

# The **ADVOCATE**

*The Voice Of Oklahoma's State Employees*



March 2007

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Volume 28, No. 2

**PAYS  
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**FAIR PAY  
NOW!**

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**WE NEED  
STAFF**

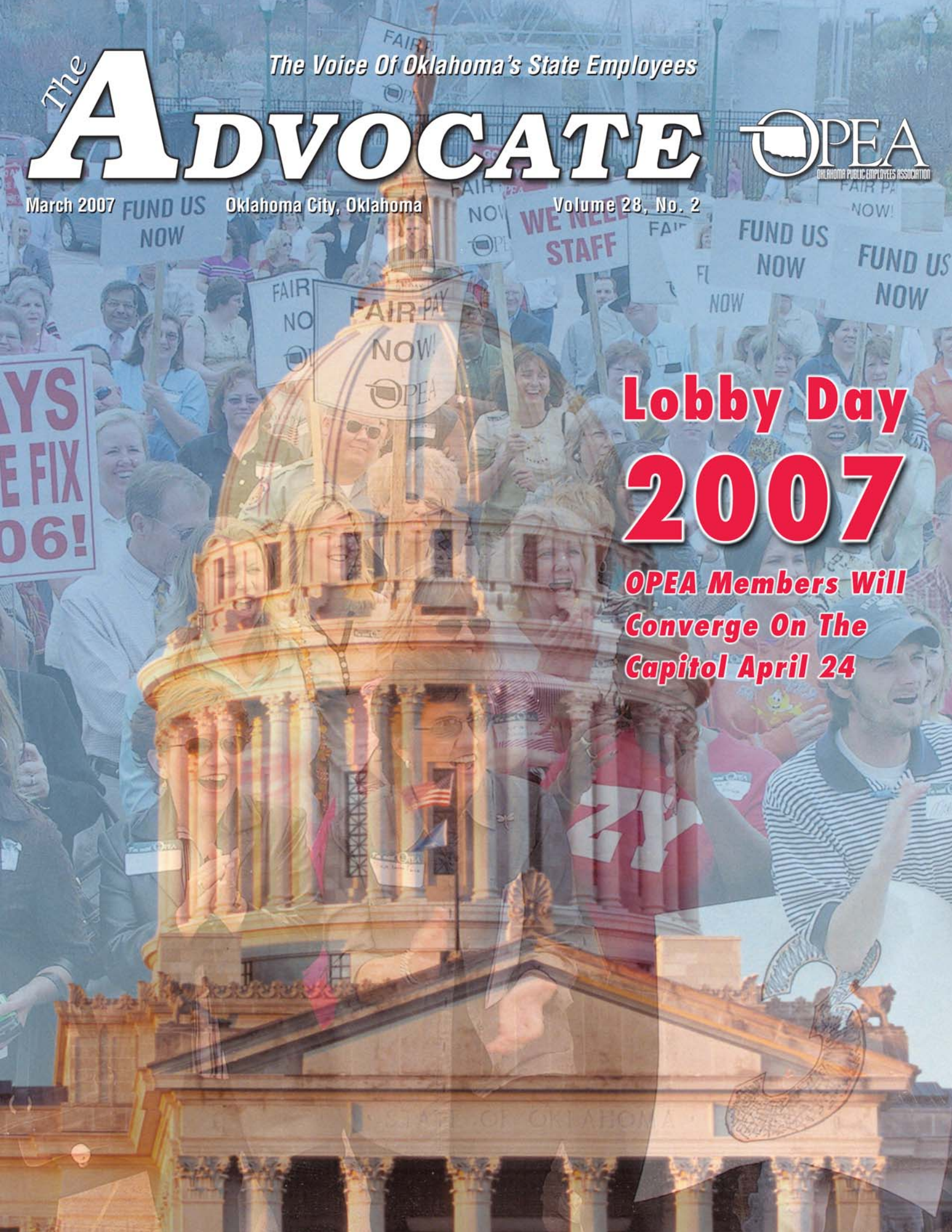
**FAIR  
NOW**

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## **Lobby Day 2007**

***OPEA Members Will  
Converge On The  
Capitol April 24***





# MAKING A DIFFERENCE ...

## New Members • The following people recently chose to get involved by joining the Oklahoma Public Employees Association.

- |                           |                     |                    |                       |                    |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Lora Adams                | Sandra Cavenar      | Nancy Garner       | Stephanie Lyon        | Olivia Rodriquez   |
| Phyllis Adams             | Jason Ceriotti      | Judy Gettings      | John Martin           | Robert Rodriguez   |
| Martha Alexander          | Roger Chandler      | Randall Gettings   | Miranda Mathews       | John Roper         |
| Lana Allen                | Gilbert Cheveres    | Thayer Goss        | Veronica Mayes        | Christina Rushing  |
| Adena Alvis               | John Cole           | LeeAnn Graumann    | Tiffany Mayo          | Joshua Ryans       |
| Cheryl Anderson           | Sandie Cook         | Katy Greaham       | Patricia McAllister   | Nail Sakmari       |
| Crystal Angline           | Jeanetta Cooper     | Clark Greene       | Polly McCray          | Gwendolyn Scales   |
| David Annanders           | Tia Coots           | Cristina Griffin   | Linda McDaniel        | Candice Scarpitti  |
| Ghezal Arsala             | William Cornell     | Melinda Guilfoyle  | Richard McKee         | Paul Scott         |
| Janice Austin             | Scott Cosby         | Kelly Hamblin      | Charlotte McKeon      | Michelle Self      |
| Elizabeth Babler-Schrader | Donna Couch         | Don Hankins        | Eva Marie Mendicki    | Jeremy Sellers     |
| Michael Banning           | Betty Cowperthwaite | Klaidia Hansley    | Sonia Mock            | Tamina Severtsen   |
| Rebecca Barker            | Delores Cox         | David Hanson       | Allen Molyneux        | Michelle Shafer    |
| Carnie Barnes             | Patricia Crepps     | Stephanie Hara     | Al Monks              | Pamela Shannon     |
| Garry Barnes              | Vickie Crouch       | Joanna Harris      | Pamela Mooney-Freeman | Mary Sharp         |
| Johnny Barnes             | Donnela Davis       | Arlyn Hatch        | Bobbi Moore           | Tia Shelby         |
| Mannix Barnes             | Elizabeth Davis     | Willie Higgins     | Jeanne Morgan         | Nathan Simms       |
| Barbara Bartlett          | Cody DeCamp         | Delphina Hill      | Shandra Morton        | Rhonda Slayden     |
| Jodie Bartlett            | Yvette DeShazer     | DeWane Hoffman     | Melvin Myhre          | Velma Smith-Mays   |
| Tom Baty                  | Eric Dickerson      | Teri Hoffman       | Kailee Needham        | Alisa Southon      |
| Floy Beard                | Ruby Dickson        | Pam Holland        | Michael Neeley        | Ollie Stanford     |
| Eric Beasley              | Vickey Dooley       | Andrea Hollis      | Stephanie Nicholson   | Elaine Stow        |
| Bruce Bebout              | Christopher Douglas | Kimberly Hollis    | Layla Nickey          | Tammy Thompson     |
| Don Beighle               | Debbie Drain        | Lea Hopkins        | Diane O'Brien         | Annette Tipton     |
| Phillip Bennett           | J. Draper           | Jeremy Horwitz     | Annie Ogiela          | Robyn Tittle       |
| Shirley Bennett           | Jeffrey Dunkin      | William Howell     | Lori Olmstead         | Joseph Tomasheski  |
| Brooke Berthiaume         | Mike Dunlap         | Charla Hursh       | Sherri Orsburn        | Carl Vick          |
| Karen Blount              | Heather Durbin      | Fred Ikard         | Bruce Outland         | Stephen Walker     |
| Rebecca Bosch             | Crystal Durfey      | Stephanie Ingerson | Jason Page            | Heath Wallace      |
| Jeremy Brice              | James Dutton        | Joyce Jackson      | Kelley Parker         | Carol Wekar        |
| Roy Bridwell              | Billy Eakins        | Teresa James       | Sheryl Parker         | Toyce Wesley       |
| Chris Brooks              | Jennifer Elledge    | Karen Jines        | Robin Peckham         | Katera Whitaker    |
| Shana Brooks              | Shiela Espinoza     | Kevin Johnson      | Cyndie Penner         | Cynthia White      |
| Kathleen Broudrick        | Katherine Evans     | Joshua Johnston    | Edbert Phifer         | M. Cassandra White |
| Arlene Brown              | Justin Farris       | Gordon Karber      | Rochelle Platt        | Vickie Wilkins     |
| Marian Brown              | Michael Fenner      | Gerarda Kelcy      | Nina Pratt            | Carolyn Williams   |
| Stephen Brown             | Marc Fernandez      | Trudi Kimble       | Kimberly Quendibility | Diana Williams     |
| Steven Bruner             | Bobby Fletcher      | Gail Kitchen       | Helen Rambo           | Greg Williams      |
| Michael Burke             | Charles Franklin    | Eva Landeros       | Sherryl Raymond       | Kyle Williamson    |
| Gary Bush                 | Debra Franklin      | Dolores Leotaud    | Cynthia Reed          | Janice Wilson      |
| Albert Campbell           | Annette Fulton      | Elaine Lewis       | Vallene Rhoads        | Regina Wilson      |
| Alfonso Canon             | Carol Furr          | Lewis Logan        | Lonny Ritter          | Jimmy Wingo        |
| Lee Cantu                 | Melvin Gaines       | Shelly Long        | Tommy Robinson        | Joyce Wright       |
| Glenda Carlile            | Magdalena Garcia    | Cheryl Loyd        |                       |                    |

