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Committees:

Public Health
Public Safety
Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee
on Public Health and Social Services

Oklahoma House of Representatives

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Weekly Review

House Votes to Override Governor's Veto and Protect Life

A bipartisan majority voted to override Gov. Brad Henry's veto of House Bill 1326, which makes it illegal for any Oklahoma business to conduct research that would kill a human embryo or subject an unborn child to a substantial risk of death or injury.

Gov. Brad Henry vetoed the measure, saying it would hinder research opportunities. However, a majority of state lawmakers felt that it was more important to protect innocent human life than reap a financial reward from its destruction.

The House voted 68-26 to override the veto with both Republicans and Democrats supporting the override.

The Legislature has instead voted to support adult stem cell research, which does not require destruction of embryos and has generated more than 70 therapies (embryonic stem cell research has generated none and typically results in cancer formation in test subjects).

House Votes to Require More Violent Criminals to Give DNA Samples

Legislation that would require more than 30,000 violent criminals to provide a DNA sample for a state database was approved this week by the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Senate Bill 1102 would expand existing law requiring DNA samples to include individuals convicted of certain violent misdemeanor crimes as well as illegal aliens upon arrest for any crime.

DNA evidence led officials to a suspect in the 1996 rape and murder of Jewell "Juli" Buskin, a University of Oklahoma ballet student. Forensic evidence from the crime was linked to a man already incarcerated in Oklahoma on an unrelated charge.

Officials have titled Senate Bill 1102 "Juli's Law" to honor her memory.

Under the bill, anyone convicted of the following violent misdemeanor crimes would have to provide a DNA sample for inclusion in the state database: assault and battery, domestic abuse, stalking, possession of a controlled substance, outraging public decency, resisting arrest, escape or attempting to escape, eluding a police officer, peeping tom, pointing a firearm, unlawful carry of a firearm, illegal transport of a firearm, discharging of a firearm, threatening an act of violence, breaking and entering a dwelling

place, destruction of property, negligent homicide, or causing a personal injury accident while driving under the influence.

The bill would also apply to illegal aliens upon arrest for any crime.

The law will add another 32,500 samples to the state DNA database each year, according to estimates.

Senate Bill 1102 passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives today on a 73-18 vote. It now returns to the state Senate.

Educational Accountability Reform Act Passes House, Heads to Governor

Legislation increasing the transparency of standards-testing, student assessment and data collection is headed to the governor for his signature following House passage.

Senate Bill 1111, the Educational Accountability Reform Act, moves accountability and the determination of adequate yearly progress, cut scores, the school testing program and the state student record system from the State Department of Education to the Education Quality and Accountability Office.

The legislation sets up a non-partisan entity within the current Office of Accountability that will warehouse all data, standards and testing and free the Secretary of Education to solely focus on implementation of education programs to meet these goals.

The U.S Chamber of Commerce released a study called 'Leaders and Laggards' in 2007 that gave Oklahoma a score of 'F' in accountability. Despite receiving an 'A' for 21st century teaching force, the state received an 'F' in academic achievement and truth in advertising about student proficiency. Oklahoma also received a 'D' in data quality.

The legislation is also based on a comprehensive study called 'Organizing Effective Educational Accountability: The Case of Oklahoma,' which was released earlier this year and was sponsored by the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition.

The extensive study was conducted by Dominic J. Brewer, Ph.D., and the Clifford H. and Betty C. Allen Professor in Urban Leadership at the University of Southern California and Kieran M. Killeen, Ph.D. and an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Vermont.

The legislation has been endorsed by several education organizations in the state, including the Oklahoma Education Association, Professional Oklahoma Educators and the American Federation of Teachers.

The bill passed the House with a bipartisan vote of 58-39 and now goes to the governor to be signed into law.

Legislation Decreasing Legal Blood Alcohol for Boating Passes House

Members of the House approved Senate Bill 902 to lower the legal blood alcohol content required to file charges against drunk drivers operating a boat.

Senate Bill 902 is intended to increase public safety and aid law enforcement and passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives by a 97-1 vote.

Tax Break for Veterans' Spouses Clears House

Spouses of disabled veterans may soon receive a tax break.

Senate Bill 489 would grant surviving spouses of a 100-percent disabled veteran a tax break of up to \$15,000 on the sales of tangible personal property or services. It would also make refusal on the part of a vendor to honor the tax break a misdemeanor.

According to the Oklahoma Department of Veteran Affairs, there are about 2,364 surviving spouses who would qualify for the exemption. Those spouses would save an estimated \$987,000 combined in fiscal year 2010 and \$1.74 million in fiscal year 2011.

Senate Bill 489 passed the House unanimously and is expected to go to a conference committee.

Legislation Making State's Apportionment Commission Bipartisan Passes House

The people of Oklahoma will vote to change the makeup of the state Apportionment Commission following House passage of the legislation making the change.

The Apportionment Commission, which is renamed the Bipartisan Commission on Legislative Apportionment in the bill, is currently comprised of the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Attorney General and the state Treasurer. The commission is responsible for writing new legislative district lines following a federal census if the Legislature is unable within 90 days to compromise on the redrawing of the districts.

Senate Joint Resolution 25 would change the make-up of the commission to ensure it is made up of equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats.

The resolution, which passed the Senate and House and now goes to a vote of the people, would give the governor, Speaker of the House and President Pro Tem of the Senate two appointments to the commission, one Republican and one Democrat each. The lieutenant governor would also serve on the commission as a non-voting member and as chair of the commission.

The resolution passed the House with a vote of 59-38 and will now go to a vote of the people.

As your Representative, I will always strive to be pro-business by reducing the burdens of government regulation on the Free enterprise system. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 1-800-522-8502.



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