

A close-up photograph of a person's hands in metal handcuffs. The person is wearing a white dress shirt and a dark blue patterned tie. The background is dark and out of focus.

the **advocate**

VOICE OF OKLAHOMA'S STATE EMPLOYEES

May 2010

**PRIVACY
IS NOT
A CRIME**



the advocate

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The Advocate

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There's A Reason Why We Fight



Throughout this legislative session and as budget issues remain, a certain question has been raised a fair number of times. It is a question asked honestly by those who are looking for OPEA's help and also cynically by state agencies. It comes in various forms, but it boils down to this: Why would we, state employees who already are members of OPEA, fight to save state employees who are not?

Ultimately, this is a question members must answer for themselves. Speaking as someone who is in a position of responsibility in this Association, I could write endlessly on why I'm in the fight.

Here is why we fight:

Because we know what came before - None of us stands on our own in state employment. We have all been boosted onto the shoulders of generations of OPEA members who demanded and achieved a decent standard of living for state employees.

Because we know what we've got - As a result of past fights,

we have everything we could never have earned without a fight: longevity, retirement, merit protection, affordable health insurance and countless other benefits.

Because we know what you're going through - We see the budget dilemma every day: agencies forced to sacrifice human capital (that's you and me) to balance the budget; substandard pay with wages that have been frozen since 2006; and increasing caseloads. The Dangerfieldian lack of respect with which you are treated drains power from all state employees. Not only does it bring down individual state employees, it brings our families down as well.

Because we know we're next - This budget will get worse, and more pressure will be placed on furloughing or RIF'ing state employees. It will spread throughout state government unless more state employees get behind OPEA.

As I write this, state employees in OKDHS, DOC, OJA, the Corporation Commission and many other agencies are facing deeper and deeper budget cuts that, if you stand on the side, probably will mean less take-home pay. (Continued On Page 22)

The President's Pen

By Connie Stockton
OPEA President

When We're United, The Sky Is The Limit



The 2010 legislative session has been fast-paced and filled with significant budget challenges. The session will conclude on May 28, and the last few weeks of May will be dominated by budget negotiations.

OPEA has continued to educate legislators on the impact that budget reductions will have on the citizens of Oklahoma and state employees. OPEA is fighting to assure that budget reductions are kept to a minimum and that common and higher education share in the burden of these reductions.

The date of birth issue has been and continues to be a hot topic for state employees during this legislative session. We know that when you become a public employee, you give up certain rights to privacy. Your salary becomes a matter of public record, and, with the click of a mouse or a trip to the Capitol, people can find almost any detail about state employees who are paid with taxpayer dollars.

I believe that just because a person becomes a public employee does not mean their entire life history should be open to the public. Many state employees are engaged in law

enforcement activities, child welfare cases, determining benefits and other occupations that leave them open to retaliation from a disgruntled citizen or former offender. Therefore, a state employee's date of birth should not be a matter of public record.

This is not just about fraud or identity theft. It is about protecting our employees and their families. A person's date of birth is the missing piece in the identity puzzle if someone is trying to commit fraud or harm an individual.

Over the past couple of months, newspapers have claimed that "dates on a calendar do not belong to any single person, and taxpayers have the right to know the dates of birth of public employees."

I disagree. A person's date of birth belongs to that person. There is no way to change that.

It is not just a date on a calendar. State employees are taxpayers, too, and they have a right to a semblance of privacy. In this day of identity theft and fraud, it's important to protect a person's safety, and that includes those individuals who have chosen a career in

A Sterling Example

By Sterling Zearley
OPEA Executive Director

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District Judge Rules For State Employees In Birth Date Case

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association's battle to keep the state's largest newspaper from obtaining the birth dates of state employees received a major boost April 9, when a District Court judge granted OPEA and the Oklahoma State Troopers Association a restraining order that will at least temporarily prevent the release of this information.

Oklahoma County District Court Judge Bryan Dixon granted the temporary restraining order in a courtroom packed with OPEA members, Highway Patrol troopers, state legislators and representatives of state agencies. Reporters and photographers from *The Oklahoman*, which requested the information from the state in February, also were on hand, as was the newspaper's editor, Ed Kelley.

"This is a significant win for our members and all 37,000 state employees," OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley commented after Dixon's ruling. "We stepped up to the plate on this issue because we believe in protecting the rights of our state's workforce. It's not just employees' rights for which we are crusading but their very safety. A person's date of birth is the



Rep. Randy Terrill, right, talks with John Estus, a reporter with *The Oklahoman*.

one key that could unlock the door not only to identity theft and fraud, but it could affect their safety and that of their family if someone is looking to do them harm. That's why we fought so tirelessly on this issue."