## 15-Year Anniversaries • These OPEA members reached their 15th anniversary with the Association during the past month.

- |                 |                  |                      |                  |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Gerald Baker    | Ruth Fisher      | Fannie Johnson       | William Pinkston | Mary Springer    |
| Mary Bennett    | Gary Grizzle     | Janie Mapp-Christian | Christina Polk   | Lettie Sullivan  |
| Kelly Brewer    | Billy Hamblin    | Mary Mayberry        | Arleta Pummel    | Helen Thornton   |
| Betty Bryant    | James Hazeldine  | David McCollaum      | C. Ranson        | Persia Thrash    |
| Mark Buchanan   | Dale Heltzel     | Wanda McIntosh       | Calvin Redwine   | Ava Tidwell      |
| Anna Burgess    | Samuel Henderson | Ollie Michael        | Kenny Reynolds   | Velma Toole      |
| Karen Calhoun   | Roger Hickman    | Clyde Miller         | Loyd Sample      | Freda Trowbridge |
| Mary Carr       | Jerri Hill       | Connie Moore         | Elvus Sasseen    | Catherine Turner |
| Shirley Carter  | Laura Hix        | Alice Musser         | Ina Scroggins    | James Turner     |
| Mark Cook       | Jeff Hodge       | Betty Neely          | Juanita Shockley | Mark Turner      |
| Imogene Duckert | Ellen Hunter     | Kenneth Newton       | John Shropshire  | Jammie Whaley    |
| Sylva Dukes     | Benjamin Jamison | Patricia Parry       | Foad Slyman      | Donna Wills      |
| Nola Ellington  | Ann Jenni        | Nancy Paulding       | Linda Smith      | Robert Wills     |



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OPEA members and all state employees should mark their calendars for the Association's annual Lobby Day at the state Capitol.

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## Fighting For Change

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association Lobby Team worked overtime during the first few weeks of the 2007 legislative session, moving its bills down the complicated road to the governor's desk while also meeting with key leaders in an effort to gain support on important issues.

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## OPEA Board Chooses Executive Director

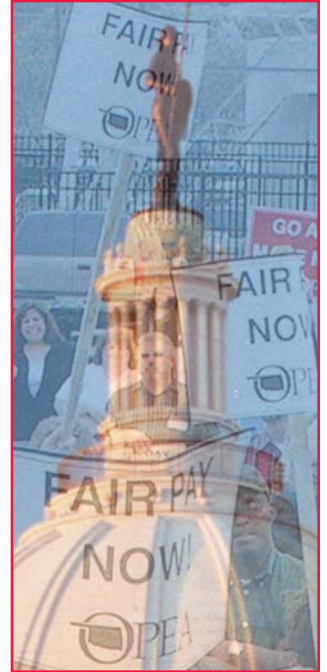
Sterling R. Zearley, longtime north regional director of the Oklahoma State Parks system, was named executive director of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association Feb. 24.

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## 'No Better Friend'

OPEA recently had a productive meeting with Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry.

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### The Advocate

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#### OPEA Board Of Directors

Billy Moore - President • Christie Biggs - Veterans Council • Kenneth Burrow - GRDA Council • Glen Coleman - DOC Council • Mark Collum - DHS Council • Patricia Dill - DHS Council • Jann Ensz - DHS Council • Darren Francis - Natural Resources/Safety and Security Council • Royce Harder - OJA Council • Glenn Hightower - Retiree Council • Dixie Jackson - Department of Mental Health Council • Patricia Naifeh-Parker - Education Services/Human Resources Council • Fred Martin - Transportation/Transportation Authority Council • Tom McDonald - DHS Council • Forrest Rush - Education Services/Human Resources Council • Connie Stockton - Natural Resources/Safety and Security Council • William Weldon - DOC Council

#### OPEA Staff

Interim Executive Director - Scott Barger (scottb@opea.org); Policy and Agency Relations Director - Trish Frazier, MPA (trishf@opea.org); Executive Assistant - Nancy Hughes (nancyh@opea.org); Senior Organizer - Dean Balmer (deanb@opea.org); Communications Director and Special Projects - Bud Elder (bude@opea.org); General Counsel - Melinda Alizadeh-Fard (melindaa@opea.org); Administrative Assistant - Raeshoun Jakes.

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# It's Starting To Come Together

These last few months have been trying times for OPEA, but at last the road ahead looks promising.

Your OPEA Board and leaders have decided it's time to get back to the basics and remember where and why it all started. This Association was founded 32 years ago by state employees who felt the need to have their voice heard at the state Capitol. Over the years, the efforts to unite employees have moved along at a snail's pace and our teachers, while deserving, have become the central focus of the Legislature's generosity.

