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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***

***People to Decide Voter ID, Not Governor***

Oklahomans will be able to decide for themselves whether to protect the state's voting process from possible fraud by requiring voter identification at the polls despite a gubernatorial veto of similar legislation.

Gov. Brad Henry vetoed legislation that would have ensured the integrity of the voting process by requiring "proof of identity" to vote, said House author Rep. Sue Tibbs.

Senate Bill 4 would have allowed voters to show a photo identification issued by a state, federal or tribal government prior to casting their ballot. It also allowed for voters to show their free voter identification card issued by their county election board.

Finally, if the voter could not present proof of their identity, they would have been allowed to vote by provisional ballot after signing a statement under oath swearing to his or her identity.

Following announcement of the veto, the House passed Senate Bill 692, which will send the voter ID requirement to a vote of the people.

The House passed SB 692 with a bipartisan vote of 69-30.

***Cox votes to screen state assistance applicants for drug abuse***

Lawmakers approved legislation this week that would require drug screening for people applying for or receiving assistance through the "temporary aid to needy families" (TANF) program.

Under Senate Bill 390, persons identified as in need of substance abuse services would be conditionally eligible to receive TANF assistance only if they participate in a recommended substance abuse treatment program.

Senate Bill 390 passed the Oklahoma House of Representatives on a 96-3 vote.

***House Urges Federal Changes to Encourage Natural Gas Vehicle Usage***

A resolution urging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to act promptly and decisively in revising and streamlining its natural gas vehicle certification requirements passed the House this week.

House Speaker Chris Benge, who authored the resolution, said current EPA regulations are a needless hindrance to the natural gas vehicle market and increase the cost of conversion.

The changes needed include a revision of the certification requirements applicable to small volume manufacturers of alternative fuel engine conversion kits.

The resolution also urges the EPA to waive requirements for recertifying alternative fuel engine conversion kits if the kit has been previously certified for the

model of vehicle to be converted and neither the kit nor the design and specifications of the model of vehicle to be converted have substantially changed.

Cost efficiency could also be found if the EPA allows small vehicle manufacturers to include vehicles and engines in a single engine category when it comes to emission testing of converted vehicles and provide additional guidance to small volume manufacturers regarding the conversion of older vehicle models.

The resolution also encourages the EPA to continue a natural gas vehicle research, development, and demonstration funding program within its existing budget and personnel levels to help improve and develop natural gas usage in engines and vehicles.

Research would also assist manufacturers in emissions certification, develop and improve nationally recognized safety codes and standards, and examine and improve the reliability and efficiency of natural gas fueling station infrastructure.

The ultimate goal would be to increase the number of NGVs on the market and on the road, which would allow industry and the public to more quickly decrease the dependency of the nation on imported petroleum.

### ***Legislation Streamlining Information Technology Passes House***

Legislation streamlining and consolidating technology services across state agencies passed the House this week.

Senate Bill 980, by Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee and Rep. Jason Murphey, would create a Chief Information Officer, who would direct technology purchases for state agencies. The consolidation of technology contracts will lead to millions of dollars in savings to the state as improved purchasing power drives prices down.

Instead of each state agency having its own small information technology (IT) contract, this legislation would allow the state to better leverage its purchasing power by buying IT equipment in bulk for agencies that have similar needs.

Oklahoma is only one of four states in the country without a centralized technology officer.

Currently, the state is spending \$340 million a year on IT not including personnel and salaries.

A task force created by 2005 legislation concluded that Oklahoma lacked a state technology strategy after listening to the concerns of agency information technology personnel.

Most recently, experts from across the nation appeared before a joint meeting of the House and Senate Appropriation and Budget committees to provide examples of other states' successes in modernizing their information technology services, often resulting in tremendous savings.

The bill passed the House with a vote of 62-35 and now returns to the Senate for further consideration.

### ***Committee Backs Bill to Block Sexual Exploitation of Students***

Legislation sponsored by state Rep. Todd Thomsen would increase the penalties for kidnapping and remove consent as a factor in the rape of a student by a school official or other person of authority. The legislation was approved by the House Judiciary Committee this week.

Senate Bill 702 would enhance the protection of students by making consent a non-factor in rape by instrumentation of a student less than 20 years of age. The bill would also increase the penalty for kidnapping from 10 to 20 years.

The bill also refers to federal, state and local government officials such as police who have authority over an individual. Thomsen said he hoped that by expanding state law on rape, it would be made clear that the issue is not just age but the power one person holds over another.

### ***Tribes Given Chance to Sponsor Charter Schools***

Oklahoma's tribal governments could soon sponsor charter schools, providing much-needed help to lower-income children.

Senate Bill 586, by state Sen. John Ford and state Rep. Jabar Shumate, would allow any of Oklahoma's 39 federally recognized Native American tribes to sponsor a charter school located in a district with more than 5,000 students in a major metropolitan area.

Shumate said the Cherokee Nation, in particular, has expressed interest in sponsoring a charter school.

Charter schools operate free of most state mandates, providing increased local control. Those schools have been largely successful in increasing the educational outcomes of low-income students.

Senate Bill 586 passed out of the House Common Education Committee this week. It now proceeds to the floor of the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

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



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