"This is an important victory for state employees and all Oklahoma citizens," Sen. Debbe Leftwich added. "Once the genie is out of the bottle, you can't put it back in. Had the court allowed the mass release of all state employees' birth dates, that information would have remained a public record forever – even long after a person has left state employment. There is nothing in place to govern how long someone could hold onto that personal information or what they could use it for."

Rep. Randy Terrill also voiced his appreciation of the judge's ruling.

"This was a win for both the privacy and safety interests of state employees, as well as the public interest," he said. "All along we have said that if there are specific allegations of corruption or wrongdoing, we do not have a problem



allowing the press to contact state agencies to verify a person's identity. What we have strongly objected to is the mass release of all state employees' birth dates."

In February, *The Oklahoman* asked the Office of Personnel Management to release information about all state employees, including full name, title, employee ID number, agency, job description, start date and date of birth. OPEA urged its members to call or e-mail the editors of *The Oklahoman* and ask why they need to make public every state employee's date of birth. The newspaper retaliated by asking Attorney General Drew Edmondson to investigate whether state employees carried out political activities on state time.

"We offered to meet with the editors face-to-face. They did not respond to our request, and instead resorted to this tactic. Clearly this is a misuse of the power of the press to intimidate private citizens," Zearley said at the time. "Our members were not engaging in political lobbying but expressing their right to free speech."

OPEA filed an injunction in District Court March 29, seeking to protect state employees' confidential information. The Oklahoma State Troopers Association filed a similar injunction April 2, and, four days later, nine other state law enforcement agencies joined the fight by announcing their opposition to efforts to release state employees' birth dates and other private information.

"OPEA welcomes the support of the state's law enforcement community in refusing to release this information," Zearley commented. "The release of this information would adversely impact public safety and our law enforcement agencies' ability to perform their jobs. We are fortunate the State Troopers Association is joining with us in this fight. This is an issue that will affect every single state employee, as well as those who work for city and county municipalities."

Why Privacy Is Important

OPEA Strives To Protect State Employees

During the current legislative session, OPEA has been working to safeguard employees' privacy for several reasons. First, public servants should not be subject to unreasonable invasion of their privacy by a media outlet that wants to sell newspapers in their "ongoing investigation into the background of state employees." Computer and privacy experts indicate revealing your birth date could expose you to identity theft. Read on to find out more about why OPEA opposes releasing state employees' birth dates to the public.

A Word From The So-Called Experts

The Oklahoman has quoted a so-called "privacy expert" from Texas, Richard J.H. Varn, who claims the release of birth dates poses no threat to state employees. Varn is the executive director of The Coalition for Sensible Public Records Access, which lobbies in Texas for the release of all information about public employees.

Varn and *The Oklahoman* do not disclose that Varn represents companies that are no more than media marketing firms or information data miners. Some of the members of his organization include Acxiom Corp., R.L. Polk & Co., First American CoreLogic, First Advantage and Reed Elsevier. All these companies either concentrate on marketing and research or sell data to other organizations. They pay big money to get their hands on information for their clients. *The Oklahoman's* parent company recently joined the ranks of these corporations when it purchased a direct mail company.

OPEA, on the other hand, has found an expert source that has been cited in *Information Week* but has not been bought and paid for by corporate interests. Two researchers from Carnegie Mellon University have proved that you

can find a person's Social Security number if you have his or her name, birth date and place of birth.

In "Predicting Social Security Numbers from Public Data," Alessandro Acquisti and Ralph Gross illustrate how



to predict the first five digits of Social Security numbers based on place and date of birth. The last four digits can be calculated using a computer program that guesses the four-digit number. This process is much more accurate in geographical locations with lower population density, which is the situation in parts of rural Oklahoma.

In addition, *Harvard Magazine* recently reported in the article titled "Exposed" that linking databases can put the pieces of the puzzle together to learn more and more about a person. Linking a medical database used for research to a voter database, the author was able to identify the anonymous medical records of then Massachusetts Gov. William Weld.

You might trust Ed Kelley, editor of *The Oklahoman*, not to use the private information of state employees to determine Social Security numbers, facilitate identity theft or gain access to your

medical records. However, if news organizations can access your private information, so can anyone else. Technology has facilitated the storage and transfer of large amounts of information, making it easy for a corporation or individual to use it for marketing or identity theft.

The Oklahoman's expert, bought and paid for by corporate interests, says "trust us." Academic and computer programming experts indicate individuals and employers should protect workers' information. Who do you believe?