Our state employees are underpaid and overworked. Employees have no hope of retirement because of the increasing cost of insurance. Most of those who do retire end up coming back to work as 999s or take jobs at Wal-Mart just to supplement their retirement check. I recently visited with a retired state employee whose retirement check, after 22 years of state service, was only \$127 per month. I thought there had to be some kind of mistake until she explained to me that because she had to add her chronically ill spouse to her insurance policy, \$1,100 was deducted from each of her checks. This could happen to any one of us. We have got to come together as one to fix issues similar to this one.



## Moore Comments By Billy Moore • OPEA President

Oklahoma has 45,000 teachers, and more than 43,000 of them pay \$45 a month in dues to the Oklahoma Education Association. The state troopers have 100 percent participation in their association. This could be the reason the troopers have a progressive pay scale that guarantees a salary increase during the first seven years of employment. With only one-third of state employees participating in OPEA, it's no wonder we are left with the crumbs after each legislative session ends.

OPEA plans to establish a theme of unity so that state employees will be able to stop begging for better salaries and benefits. Legislators should be asking state employees what they need to provide better service to the state's taxpayers rather than us begging for cost-of-living increases every year. The lawmakers also need to provide adequate funding for state agencies, which are forced to leave positions vacant because they can't afford to fill them. This most certainly increases workloads for the remaining employees.

OPEA members are seeing progress from the Association and are invigorated. We have a new executive director, Sterling Zearley, and I see the Association growing by volumes over the next few months. Sterling comes to OPEA after a stellar 24-year career in state government.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. Join OPEA today and help us ensure that state employees get what they deserve.

# Working Together, We Can Reach Our Goals

It was my honor Feb. 24 to be appointed the new executive director by the OPEA Board of Directors. As I prepare to begin the job on March 12, I thought I would share a little about myself, as well as an early vision of what I feel we can accomplish together in the short-term.



## Frontlines By Sterling Zearley OPEA Executive Director

I have worked my way up through the ranks within the Oklahoma State Parks system, starting as a curator and ending my service there as the north regional director. I feel I have developed special relationships with my employees throughout my tenure as a supervisor and that my experience as both employee and manager will give me insight into your workplace wants and needs.

Today, I was reflecting on perhaps my lowest day as a supervisor, when budget cuts forced a statewide RIF. As your new executive director, I am going to work tirelessly to see that this situation never occurs again.

As an OPEA member for 17 years, I have seen both the tri-

umphs and the tragedies this group has weathered. I also know that to the general public it might appear that perhaps this Association has weakened since this summer's headlines. I know better. From what I can tell, OPEA is stronger than ever and enjoys a clear vision that will take it to the next level.

Specifically, I have established some general goals that will form the backbone of my tenure with this organization:

- Re-establish integrity and trust for OPEA.
- Provide better customer service for OPEA members.
- Address membership needs and initiate programs to increase OPEA membership.
- Educate both legislators and the general public on the value of state employees.
- Establish common goals for state employees.
- Re-establish pride for state employees.
- Establish a bipartisan working relationship with government officials.

My door and the doors of our staff members here at OPEA will always be open to you. Please let us be of service.

# OPEA Lobby Day Is April 24

OPEA members and all state employees should mark their calendars for April 24, when OPEA will hold its 2007 Lobby Day.

"This is the time that the Legislature should be involved in budget negotiations," said OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger. "We need a good turnout to push our Legislative Program."

This year, the Association will consolidate its active and retiree Lobby Days, providing a larger crowd on a single day to lobby legislators on all OPEA issues.

"Whether active or retired, all OPEA members need an increase in paychecks and benefits to help make ends meet," said Barger. "It's important to show a unified front on our issues."

Participants should plan to come to Room 432a at the Capitol between 9:15 a.m. and noon. Because schedules change so quickly at the Capitol, details about the day will be provided at registration and on the OPEA Web site at [www.opea.org](http://www.opea.org) immediately before Lobby Day.



## Fighting For Change

### OPEA Works Overtime To Move Legislation Through The Process

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association Lobby Team worked overtime during the first few weeks of the 2007 legislative session, moving its bills down the complicated road to the governor's desk while also meeting with key leaders in an effort to gain support on important issues.

According to OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger, while the process represents a familiar battle, some new wrinkles have been thrown into the mix.

"Our first step is to ensure that our bills get through the committee process. If they do not survive the deadline, we have to make sure their provisions are consolidated into other legislation," he said. "This has become an even trickier process in the Senate, which is in the midst of a rare power-sharing agreement. Each committee has two chairs, one from each party, and each chair has veto power over legislation to be heard in the committee. OPEA has had several bills blocked by one of the chairs in two committees."

"Now it is important to focus on the issue and not the bill number," said Barger. "Pay raises and retiree COLAs are always decided near the end of ses-

sion and included in shell bills that have been reserved for that purpose. OPEA members can still impact the process by coming to Lobby Day or hosting legislators in your workplace."

#### Compensation

OPEA is working for a \$2,500 across-the-board pay raise to restore the purchasing power of state employee paychecks. In addition, OPEA has introduced legislation for a long-term compensation plan to bring state employee pay to market over the next four years.

**SB 408:** (*Gumm and Billy*) • This legislation would provide a \$2,500 across-the-board pay increase for all state employees, effective July 1, 2007.

**SB 408** also includes the state employee long-term compensation plan. The provisions of this legislation are being moved to **SB 353** (*Adelson, Crutchfield, Mike Johnson, Myers, Bengé and Kenneth Miller*) after negotiations with Pro Tempore Mike Morgan and Co-Pro Tempore Glenn Coffee. The amount of the 2007 raise is not specified in the current bill because the amount must be worked out in the appropriations process. Morgan and Coffee also agreed

to place the long-term compensation plan for state employees in **SB 353**.

**SB 474:** *Riley and Inman* • This legislation would require that all full-time, permanent employees receive at least \$17,710 per year, which is the poverty limit for a family of three. The current limit is \$12,463. This legislation was bumped from the Rules Committee agenda by Sen. Mike Schulz.

**SB 858:** *Burrage and Sherrer* • This legislation would create a task force from across state government to address recruitment, retention and compensation in classifications related to the medical field. The bill passed the Senate 45-1 and now moves to the House.

**HB 2077:** *Jackson and Sparks* • This legislation would allow state agencies to help pay state employee student loans of up to \$5,000 per year, with a maximum of \$15,000. Employees must work for the state an additional year for each year of the benefit they receive. The legislation requires employees to return funds to the state on a prorated basis if they leave state service before fulfilling this obligation. **HB 2077** has passed the House floor and now awaits Senate committee assignment. (*Continued On Page 6*)

# OPEA Board Chooses Executive Director

Sterling R. Zearley, longtime north regional director of the Oklahoma State Parks system, was named executive director of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association Feb. 24.

Zearley, who had worked for the Parks Division of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department for 24 years, becomes the third executive director in the 32-year history of the Association. He was appointed unanimously by the OPEA Board of Directors.

"As one who has spent all of my professional life in state service, I have experienced firsthand the dedication and pride that state employees bring to their work site," Zearley said. "It will be one of my goals as executive director of OPEA to show both our lawmakers and the general public just how fortunate they are to have these fine public servants working in their employ."

According to Zearley, OPEA member services will be a priority under his leadership.

