures counties have the resources they need to continue improvements to their road and bridge systems by increasing funding for the County Improvement for Roads and Bridges (CIRB). HB 2249 increases the estimated annual funding for the CIRB program from \$80 million to more than \$111 million.

Improving Health Outcomes in Oklahoma

Health initiatives supported by the governor and introduced in her 2012 State of the State address were passed by the Legislature or issued via executive order. The initiatives below will

help to address infant mortality rates while decreasing rates of smoking, substance abuse and obesity. They also include an initiative to improve access to care in rural and underserved areas.

Governor Fallin:

“Healthy living is important, not just because we want Oklahomans to live full and happy lives, but because the effects of unhealthy life choices hurt our economy, drain taxpayer dollars and drive up the cost of health care for everyone. Oklahoma is currently ranked 48th in overall health indicators in the nation. The state has extremely high rates of substance abuse, obesity and smoking-related illness, costing billions of dollars in health care expenses and lost productivity. That’s unacceptable, and that’s why we need to work together to turn this state around. The initiatives outlined below will lead to a healthier Oklahoma and help to contain the growing health care costs currently straining the budgets of families, businesses and state government.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Prohibiting Smoking on State Property**
 - Governor Fallin issued an executive order to prohibit tobacco use on all state property. She has closed the smoking room at the state Capitol and begun the process of developing a privately funded fitness center for state employees.
- **Promoting Physical Fitness**
 - **SB 1882:** Limits the legal liability of school districts that open indoor or outdoor facilities on a voluntary basis to community groups or individuals for physical activity.
- **Mental Health**
 - \$118 million transferred from Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) for behavioral health programs. ODMHSAS is the State’s expert on behavioral and mental health and is best-suited to administer behavioral health programs.
- **Infant Mortality**
 - \$1 million appropriated in the FY 2013 budget to expand statewide infant mortality initiatives by implementing targeted interventions through hospitals, key state and local agencies and partner organizations. Programs will improve health outcomes for Oklahoma mothers and infants.
- **Rural Health Care**
 - **HB 3058 and SB 1280:** Expands the Oklahoma Hospital Residency Training Program to help solve the physician shortage in rural and underserved areas of the state. Budget deal includes 3.08 million in additional funding for rural residencies.
- **Drug Screenings**
 - **HB 2388:** Requires the state Department of Human Services to screen adults for drug-use who apply to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. If

the applicant refuses a drug test or is found to be using drugs, they would be denied benefits. Applicants who test positive for illegal drug use and undergo substance abuse treatment can reapply for benefits six months after the date of their denial. Child-only cases and underage parents would be exempt from drug screenings.

- **Reproductive Health**

- **SB 1274:** Creates the Heartbeat Informed Consent Act, which mandates that prior to giving informed consent to having an abortion, a provider must inform the pregnant woman that she has the right to hear the embryonic or fetal heartbeat.
- **HB 2381:** Requires the physician prescribing RU-486 or any other abortion-inducing drug to be physically present during the administration of the drug.

Protecting Oklahoma's Children

Governor Fallin believes that Oklahoma has a moral imperative to protect vulnerable children. Reforms at DHS – including the Pinnacle Plan – as well as legislation protecting drug endangered children will help to ensure the state is doing everything it can to meet the needs of its most vulnerable citizens.

Governor Fallin:

“Protecting the lives of the most vulnerable among us should always be a priority. Reforms being implemented at DHS will ensure that Oklahoma improves the care we provide children in state custody.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Department of Human Services**

- **Pinnacle Plan:** Governor Fallin and her office played an integral role in the development of the Pinnacle Plan, a reform agenda that will result in the reorganization of the Department of Human Services and will refocus and improve efforts to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in state custody. The FY 2013 budget contains a \$25 million increase to DHS to fund Pinnacle Plan reforms.
- **HB 2251:** Adds considerations for drug-endangered children under the Oklahoma Children's Code; requires analysis and safety precautions for investigations into drug-endangered children.