What Is Identity Theft?

The following is a partial reprint of an article from the Federal Trade Commission's website. For more information go to: www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/consumers/about-identity-theft.htm

Identity theft is when someone uses your personal identifying information, like your name, Social Security number or credit card number, without your permission, to commit fraud or other crimes. The FTC estimates that as many as 9 million Americans have their identities stolen each year.

The crime takes many forms. Identity thieves may rent an apartment, obtain a credit card or establish a telephone account in your name. You may not find out about the theft until you review your credit report or a credit card statement and notice charges you didn't make – or until you're contacted by a debt collector. Identity theft is serious. While some identity theft victims can resolve their problems quickly, others spend hundreds of dollars and many

(Continued On Page 6)



Several legislators recently spoke with OPEA members at the Creek County DHS office. They included, above, left to right, Rep. Mark McCullough, Sen. Brian Bingman and Rep. Skye McNiell. Left: OPEA members listen to the lawmakers speak.

Why Privacy Is Important (Continued From Page 5)

days repairing damage to their good name and credit record. Some consumers victimized by identity theft may lose out on job opportunities or be denied loans for education, housing or cars because of negative information on their credit reports. In rare cases, they may even be arrested for crimes they did not commit.

How Do Thieves Steal An Identity?

Identity theft starts with the misuse of your personal identifying information, such as your name and Social Security number, credit card numbers or other financial account information. For identity thieves, this information is as good as gold. Skilled identity thieves may use a variety of methods to get hold of your information, including:

Dumpster diving - They rummage through trash looking for bills or other paper with your personal information on it.

Skimming - They steal credit/debit card numbers by using a special storage device when processing your card.

Phishing - They pretend to be financial institutions or companies and send spam or pop-up messages to get you to reveal your personal information.

6 Changing your address - They divert your billing

“While some identity theft victims can resolve their problems quickly, others spend hundreds of dollars and many days repairing damage to their good name and credit record.”

statements to another location by completing a change of address form.

Old-fashioned stealing - They steal wallets and purses; mail, including bank and credit card statements; pre-approved credit offers; and new checks or tax information. They steal personnel records or bribe employees who have access to them.

Pretexting - They use false pretenses to obtain your personal information from financial institutions, telephone companies and other sources.

Once they have your personal information, identity thieves use it in a variety of ways, including credit card fraud, phone or utilities fraud, bank fraud and government documents fraud.

What Can You Do To Help Fight Identity Theft?

Awareness is an effective weapon against many forms of identity theft. Be aware of how information is stolen and what you can do to protect yours, monitor your personal information to uncover any problems quickly and know what to do when you suspect your identity has been stolen.

Armed with the knowledge of how to protect yourself and take action, you can make the job of identity thieves much more difficult. You can also help fight identity theft by educating your friends, family and members of your community. The FTC has prepared a collection of easy-to-use materials to help people inform others about this serious crime.

Association Will Celebrate 35th Birthday At Annual Convention

OPEA members from across the state will converge on the Crowne Plaza in Oklahoma City Aug. 27 and Aug. 28 for the Association's 2010 Convention and Delegate Assembly.

"'OPEA's 35th Anniversary' " is this year's theme, as state employees gather to determine strategies for combating RIFs, furloughs and service cuts during these tough economic times," said OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley. "OPEA has accomplished a lot for state employees over 35 years and has a rich tradition of experience to help chart our course for the future."

"This has to be one of the worst

years we've ever seen for state employees during the 35 years OPEA has been in existence," Zearley added. "We have seen furloughs, RIFs and budget cuts, and it's frightening. So now is the time for every one of us to plan the future of OPEA and celebrate how far we have come in the past 35 years. We can make OPEA stronger than it's ever been. Now is the time to be involved."

This year's Convention kicks off Aug. 27 with a meet and greet from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. The Friday night event will include finger foods and activities for members and their families, and state legislators will be in attendance.

falling at 9 a.m. OPEA members will adopt the Association's Platform, and the Convention is scheduled to wrap up around 3 p.m.

"OPEA members are encouraged to help set the course for the future by participating in the Platform process and attending the Delegate Assembly," Zearley said. "The process begins at regional meetings." (See page 11 to find out when and where your regional meeting will be held.)

The Convention registration form should be filled out and returned to the OPEA office at 13 N.E. 28th St., Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105 or faxed to (405) 524-4671. The registration fee is \$15 until July 30 and \$20 after that. The fee includes the Friday night meet and greet event and breakfast, breaks and lunch on Saturday.