"I have been a member of OPEA for some 17 years," he said, "and I have seen firsthand the battles this organization has engaged in on behalf of both its membership and all state employees. While my appointment marks a new day for this organization, I want all of our members to be reassured that we will continue to be here, fighting for the betterment of their workplace conditions."

Zearley said another of his goals would be to develop a bipartisan spirit toward elected officials.

"No matter our past affiliations, we are all here to make Oklahoma a better place to live and work," he said. "OPEA's message should ring true to both Democrats and Republicans."

OPEA President Billy Moore said the Association's Board was impressed with Zearley's leadership abilities, as well as with his plans for the group's future.

"Sterling has a vision for this Association for which it is not difficult to become enthused," he said. "We were especially impressed with his plans to help this organization grow by initiating programs to increase membership."

A native of Poteau, Okla., Zearley holds a bachelor's from Northeastern Oklahoma State University and a master of Education degree from the University of Arkansas. He and his wife Samantha have two sons, Austin, 16, and Hunter, 11.



OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley, right, with State Treasurer Scott Meacham.

"From correctional officers to nurses in our veterans hospitals to highway maintenance workers, state employees provide necessary services every day to the people of Oklahoma. It will be an honor to represent them," Zearley said.

## Fighting For Change (Continued From Page 5)

### Retirement

OPEA introduced legislation that would provide a 2-percent cost-of-living adjustment for retirees in the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System. Although OPERS is funded at only 71.4 percent, the COLA would not affect the system because a 2-percent annual COLA is included in the OPERS assumptions. OPEA also introduced legislation to increase the health insurance subsidy for retirees.

**HB 2184: Wright and Sparks** • This legislation would provide a 2-percent COLA for all OPERS retirees, effective Jan. 1, 2008. **HB 2184** was not heard in committee, but the issue is still alive. Legislative leaders informed OPEA that the COLA will be moved to another bill.

**SB 1088: Leftwich** • This legislation would provide an additional \$100 to the retiree health insurance subsidy. Because

OPERS is underfunded, the money would come from appropriations, with an \$18-million price tag. This bill was not heard by the committee. If the funding is available, it will be included in the COLA legislation.

### Personnel

OPEA introduced legislation to provide reduction-in-force benefits to unclassified employees. Clean-up legislation passed in 2003 inadvertently removed all rights and severance benefits for unclassified employees affected by a RIF.

During the budget shortfalls of 2002 and 2003, regional employees of the Education Department and Eldercare workers lost their jobs as unclassified state employees. They received the standard state severance package. However, current law does not

require that unclassified employees receive these benefits.

**SB 657: Leftwich and Hyman** • This legislation would provide RIF and severance benefits to unclassified employees, including the process outlined in Title 74, Chapter 27A, Section 840-2.27 of the Oklahoma Statutes. **SB 657** was bumped from the General Government and Transportation Committee agenda by Sen. Randy Brogdon. OPEA will be working to place the language in another bill.

### Other

**SB 470: Wilson and Piatt** • This legislation would require that proceeds from the sale of land owned by the Department of Tourism and Recreation be returned to the agency for the purchase of land or park maintenance. **SB 470** has advanced to the Senate floor.

# Tax Cuts Are Taking Their Toll

State leaders began feeling the effect of their three-year tax-cut spree Feb. 20, when the state Equalization Board met to recertify funds available for appropriation during the current legislative session. According to the latest information from the Tax Commission, the December estimate of \$277 million in growth funds was too optimistic, leaving the Legislature with \$114 million in growth revenue but more than \$300 million in ongoing expenses and promises made last year.

“This does not even begin to address the critical issues of

have passed tax cuts that will take \$781.4 million from the state budget by the year 2010. The cost for the fiscal year beginning in July is \$658 million.

“OPEA, through the Alliance for Oklahoma’s Future, has fought the tax cuts and warned lawmakers of the coming disaster,” said Frazier. “Unfortunately, election year politics prevailed. State employees and agencies are left trying to make ends meet and take care of Oklahoma, with no new resources for increasing expenses. While they were enjoying their tax cut

party, lawmakers failed to face their responsibility and put funds aside for increases in health insurance, retirement, medical supplies and energy. State agencies left positions vacant to make ends meet, leaving state employees struggling to do more with less.”

Frazier added that perhaps reality has not yet sunk in for proponents of tax cuts.

“Amazingly, some lawmakers want to continue the spree this year,” said Frazier. “Numerous tax-cut bills were introduced this year. OPEA and advocates for state services managed to win a battle recently, when SB 644 was defeated by a tie vote in the Senate Finance Committee.”

Frazier said that, according to the provisions of the bill, as amended, the top taxable income tax rate would have been reduced from 5.25 percent to 4.9 percent beginning in 2011, which would have further eroded

the state’s ability to meet its long-term financial commitments.

“While everyone likes having a little more money in their pocket, state employees must tell their legislators that the party is over and that there should be no more tax cuts,” Frazier said. “Legislators will be looking for every avenue to cut costs this year, including state employee benefits. This is a critical year to remain vigilant, stay informed and communicate with your legislators.”

## The Bills Are Coming Due

Ongoing expenses for state lawmakers (in thousands)

<b>State Employees</b>	Annualize pay increase	\$12,000
	Benefit allowance increase	\$74,000
	Retirement contribution increase	\$10,000
<b>Education</b>	Teachers’ retirement contribution increase	\$13,000
	Teacher and support staff pay raise (annualize)	\$10,370
	Teacher benefit allowance increase	\$27,000
	Higher Education operating expenses (one-time funds)	\$75,000
<b>Medicaid</b>	Loss of federal funds	\$24,440
	Utilization growth	\$17,500
	Medicare A/B premiums for state and Medicaid clients	\$3,097
	Annualize hospital rate increase	\$13,362
<b>DMHSAS</b>	Annualize programs passed in 2006	\$4,820
<b>DOC</b>	Annualize 2007 supplemental	\$40,000
<b>Transportation</b>	Portion of growth revenue that must, by-law, go to roads and bridges	\$17,500
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$342,089</b>

state employees and agencies,” said Trish Frazier, director of policy and agency relations for the Oklahoma Public Employees Association. “Making up for the neglect in state employee pay will cost more than \$100 million. The state has over \$200 million in priority one repairs to dilapidated agency buildings. Staffing levels must be addressed across state government.”

According to Frazier, over the past three years, state leaders

Right: OPEA President Billy Moore swears in members of the Board. Far right: Interim Executive Director Scott Barger, left, congratulates Moore on taking over as president of the Association.



# Legislators Will Scrutinize Health Insurance Program

With the cost of the employee benefit allowance increasing by \$74 million, or 26 percent, for calendar year 2007, legislators are closely scrutinizing the state employee health insurance program.

“Because the HMOs priced their standard plan so high this year, the benefit allowance increased significantly,” said OPEA Policy and Research Director Trish Frazier. “Legislators need to remember that the deductibles for HealthChoice, the most utilized plan, were raised to lower costs to the state and school districts. State employees did not create this problem and don’t have ‘excess’ funds in their benefit allowance. They are using the money that is left over after paying premiums for increasing out-of-pocket costs.”

State employee health care cost increases follow a national trend. Recently, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services reported that \$1 of every \$5 spent in the United States will go to health care. Out-of-pocket costs are projected to increase by 88 percent by the year 2016.