Education and Workforce Development

Initiatives pursued this year by the governor and the Legislature would increase accountability in education, continue implementation of reform policies passed into law in 2011, and continue to support college diploma and career certificate attainment in Oklahoma. Additionally, new online tools and policies continue to match appropriately skilled individuals with good jobs in-state.

Governor Fallin:

“It’s clear that a highly skilled, educated workforce has a strong and direct tie to economic growth and prosperity in Oklahoma. Generating that workforce means supporting high quality educational institutions at every level. To meet that goal, we have increased funding for teacher benefits and higher education in our budget, continued the implementation of important accountability reforms and developed a new initiative to dramatically increase the number of degree and certificate holders in the state.

“Additionally, we continue to work through online programs like OKJobMatch.com to link skilled workers – including our returning military veterans – to good career opportunities in the private sector.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Common Education Reform**

- **SB 1797:** Consolidates existing public education accountability and teacher preparation entities into a single Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) in order to save taxpayer money while streamlining existing education accountability initiatives.
- Approved agency rules creating an A-F grading system for public schools to improve transparency and accountability.
- Included a \$54 million increase in the FY 2013 budget to fund teacher health benefits and bonuses for National Board Certified teachers

- **Higher Education**

- Funded a majority of the state’s outstanding commitment for endowed chairs at Oklahoma universities by transferring the bulk of the \$161 million funding the EDGE program to endowed chairs. The endowed chairs programs funds academic positions and research, mostly in the areas of science, technology and math. The program increases research and economic development in the state.
- Included a \$10 million increase for higher education operations in the FY 2013 budget to help, in part, with the Complete College America goal of dramatically increasing college degrees awarded in Oklahoma.
- Authorized \$3 million for the Wayman Tisdale specialty health clinic in Tulsa; \$3.08 million for the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine

- **Workforce Development:**

- Created and launched OKJobMatch.com, a one-stop-shop Web site for students and job seekers to find job matches and for employers to find employees with the skill set they need. OKJobMatch.com is part of a larger portal where information and access to these workforce services can be provided in an efficient and effective way. This comprehensive portal includes resources from Higher Education, Career Tech, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Workforce Boards, Rehabilitative Services and the U.S. military.

- **SB 1863:** Creates the Post-Military Service Occupation, Education and Credentialing Act. Authorizes Career Techs and Higher Education Institutions to use the ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services to allow service members to transfer military training and experience towards academic credits. Authorizes professional licensure boards or commissions to allow for an expedited process for military spouses, who have transferred to the state, to receive professional licenses or certifications. Allows service members to remain in good standing with administrative bodies while they are on active duty.

Improving Public Safety and Saving Lives

Improving public safety and saving lives is a priority for Governor Fallin. Bills signed into law this year include crime and drug reduction initiatives as well as a Good Samaritan law protecting those who offer shelter to other citizens during weather related emergencies.

Governor Fallin:

“Increasing public safety is a top priority of my administration and a primary function of state government. The public safety reforms passed and signed into law this year will help to reduce crime and ensure our streets are safer for Oklahoma families. They are both ‘tough on crime’ and ‘smart on crime’ – and will ensure the state is spending its money wisely when it comes to law enforcement.

Additionally, the Good Samaritan law will help to protect those citizens offering shelter to neighbors during weather-related emergencies. All of these reforms will save lives and boost the quality of life for families in Oklahoma.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Statewide Public Safety Plan**

- **HB 3052:** Establishes a grant program to fund crime reduction initiatives by local law enforcement agencies, requires at least nine months of post-release supervision of all felons, establishes risk, mental health and substance abuse assessments and evaluations prior to sentencing for those found guilty of a felony, and initiates a series of other strategic reforms designed to control prison growth and implement strategies to increase public safety.

- **Reduced Meth Production**

- **HB 2941:** Requires pharmacies to enter information about persons who buy pseudoephedrine or ephedrine into an online tracking service; limits the amount of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine that can be purchased per day, month, or year.