Registration begins at 8 a.m. Saturday, with the opening gavel of the Delegate Assembly

Registration Form

**OPEA Convention and Delegate Assembly
Aug. 27 and Aug. 28, 2010 • Oklahoma City, OK**

Name _____

Agency or retiree _____

Address _____

E-mail address _____

Daytime phone _____

Number attending the Friday night reception _____

Registration fee includes:

Friday night meet and greet event
Convention registration • Saturday breakfast
Saturday breaks • Saturday lunch

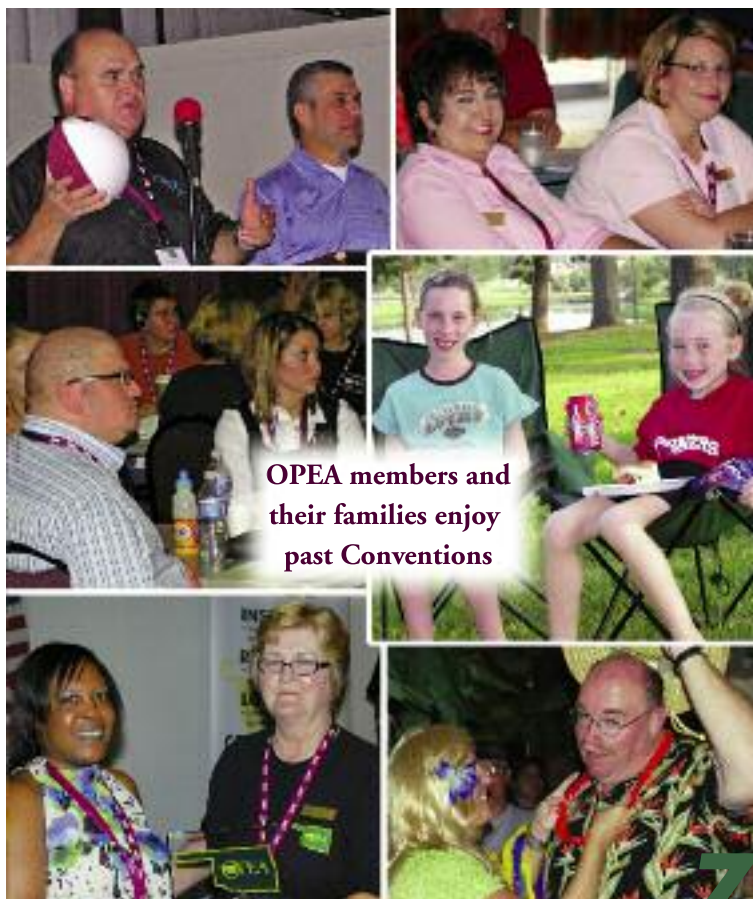
Accommodations:

Crowne Plaza
2945 Northwest Expressway • Oklahoma City, Ok. 73112
(405) 848-4811 • (888) 444-0401

Please return this form to:

OPEA
13 N.E. 28th St.
Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105
or fax to (405) 524-4671

Early Bird Special:
The registration fee is
only \$15 if you register by
July 30. The fee will be
\$20 after that date.



OPEA members and their families enjoy past Conventions

OPEA Seeks Nominations For Annual Awards

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association will accept nominations for its annual awards through July 23. The awards will be presented at the Association's Annual Convention in Oklahoma City Aug. 28.

Awards to be presented are:

Gaines Stout Award - This award goes to a member who has exhibited leadership in promoting the goals and objectives of the Association. District directors are not eligible for the award.

Gaines Stout and seven other Department of Transportation employees founded OPEA in 1975. He served

as president of the Association from 1975 to 1978.

Art Jackson Award - This award is presented to the chapter that has excelled far beyond the minimum requirements of the Association's bylaws.

Art Jackson served as OPEA president in 1979, 1980 and 1985 and was also a member of the Board of Directors for many years.

Volunteer of the Year - This award is presented to an OPEA member who is not an elected official in the Association but is always available when needed to help with OPEA and chapter activities.

This individual might also exhibit his or her willingness to help others by volunteering in the community.

Retiree of the Year - This award is presented to a member who has retired from state service and has remained active in OPEA activities.

Nominations should be mailed to Haley Blood at the OPEA office at 13 N.E. 28th St., Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105, e-mailed to haleyb@opea.org or faxed to (405) 524-4671. For further information about OPEA's annual awards, call the Association office at (405) 524-6764 or (800) 880-6732.