Legislators have introduced various bills to lower state employee health costs, including measures exempting themselves from the insurance program and allowing state employees to opt out of the insurance plan.

**“State employees don’t need to feel any more pain.”**  
– OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger

**HB 1414**, by Rep. Mark McCullough, R-Sapulpa, would provide incentives for employees to opt out of the state insurance program and participate in a health savings account. Employees would receive \$5,000 the first year, and their benefit would be lowered to \$2,000 in the third year. Currently, the benefit allowance is worth \$6,307 per year to individual state employees.

Health savings accounts are high-deductible plans, where employees are allowed to put away funds tax-free for future medical costs. The plans must have a deductible of \$1,100 for an individual and \$2,200 for family coverage.

“State employees, with low salaries, would have a problem putting away enough to cover the out-of-pocket expenses,” said Frazier.

OPEA was part of a coalition of groups that opposed **HB 1414** because the proposed program would lead to “adverse selection,” where healthy employees opt out of a plan, leaving less healthy and older employees and retirees to face massive increases in premiums.

McCullough admitted under questioning by House Appropriations Chair Chris Bengé that premiums would increase for those who remained on the plan.

“This is my attempt, after in-depth reading, to reduce the third-party payer system and to let the consumer feel more of the pain,” said McCullough.

The bill was laid over in the House Economic Development and Financial Services Subcommittee on Insurance and Retirement.

“OPEA was successful in defeating this first attack on state employee benefits,” said Interim OPEA Executive Director Scott Barger. “However, this issue has not gone away for the session. OPEA will be at the Capitol every day and remain vigilant in protecting benefits. State employees don’t need to feel any more pain.”



## OPEA Members Only may call the OPEA office for ...

**New Executive Director**  
Sterling Zearley

**Legal Advocacy Program:**  
Melinda Alizadeh-Fard, General Counsel

**Agency Information:**  
Trish Frazier, Policy and Agency Relations Director

**Grievance Assistance:**  
Melinda Alizadeh-Fard, General Counsel

**Political Action:**  
Scott Barger, Interim Executive Director

**Communications Information:**  
Bud Elder, Communications Director

**Legislation Information:**  
Nancy Hughes, Executive Assistant

**Schedule A Meeting:**  
Dean Balmer, Senior Organizer

**General Information And Questions:**  
Raeshoun Jakes, Administrative Assistant

**Joining OPEA:**  
Nancy Hughes or Raeshoun Jakes

**OPEA Local Number:** (405) 524-6764

**Toll-Free In Oklahoma:** (800) 880-OPEA (6732)

**OPEA Web Address:** [www.opea.org](http://www.opea.org)

**Mailing Address:** 13 N.E. 28th St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105



# Leader Lobby Day A Success

OPEA Board members and other Association leaders gathered at the state Capitol March 5 to hear from legislators and other elected officials during OPEA's annual Leader Lobby Day.

Legislators addressing OPEA members about the status of the Association's legislation included the Senate's two president pro tempores, Democrat Mike Morgan of Stillwater and Republican Glenn Coffee of Bethany; Rep. Mike Jackson of Enid; Minority Floor Leader Rep. Danny Morgan of Prague; State Treasurer Scott Meacham; and Lt. Gov. Jari Askins.

Following a short briefing at OPEA headquarters, the group of approximately 35 people headed for the Capitol, where they convened in room 419C.

"This was a group primed to do some good on behalf of their fellow state employees," said Scott Barger, OPEA interim executive director. "They had come prepared with many questions to ask our elected officials."

First up on the agenda was Jackson, the principal author of HB 2077, which would allow state agencies to pay up to \$5,000 per year toward an employee's educational expenses.

"This bill recently passed the House floor by a 94-3 margin," Jackson said. "It is currently in the Senate waiting for some language changes, as well as a committee assignment."

Jackson said the bill was designed to help state agencies recruit and retain employees.

"We are losing too many outstanding public servants to the private sector," he said. "It amazes me that turnover in state agencies costs taxpayers

over \$80 million per year."

Following Jackson were co-Senate Presidents Pro Tempore Morgan and Coffee. After an assessment of last year's legislative session, when state employees got a 5 percent pay raise, Morgan elaborated on the potential for another raise this year. He said it's far too early to determine budget numbers but pointed out that a bonus for state employees could be considered.

"We are just now beginning to talk to our counterparts in the House about how best

to spend the funds available," he said.

He was followed by House Minority Leader Danny Morgan.

"I am concerned this year with our health insurance issues," he said. "In fact, I have authored a House joint resolution aimed at studying this subject."

Morgan also impressed the crowd with his take on paying state workers competitive salaries.

"Our state employees are dedicated public servants and should be paid accordingly," he commented.

Following Morgan's speech, Meacham spent a long time with the group, mostly discussing the market pay plan that is now included, at the request of OPEA, in the governor's budget.

"From the moment Scott Barger brought this idea to me in a meeting, I thought it would be a common sense method to make sure that our state employees approach market pay over time," he said. "The governor is on board with this plan, and I have already called Oscar Jackson at OPM to have

his involvement as well."

OPEA council member Tim Creedon asked Meacham about the possibility of a one-time cost-of-living salary supplement for state employees this session.

"As far as I am concerned, this administration will explore absolutely all options to help our state employees survive this economy," he said.

Askins, a longtime friend of OPEA, was the last elected official to address the group.

"First of all, I want to again thank the membership and Board of OPEA for their unwavering support in my recent campaign," she said. "Everywhere my campaign went, we met OPEA members who had knocked on doors and made signs. I can't thank you enough."

Askins mentioned that she had been following the OPEA Legislative Agenda with great interest.

"I plan to use the Lt. Governor's office as platform for state employee issues," she said.

Reba Robinson, a retired state employee and active OPEA member, thought her issues were addressed at Leader Lobby Day.

"I feel that our legislators and other leaders are now more familiar with what we retirees deal with regarding insur-

ance and regular COLAs," she said.

Association Vice Chair William Weldon was also pleased with the day's results.

"It was a great opportunity for give and take between our different factions," he said. "We are grateful for everyone who attended on both sides and feel that progress was made."

Participants also had the opportunity to visit with their local legislators.



Participating in Leader Lobby Day were, left to right, Michelle Davis, LeFlore County DHS; OPEA Board member Fred Martin, ODOT; Mike Rogers, Department of Corrections Council chair; and Bill Gaiche, GRDA Council communications director.



State Treasurer Scott Meacham, left, talks to OPEA members during Leader Lobby Day, as OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger looks on.

# Lawmakers Get Firsthand Look At Assessment Center

Continuing its long tradition of putting its membership together with state leadership, the Oklahoma Public Employees Association facilitated a tour and luncheon at the Lexington Assessment Center Feb. 9 with State Reps. Lisa Billy, District 42; Scott Martin, District 46; and Scott BigHorse, District 36.

According to Scott Barger, interim executive director of OPEA, the day's activities were instigated by Rep. Billy through OPEA Senior Organizer Dean Balmer.

"Dean and I both worked for a very long time at the center and have many friends and members there," Barger said. "Dean's diligent work putting this day together will most certainly pay dividends as the session progresses."