- **Supporting State Troopers**

- Included in budget: \$5 million for authorization of an annual trooper academy with capacity for 40 trainees

- **Good Samaritan**

- **HB 2419:** Prohibits liability for persons offering his or her storm shelter to others in times of severe weather if the owner was acting in good faith and damage was not caused by the willful neglect or misconduct of the owner.

Supporting Our Veterans and Military

Reforms signed into law and policies pursued by the governor and state agencies this year will aid veterans looking for work in the private sector. Additionally, Governor Fallin has asked the new membership of the War Veterans Commission to increase their oversight of veteran's facilities throughout the state to ensure quality services are being provided.

Governor Fallin:

“Oklahomans have a deep and profound respect for the men and women of our military – and their families. We can never fully repay the debt of gratitude owed to them, but we can continue to pursue policies that recognize and honor their service. Initiatives implemented this year will help veterans to seek opportunities for educational advancement and find good jobs. Finally, we remain committed to improving the standard of care at our state’s veteran’s centers. Our veterans deserve nothing but the best, and that’s what we aim to give them.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Veterans Education**

- **HB 2689:** Allows students and dependents of military personnel who are from Oklahoma but stationed outside of the state to receive in-state college tuition.
- **SB 1863:** Allows Oklahoma colleges, university and technology centers to provide academic credit to military veterans, who were honorably discharged in the previous three years, for any applicable education, training and experience received through military duty that pertains to his or her area of study.

- **Jobs for Veterans**

- **House Bill 1985:** Requires public sector employers to interview veterans who meet the minimum and special qualifications for job openings.
- **Developed OKJobMatch.com** in partnership with the Department of Commerce OkJobMatch.com is a Web site to match job seekers with employers. The site serves as a comprehensive employment resource for returning military men and women who have bravely served us, the governor said.

- **Improving Care at Veterans Centers**

- Governor Fallin this year replaced eight out of nine members of the War Veterans Commission, asking each one of them to step up oversight efforts at the state’s veterans centers. Fallin directed them to pursue improvements in service and to investigate any instances of abuse or neglect.
- Allocated a \$1 million increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs for additional nurses at veterans centers

- **Camp Gruber Chapel:** Governor Fallin helped to raise over \$2 million in private donations to support the creation of the Thunderbird Chapel at Camp Gruber

Protecting Oklahoma's Water Resources

The Water for 2060 Act, signed into law by Governor Fallin this year, represents one of the most comprehensive, ambitious statewide water conservation measures in the United States.

Governor Fallin:

“By setting an ambitious water conservation goal and expanding the use of other non-potable supplies, HB 3055 will help ensure we protect our freshwater while helping cities, businesses, industries and agriculture producers find the water resources they need to grow and expand.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Water Conservation**

- **HB 3055:** The “Water for 2060” Act establishes a statewide goal of consuming no more fresh water in 2060 than is consumed currently in the state. The bill also creates an advisory council that will develop a strategy for achieving the statewide goal, as well as recommendations on more efficient use of existing water supplies, identification of new water supplies and more efficient infrastructure.

Expanding Gun Rights and Defending the Second Amendment

Governor Fallin signed into law “open carry” legislation, allowing licensed and law-abiding gun owners to openly carry weapons.

Governor Fallin:

“As a gun owner and strong supporter of Second Amendment Rights, I have always supported the principle of responsible ‘open carry.’ The bill I signed into law this year sends a strong message that Oklahoma values the rights of its citizens to defend themselves, their family and their property. It also does so in a responsible way, by requiring those citizens who choose to ‘open carry’ to undergo both firearms training and a background check.”

Legislative/Policy Highlights

- **Open Carry**

- **SB 1733:** Allows Oklahoma citizens to openly carry firearms. The bill permits those who are licensed, or already have been licensed, to carry a firearm under the Oklahoma Self Defense Act to openly carry a weapon or conceal it. It also allows property owners to openly carry a firearm on their property without a concealed carry permit for the purpose of self defense.

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