OPEA Annual Awards

Nomination Form

Gaines Stout Award

This award is presented to a member of OPEA who has exhibited leadership in promoting the goals and objectives of the Association. District directors are not eligible for the award. Please include the following information that applies to the nominee:

- Chapter positions held;
- Activities the individual has helped organize;
- Attendance at OPEA legislative Lobby Days;
- Attendance at the previous year's Annual Convention;
- Attendance at chapter functions and meetings, including the number attended;
- Involvement in recruiting new members and the number of members recruited;
- Years of OPEA membership.

Art Jackson Award

This award is presented to the chapter that has excelled far beyond the minimum requirements of the Association's bylaws. Note the chapter's accomplishments for the year. The chapter must submit a scrapbook or other form of reviewable record to document the year's activities. The nomination form should include the following information:

- Number of new members signed up during the previous year;
- Legislative activities, including documented letters sent to legislators by chapter members and members' attendance at OPEA Lobby Days;
- Dates of chapter meetings;
- Dates of meetings held by chapter officers;
- Activities held to recruit new members;
- Chapter attendance at previous year's Annual Convention;

- Special projects and programs;
- Other activities, such as community activities, publishing a chapter newsletter, etc.

Volunteer Of The Year Award

This award is presented to an OPEA member who is not an elected official in the Association but is always available to help with OPEA and chapter activities. The individual might also exhibit his or her willingness to help others by volunteering in the community. The nomination form should answer these questions:

- What activities has the nominee helped organize?
- What OPEA events has the nominee attended?
- How has the nominee helped recruit members for OPEA?
- What role has the nominee played in the development of OPEA?
- If you were asked to cite a special quality of the nominee, what would it be?
- In what community activities has the nominee been involved?
- How has OPEA benefited from the nominee's actions?
- Can the result of the nominee's time and effort be measured? Is it innovative? Is it unique? In what ways?

Retiree Of The Year Award

This award is presented to a member who has retired from state service. The nomination form should include a list of activities:

- Is the nominee actively involved in OPEA?
- Has the nominee attended at least two-thirds of chapter activities?
- Did the nominee attend last year's OPEA Annual Convention?
- Has the nominee been retired for one year?
- Is the nominee politically active?

Will Your Idea Make It To The Governor's Desk?

Like Matthew Nowlin, OPEA members will have an opportunity to see their ideas end up on the governor's desk by participating in the Platform process this summer.

In 2007, Nowlin, an OPEA member and employee with the Employment Security Commission, was the catalyst for what became the Financial Reimbursement for Educational Expenses Act of 2007. Created to help recruit and retain quality state employees, the bill authorizes state agencies to pay some education loan expenses for state employees.

"It was exciting to watch my idea make its way through the process," Nowlin said. "This is an important step in recruiting the next generation of state employees and will also encourage recent graduates to consider public service and to stay in the state and help build the future of Oklahoma."

The first step in this process is meeting and discussing ideas with other state employees in workplaces across the state and at regional meetings.

"State employees and retirees are facing serious challenges with the economic downturn and state budget shortfall," said OPEA

Platform Chair Jann Ensz. "Members have an opportunity to see their ideas put into the OPEA Platform and move through the legislative process, possibly even to the governor's desk."