The group spent several hours walking

through the grounds of the prison, stopping at the intake center, health center, Career Tech, Oklahoma State Industries, the dog training grounds and the minimum and maximum security cell blocks.

"It was very important for these legislators to see firsthand the bunks on the floor of the unit because of overcrowding and also to experience the sometimes thankless job our members perform on a daily basis," Barger said.

After the tour, the group had lunch, followed by a question-and-answer session with members of the facility staff, including OPEA Board members William Weldon and Glen Coleman.

"We enjoyed some very frank discussions with the legislators with regard to employee pay raises, facilities and other matters of interest," Weldon said.

Balmer commented that the day was



Participating in the legislative tour at the Lexington Assessment Center Feb. 9 were, left to right, back row: Robert Watson, COS; Jane Standifird, deputy; Neville Massie, legislative liaison; Patty Davis, population administrator; Mike Addison, JHCC Warden; Rep. Lisa Billy; Rep. Scott Martin; Rep. Scott BigHorse; and Warden Randall Workmann. Front row: Bob Tomlinson, OSI; Jimmy Green, deputy; and Dean Balmer, OPEA.

a success due to the cooperation and hospitality of the prison administration.

"The work Warden Randall Workmann and his staff put into making this day a success was a wonderful reflection on the entire Department of Corrections," he said.

## Did you know that Oklahoma Public Employees could save up to \$327.96 or more a year on auto insurance?



You may already know that Oklahoma Public Employees can get a special group discount on auto insurance through Liberty Mutual's Group Savings Plus® program.\* But did you know that Group Savings Plus offers many other discounts on both auto and home insurance? In fact, you could save up to \$327.96 or more a year on auto insurance alone.\*\* And you could save even more by insuring your home as well.

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\*Discounts and credits are available where state laws and regulations allow, and may vary by state. Certain discounts apply to specific coverages only. To the extent permitted by law, applicants are individually underwritten; not all applicants may qualify. \*\*Figure based on a March 2006 sample of auto policyholder savings when comparing their former premium with those of Liberty Mutual's group auto and home program. Individual premiums and savings will vary. Coverage provided and underwritten by Liberty Mutual Insurance Company and its affiliates, 175 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA. A consumer report from a consumer reporting agency and/or a motor vehicle report, on all drivers listed on your policy, may be obtained where state laws and regulations allow. ©2006 Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. All Rights Reserved.

# Don't Be Afraid To Use The Grievance Process

Albert Einstein once said, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

If you feel that everything that should count when evaluating your job performance is not being counted, while things that should not count, such as discrimination or how close you are to retirement, are entering into the equation, you need to file a grievance. OPEA's permanent classified members should be aware that it is never too early to pay serious attention to even the smallest discrepancies of recorded job performance reviews.



A positive relationship between employees and supervisors is based on mutual trust, respect and open communication. If you have a problem or grievance concerning your employment, you should be able to discuss the issue with your immediate supervisor. In most cases, these discussions, which are the required first step in the grievance process, can clear up any misunderstanding or conflict. If you are not successful in resolving your concerns, the grievance policy provides an effective way to address work-related problems or complaints fairly and is intended to operate without fear of reprisal.

Employees should not be afraid to utilize the grievance process. Retaliation for exercising the right to file a grievance not only undermines the process but is also illegal. 74 OS § 840-6.2(C) provides that "No employee shall be disciplined or otherwise prejudiced in his or her employment for exercising his or her rights under the internal agency grievance resolution procedure."

Most people want to believe that those in authority over them have their best interest at heart and hence are severely tempted not to "rock the boat." Often, longtime employees who have never had a problem on the job find themselves on the receiving end of overscrutiny of their performance, constant counseling sessions and written reprimands. If an employee faces corrective discipline more than once in a six-month period, this should be a signal that a paper trail for eventual termination is being created and that things better change quickly.

If you feel the reasons you have been given for corrective discipline or a less than meets standard PMP are not justified, then you must use the grievance process.

The permanent classified state employee's duties are set forth in Merit Rule 455:10-19-23: "(a) Any employee who has reason to believe his or her employment has been directly affected by unfair treatment, unsafe working conditions or erroneous interpretation or application of agency policy, procedure, merit rule or law, has a duty and responsibility to attempt to resolve the dispute informally. Thereafter, the employee has the right to file a formal grievance."

Taking these duties and responsibilities seriously keeps the merit system working and operates as a form of checks and balances that maintain the integrity of the state classified service.

OPEA, its general counsel and all members of the staff have been trained in the grievance process and have received the Grievance Manager certification. We are available to answer questions about the grievance process and offer suggestions so you can properly exercise your right to file a grievance and thereby protect your job.

## Burden Of Proof By Melinda Alizadeh-Fard OPEA General Counsel

# OPEA Received Warmly During Visit To Tulsa

OPEA met with old members and new Feb. 27 and 28 in Tulsa, first at the Laura Dester DHS Center and then at DHS office 72B.

"Tulsa is a prime area for our recruitment efforts right now," said OPEA Senior Organizer Dean Balmer. "State employees traditionally



OPEA received a warm reception at the Laura Dester DHS Center in Tulsa in February. Left to right: Nancy Graham, OPEA Senior Organizer Dean Balmer, Kay Saunders, Lester Morris, Susan Edwards, Marshall Tyner and Johnathan Nachtrab.

feel somewhat disconnected from what goes on at the Capitol and that is all the more reason for our friends in this area to become members of OPEA."

Those in attendance at 72B were treated to a visit from newly appointed OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley.

"This was a great group, one that is traditionally tied to CWA. We very much appreciated their enthusiasm and support," he said.

According to Balmer, this will not be the last time OPEA travels up the turnpike.

"We are making Tulsa a priority right now," he said. "We will be making several trips up there per month in order to keep our membership updated on events and assist them as they sign up their co-workers."

**"S**tate employees traditionally feel somewhat disconnected from what goes on at the Capitol and that is all the more reason for our friends in this area to become members of OPEA."  
– OPEA Senior Organizer Dean Balmer

# OPEA Launches Recruitment Campaign

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association launched its first recruitment drive of the year Feb. 1, using the effort to unite state employees while offering members rewards for doing their part.

Members will receive \$5 each for the first 10 members they recruit and \$10 each starting with the 11th new member they bring on board. At the end of the contest, recruiters will be eligible for prizes of \$300, \$200 and \$100.

"We are off to a great start, with the usual member leaders recruiting and building their rewards," said Dean Balmer, OPEA senior organizer. "I think state employees have finally acknowledged that building the Association is the ticket to becoming a priority with the legislators."

Melissa Jones of the Department of Human Services, along with Venita Johnson from the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and Wally Ogunoiki from the

Parker of the Department of Corrections are in the running with two each. Applications are coming in from a wide range of state agencies.

"I know OPEA is there for all state employees, but we at the Department of Corrections are going to show all the agencies that we are serious and we plan to recruit more than all the agencies together," said OPEA Board member Glen Coleman. "I hope DHS members can keep up with us."

Recruitment activity and upcoming lunch visits will be posted on the OPEA Web site at [www.opea.org](http://www.opea.org). If you would like to have a pizza

lunch at your work location, e-mail Balmer at [deanb@opea.org](mailto:deanb@opea.org) or call the OPEA office at (405) 524-6764.