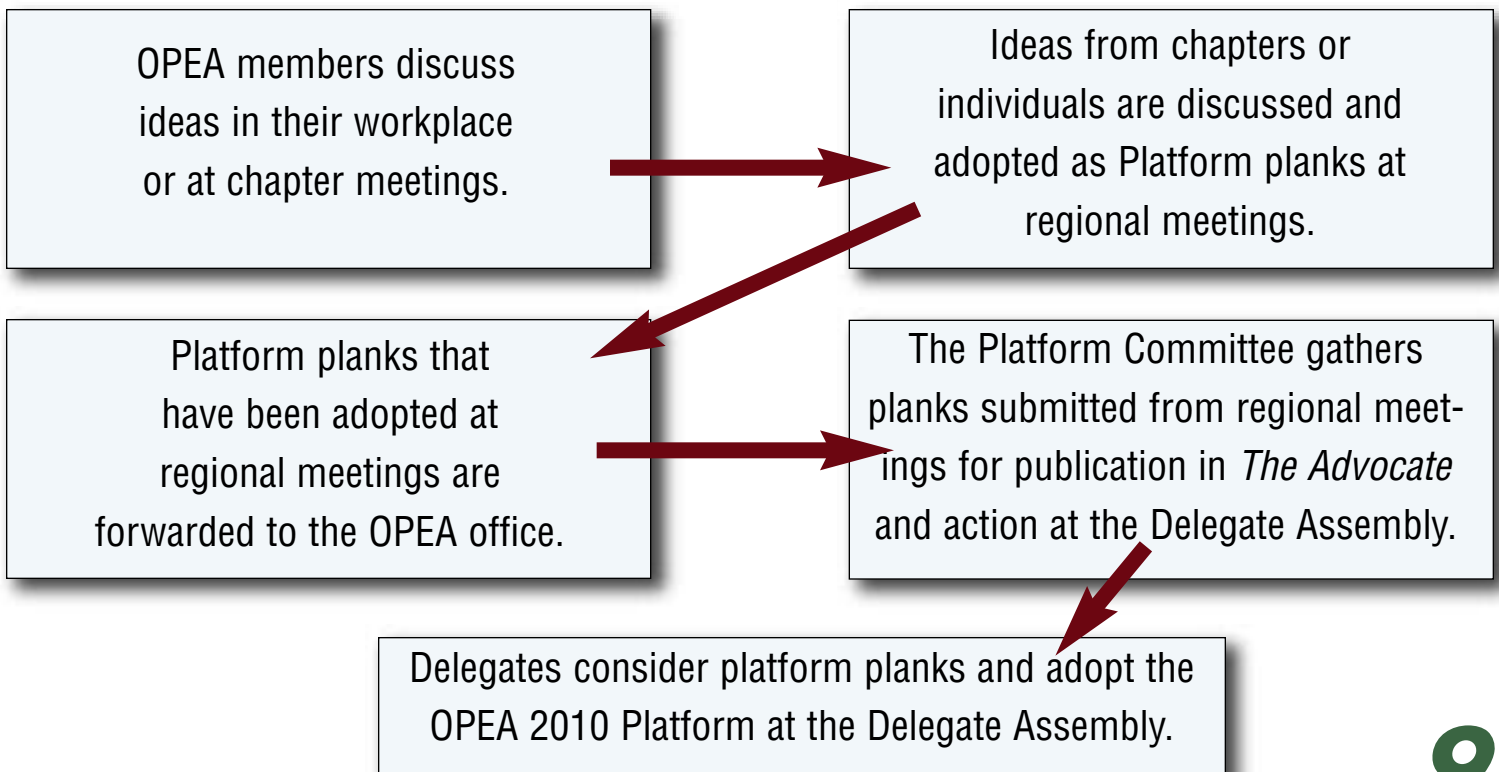
OPEA members should discuss ideas for Platform planks with others in their workplace or at a chapter meeting and bring those ideas to regional meetings. At regional meetings, participants will discuss and adopt planks to forward for consideration at the Delegate Assembly, scheduled for Aug. 28 in Oklahoma City.

Meetings will be held in all 11 OPEA regions in late May and the first few weeks of June. To find a meeting in your area, see page 11 or visit the OPEA website at www.oepa.org.

"OPEA is going back to its roots in the Platform process this year," said Ensz. "Each individual plank forwarded from regional meetings will be debated and considered for adoption on the Delegate Assembly floor."

The planks or resolutions from regional meetings will be printed in the July *Advocate* in preparation for the Delegate Assembly in August.

The Platform Process



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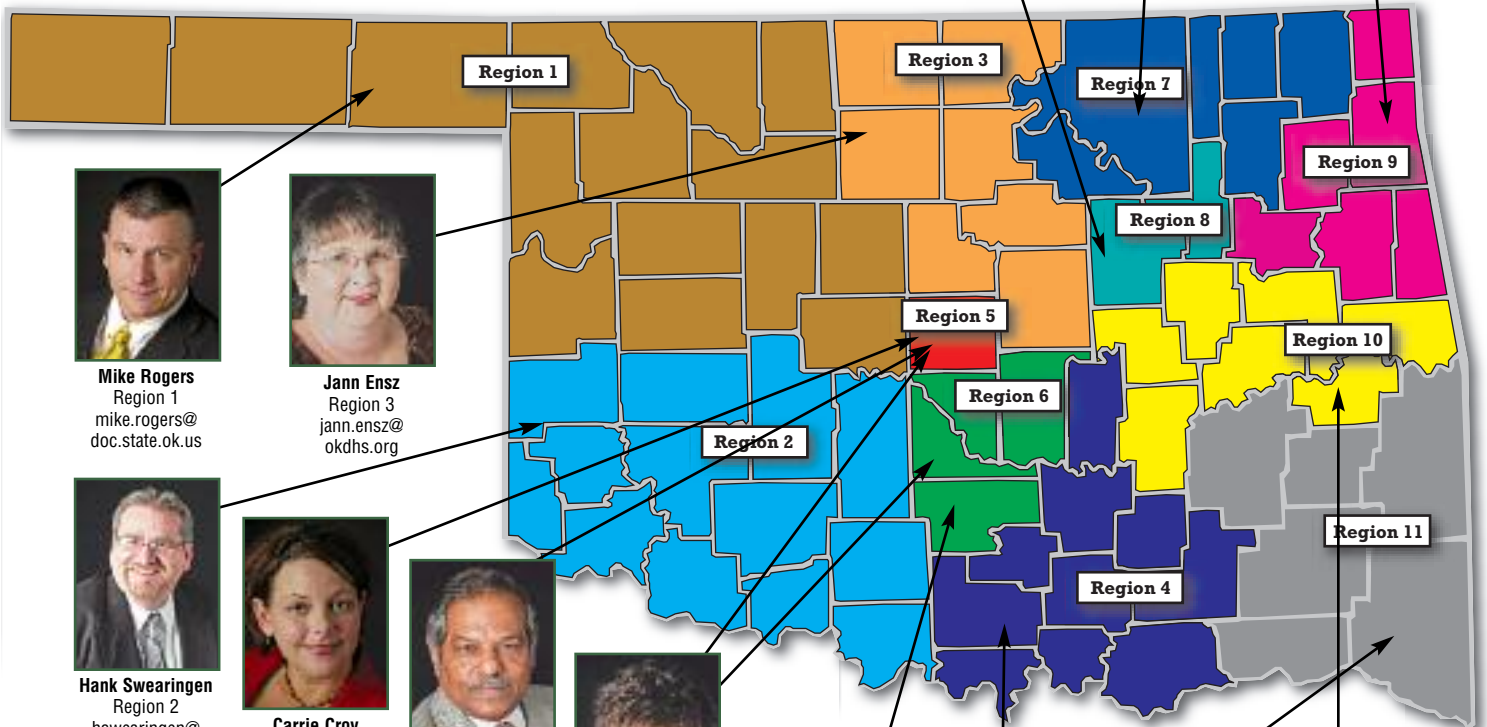
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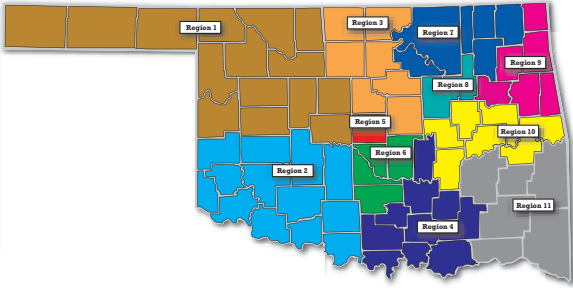


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Regional Meetings



Region 1	To be announced
Region 2	Dutch treat lunch Saturday, May 15 • 11 a.m. Golden Corral 2623 N.W. Cache Road • Lawton
Region 3	Saturday, June 12 • 10 a.m. Enid Public Library Meeting Room 120 W. Maine, Enid
Region 4	To be announced
Region 5	Wednesday, June 2 • 5:30 p.m. OPEA office • 13 N.E. 28th St. • Oklahoma City
Region 6	Thursday June 3 • 5:30 p.m. Oklahoma Electric Cooperative 242 24th Ave. N.W. • Norman
Region 7	Saturday, May 22 • 10 a.m. Will Rogers Library 1515 N. Florence • Claremore
Region 8	Friday, May 21 • 6 p.m. Chimis • S.E. Corner of 15th and Peoria Tulsa
Region 9	Saturday, May 22 • 9 a.m. Emerald City Coffee and Bistro 109 Steve Barry Blvd. • Pryor
Region 10	Thursday, June 3 • 6:30 p.m. Muskogee Public Library 801 W. Okmulgee • Muskogee
Region 11	Dutch treat lunch Saturday, May 29 • 10:30 a.m. Western Sizzlin • 506 South George Nigh Expressway • McAlester



Do you know who these people are? Be the first person to identify them and you'll win a prize from OPEA.

DHS Members Volunteer Their Time For OPEA

Oklahoma Public Employees Association President Connie Stockton is telling state employees in telephone conversations that “There is no better time to strengthen OPEA with your membership than now.”

“This is a tough time to be a state employee, and it is a tough time to be an Association leader,” said Stockton. “But OPEA is up to the task, and I am getting a great response from state employees. Many are choosing to join with us to increase the Association’s ability to fight the devastating budget cuts and all the ramifications that come with them.”

Stockton was in the OPEA office for five days recently to help the OPEA staff make phone calls to employees seeking more information on the state’s budget situation and about OPEA membership.