## The Early Leaders

**3 new members:** Venita Johnson, Wally Ogunoiki, Melissa Jones. **2 new members:** Jennifer Wells, Alice Parker. **1 new member:** Janice Austin, Karen Baker, Sue Bates, Brooke Berthiaume, Rondine Bruner, Janet Bryant, Theresa Chonlahan, Matthew Conley, Kacie Cox Brown, David Dyer, Shirley Ford, Joan Guthrie, Terry Haws, Benda Jefferies, Michelle Kirby, Martha Levier, Valeria Lewis, David Martinez, Lydia Marzour, Linda McCarn, Joanne McCurley, Randel McKee, Verna Meadows, Jesse Newport, Rhonda Parker, Kay Payne, Clifton Penner, Thomas Peter, Mike Rogers, Kim Rotelli, Phillip Sullivan, Lynn Swihart, Janis Tidwell, Melody Turpin, Kathy Underwood, Nancy Wright, Bob Zapfe.

Office of Juvenile Affairs, are the top recruiters so far, with three new members each. Jennifer Wells and Alice

# Merit Protection Commission Will Have New Look

The Oklahoma Merit Protection Commission will have a new look this year, with three new appointments, two by House Speaker Lance Cargill and one by the Senate Pro Tempore team of Mike Morgan and Glenn Coffee.

"Perhaps there are no more vital appointments to the well-being of state employees than to this commission," said Scott Barger, interim executive director of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association. "This organization has taken a very proactive approach to the makeup of this board, which is traditionally the last stand for state employees involved in grievances and/or other personnel matters."

For the uninitiated, this year's appointment process might seem complicated. There were two appointments to be made by the speaker's office. OPEA had submitted the name of Robin Eubank, which would in fact have been a re-appointment. Instead, Cargill selected constituents Jacque L. Fincher of Oklahoma City and Jo Ann Bartlett of Del City.

According to Barger, finding a way for Eubank to remain

on the board became a priority.

"Robin was a very fair, innovative commissioner and was respected highly by both the other commissioners and staff," he said. "Since Bud Elder, a longtime Merit commissioner, had resigned to become the new communications director at OPEA, his post was available through the president pro tempore's office. We were able then to get Robin appointed in his slot."

Elder, Barger, Association attorney Melinda Alizadeh-Fard and Senior Organizer Dean Balmer had the opportunity to meet with Cargill's appointments recently.

"Both appointees seemed very keen on their responsibilities

to the workers of Oklahoma," Barger said. "We had the opportunity to give them OPEA's message and they seemed receptive."



Among those serving the Merit Protection Commission are, left to right, front row, Jo Ann Bartlett and Jacque L. Fincher. Back row: Deputy Director Clyde McLenden, Director Susan Bussey and Commission Chair Jerry Rackley.



Robin Eubank

# 'No Better Friend'

"State employees have no better friend."

With those words, Gov. Brad Henry began what was described as a "very productive" meeting with OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger, Board member Tom McDonald, Lobbyist Jimmy Durant and Communications Director Bud Elder.

Held Feb. 12 in the governor's office, the meeting, also attended by State Treasurer Scott Meacham, touched on issues such as pay raises, cost-of-living adjustments for state retirees and, perhaps most importantly, the creation of a market-pay plan to ensure fair compensation for state employees.

Barger first focused on the governor's budget proposal, which had not mentioned a state employee pay raise.



Gov. Brad Henry, left, talks with OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger.

"We had a great conversation with the governor and with Treasurer Meacham about the budget and its lack of an across-the-board raise for state employees. However, in those discussions, we did bring up an element of the budget that contains something that may prove even better for our members," said Barger.

"The governor included in his budget a compensation study for state employees that may ultimately lead to a long-term com-

pensation program," Barger said. "Gov. Henry is committed to taking action to address our compensation issues with a long-term commitment that we believe will be on par with the teachers' long-term compensation program that he championed as he took office. This meeting signals a turning point for state employees, and I am very excited about this commitment. I hope every state employee will watch this progress and remember that it was Gov. Henry and his leadership that is breaking the mold and providing hope to a work force that is suffering."

Barger also mentioned that credit should go to the leadership shown by Meacham.

"From the moment OPEA brought this concept to Scott Meacham, the executive branch has embraced the pay plan proposal," Barger said.

Next on the agenda was the issue of COLAs for state retirees.

"Gov. Henry has heard our message about de-politicizing the COLA issue and not using it as a way to garner support in election years," Barger said. "He understands and is willing to work with us in making sure that our state's retirees are getting an annual increase, if the system can afford it. He also specifically raised the lack of funding for OPERS and wants to put in place a plan by which a mechanism can be created to raise funding levels without burdening employees."

"Gov. Henry has heard from our retired members and realizes that we must soon face retirement issues such as insurance coverage and not make these decisions only in election years," Barger said.

At the meeting's conclusion, Barger took the time to deliver a message to the governor from OPEA.

"I wanted the governor to know how much our Board and membership appreciated his leadership during the snow day leave reversal issue," Barger said. "It took a lot of courage to step out and battle the public, some agency administrators and a policy that was nearly 20 years

*(Continued On Page 14)*

## OPEA Visits DHS In Oklahoma City

It was standing room only recently as OPEA Senior Organizer Dean Balmer captivated a crowd consisting of current and future OPEA members at DHS 55J during a pizza lunch at its offices in south Oklahoma City.

"This was one of the most spirited groups with which I have had the opportunity to meet," said Balmer. "Many were longtime DHS employees who know we have to fight together

to come out ahead with the Legislature and their agency."

Balmer mentioned that leadership in this chapter is strong.

"We had a terrific meeting because of the leadership of Terry Haws," said Balmer. "I think it's possible that we can reach 100-percent membership there."

Balmer, as the OPEA representative for DHS, plans to visit many more of the agency's offices in the coming weeks.

### The OPEA Mission Statement

OPEA unites public employees in Oklahoma to improve the quality of state employment.

### The OPEA Vision Statement

OPEA will be a catalyst to make Oklahoma a better place to live and work.

# Planning Ahead Will Help The Retirement Process Run Smoother

Even longtime state employees familiar with every agency policy and procedure can be confused with what could be the most important process they will undertake: completing the proper forms to begin their retirement.

“The best way to understand details about your retirement is to attend an OPERS pre-retirement seminar,” said OPEA Policy and Research Director Trish Frazier.

According to the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System, state employees should attend the seminar in the year they retire. However, you may attend up to two years before you are eligible for retirement. The process is also outlined in the OPERS handbook.

“The most important thing to remember is that the process must be initiated well before your retirement date,” Frazier said. “Your completed retirement notice and application must be received by OPERS 60 days before your retirement. Start early by contacting the retirement coordinator in your office or agency.”

The key to a successful start of the retirement process is completing the Retirement Notice and Application form. The form may be obtained through the agency’s retirement coordinator, who should also help with its completion.

Once the form has been completed, it should be presented to OPERS at least 60 calendar days before your retirement

date. This requirement can be waived only by the OPERS Board of Trustees.

After OPERS receives the Retirement Notice and Application Form and documents such as birth certificates and divorce decrees, the agency will start sending informational forms to the potential retiree.

For example, a Medicare Gap Benefit Option Election form will show the amount of increase in the benefit before age 65 and the amount of decrease in the benefit after age 65. You will lose the opportunity to choose this option if a signed form is not received in the OPERS office before your retirement date.

The most important document mailed by OPERS to potential retirees is the Preliminary Benefits Statement, which is an accounting of the retiree’s service credit, an estimate of the gross monthly benefit, the date the first payment will be issued, rules for returning to work after retirement, withholding charts and a Withholding Preference Certificate to authorize federal and state income taxes to be withheld.

Included in the agency’s Final Retirement Letter is a final statement of benefits, a list of deductions, such as tax withholding and insurance premiums, and a statement of the amount of contributions, both taxable and non-taxable, made by the employee.

“This process might seem to be a bit overwhelming,”

Frazier said. “However, if the potential retiree follows the guidelines and meets the deadlines, the process can be relatively easy.”

OPERS holds at least two retirement seminars per month. To find out when they are held, follow the Retirement Planning link on the OPERS Web site ([www.opers.state.ok.us](http://www.opers.state.ok.us)) or call OPERS at (405) 858-6737 or (800) 733-9008.

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## No Better Friend

(Continued From Page 13)

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old. OPEA understands the risk and commitment it took, and we wanted him to know that, through his efforts, an injustice to state employees has been righted.”

According to Barger, now that OPEA has been in front of the governor for the first time during the current session, the Association should utilize the information it obtained to further its legislative goals.

“We were encouraged by Gov. Henry’s heartfelt expressions of support for our issues,” Barger said. “We left with specific chains of communication that we have been told are available to us, up to direct contact with the governor himself. We need to use this meeting as a springboard to be able to bring our issues in front of what we feel is a very friendly chief executive.”



OPEA’s Retiree Council met Feb. 15 at the OPEA office in Oklahoma City. Several retirees braved the snow and inclement weather to make plans for the 2007 legislative session and Lobby Day. Retirees are encouraged to set up meetings in their districts with legislators before Lobby Day. If you are a retiree and want to help plan a meeting in your community, contact Trish Frazier at the OPEA office, at (405) 524-6764 or (800) 880-6732. Left to right: Nancy Sharp, Drucilla Heltzel and Lynne Bussell.

# OPEA Staff Attend Receptions On Both Sides Of The Aisle

OPEA staff attended political receptions held by those from both sides of the aisle Jan. 30.

“While there are many opportunities to attend these events, we handpicked these specifically in order to help cement relationships we already have and gain new friends as well,” said OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger.

Representing OPEA at a reception for Rep. Gus Blackwell was Senior Organizer Dean Balmer, while Communications Director Bud Elder and Barger attended a similar function for Reps. Scott Inman, Eric Proctor and Mike Brown.

“We use these informal opportunities to press our issues with these legislators,” said Barger. “We feel that both receptions gave us some face time that a normal business day wouldn’t offer.”



OPEA Communications Director Bud Elder, Lt. Gov. Jari Askins and OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger.



Rep. Eric Proctor, OPEA Interim Executive Director Scott Barger, Rep. Scott Inman and OPEA Communications Director Bud Elder.

## Legislators Tour Mayfair DHS Office

State Sen. Cliff Branan and State Rep. Trebor Worthen recently participated in an OPEA-sponsored tour and meeting at the Mayfair DHS office located in their districts in Oklahoma City.

Branan and Worthen obtained a wealth of information during the tour, led by DHS County Director Nancy Thompson. Both legislators were particularly impressed with the food bank, a charitable operation that includes items donated entirely by the center’s employees.

Following the tour, the legislative guests participated in a question-and-answer session attended by approximately 25 OPEA members. Both were candid about the realities facing the Department of Human Services.

“DHS is the fastest-growing Oklahoma budget line item,” said Branan. “We see the DHS clientele on the campaign trail and know that the work involved in their care is very taxing.”

Worthen echoed similar sentiments and expressed his willingness to work with OPEA to improve pay and benefits for state employees.

“I will support whatever state employee pay plan is agreed upon by the governor, Senate pro tem and House speaker,” Worthen stated.

OPEA leader Thomas Kalayilparampil thought the meeting represented a positive step in relations between the Legislature and state agencies.

“It was the first time either of these officials had ever been to our office and it was good that they could see what we do,” Kalayilparampil said. “This way they have a better understanding of our day-to-day struggle as state employees.”



State Sen. Cliff Branan, left, and State Rep. Trebor Worthen recently visited the Mayfair DHS office.

## Dates To Remember

*(All dates are subject to change.)*

### April 2007

- 9 Agency Director Breakfast • OPEA Board meeting • afternoon.
- 24 OPEA Lobby Day • Active and Retirees.
- 26 Deadline for legislation to pass the opposite house.

### May 2007

- 7-13 Public Service Recognition Week.
- 12 Board meeting • OPEA office.
- 25 Legislative session ends.
- 28 Memorial Day holiday • OPEA office closed.

### June 2007

- 9 Board meeting • McAlester.

### July 2007

- 4 4th of July • OPEA office closed.
- 14 Board meeting • Tulsa.

### August 2007

- 19 Reserved for OPEA Annual Business Meeting • Bylaws if necessary.

### September 2007

- 3 Labor Day holiday • OPEA office closed.
- 22 Board meeting • Enid.

### October 2007

- 20 Board meeting • Norman.

### November 2007

- 12 Veterans Day holiday • OPEA office closed.
- 16-17 OPEA Board retreat/meeting • First tentative date.
- 22-23 Thanksgiving Day holiday • OPEA office closed.

### December 2007

- 14-15 Board retreat/meeting • Second tentative date.
- 24-25 Christmas holiday • OPEA office closed.

# Cash Out With OPEA!

*Put money in your pocket by helping OPEA recruit 500 new members during your Association's Cash Out Recruitment Drive.*

*You'll get \$5 for every new member you sign up, increasing to \$10 after your first 10 recruits.*

**How Many Members Have You Signed Up Today?**

**Oklahoma Public Employees Association**

13 N.E. 28th St. • Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105 • (405) 524-6764 • [www.opea.org](http://www.opea.org)

## Oklahoma Public Employees Association Membership Application

Please return to: OPEA, 13 N.E. 28th St., Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105 or visit [www.opea.org](http://www.opea.org).



First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Work E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Work Location \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work Location Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Work Fax Number ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Who introduced you to OPEA? \_\_\_\_\_

### Payroll Deduction Authorization

I hereby authorize the state of Oklahoma to deduct from my pay the amount checked below required to purchase dues in the Oklahoma Public Employees Association, subject to my right to revoke this order by written notice to my employer.

### Dues Options:

\$15  \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ (Members may choose to pay more to help the Association further its goals.)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ SS# \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 OPEA's standard dues are \$15 per month. Annual dues: state employees - \$180; retirees - \$60; associates - \$20; corporate affiliates - \$300. Contributions or gifts to OPEA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. However, dues payments are deductible as a miscellaneous itemized deduction. Dues include your annual subscription to *The Advocate* (a \$4 value). Your \$15 monthly dues payment includes a \$2.25 contribution to OSEAPAC.

I do not want \$2.25 per month of my dues to go to OSEAPAC.

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