“A group of employees from the OKDHS 55J OPEA chapter came into the office recently because they felt it was important enough to give up their own time to talk with other state employees about joining OPEA,” said Stockton. “That is truly what OPEA is about. The employees from 55J were saying that they are up to the task of supporting OPEA and then some. It really has made an impression on me, and that is why I wanted to do my part as well.”

Stockton and the 55J employees called state employees who have contacted OPEA asking for information. OPEA has received more than 300 inquiries from state employees working at a wide range of state agencies.

OPEA’s membership team is spearheading the effort.

“With the field visits the staff is making, it was almost impossible for OPEA to get to all the requests,” said OPEA Membership Representative Jimmy Durant. “Our volunteer leaders are seeing the need and stepping up to help build OPEA, and it is really effective.”

“The response from our calls is great,” said 55J Vice President Jessica Watson. “It is really fun talking with other state employees from other agencies and telling them about OPEA. You can hear the excitement and appreciation in their voice that someone really cares about them and their family. I would recommend that more OPEA members get involved.”

Stockton thanked the 55J chapter members – Watson, Eric Dickerson, Will Wier, Jon Brigstock, Patricia Crepps and Ebony Young – for volunteering their time.

“This is what the Association is all about,” said Stockton. “These are great state employees who see a need to build our Association’s strength. I really appreciate their efforts.”

Association Members Will Choose President And Region 8 Director

OPEA members across the state will choose a new leader this summer, and members in Region 8 will elect a director to complete an unexpired term.

Candidates for president must have been an OPEA member for one year. In addition, the candidate cannot have been a member of a competing organization for four years. Competing organizations include the Communications Workers of America/Oklahoma State Workers Union and Oklahoma Corrections Professionals.

Members in Region 8 will be replac-

ing Harold Wright, who resigned from the Board.

“Being on the OPEA Board of Directors has been a rewarding experience for me,” said Wright. “Unfortunately, I can’t continue in this capacity. I encourage fellow OPEA members to become involved in the organization and consider serving in a leadership position.”

To run for Region 8 director, a candidate must be an active state employee, live in the region’s boundaries and be an OPEA member for at least one year. In addition, the candidate cannot have

been a member of a competing organization for two years.

The filing period for both offices is June 1 through June 15. Ballots will be mailed to OPEA members on July 30, and the postmark deadline for ballots will be Aug. 16. VR Election Services will run the election, with phone, Internet and mail balloting available to participants.

For more information, see the election rules and filing form on pages 12 and 13 or contact Trish Frazier at the OPEA office at trishf@opea.org, (405) 524-6764 or (800) 880-6732.

OPEA Campaign And Election Rules

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association is vibrant and expanding by virtue of its positive championing of state employees. Candidates for OPEA elective offices are expected to campaign in such a way to bring credit upon themselves and foster the growth and unity of the organization. They should exercise discretion regarding campaign tactics and emphasize their own strengths and qualifications. It is the responsibility of the candidates to familiarize themselves and their campaigners with the following rules.

I. Candidates for president

A. A candidate for president shall:

1. Be a dues paying member of OPEA for one year prior to filing;
2. Not have been a member of a competing organization, as established by the OPEA Board of Directors, for four years.

II. Candidates for Region 8 director

A candidate for Region 8 director shall:

1. Be an active state employee and dues paying member of OPEA for two years prior to filing;
2. Not have been a member of a competing

(Continued On Page 13)

OPEA Filing Form

Name _____

Home address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____

E-mail address _____

Agency _____

Office you are seeking President Region 8 Director

I hereby swear that the above information is correct, and I will abide by the OPEA Election Rules and the OPEA Bylaws.

Signature _____

Name (Please print) _____

This completed form may be sent by mail (13 N.E. 28th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73105) or Fax (405-524-4671). Mark the envelope or cover sheet “Attention Trish.” In addition, e-mail a biography and statement of priorities for OPEA and digital photo to trishf@opea.org for printing in *The Advocate* and in the ballot packet. The word limit is 200. All information must be received at the OPEA office by 5 p.m. June 15, 2010. All questions should be referred to Trish Frazier at (405) 524-6764 or (800) 880-OPEA, or by e-mail at trishf@opea.org.

Campaign Rules (Continued From Page 12)

organization, as established by the OPEA Board of Directors, for two years.

3. Live in OPEA Region 8.

III. Certification of candidates

The Election Board staff liaison in consultation with the Election Board chair or designee will verify requirements of each candidate.

IV. Terms

The term of office for the OPEA president is Jan. 1, 2011, through Dec. 31, 2013.

V. Filing

A. The filing period for OPEA's 2010 elections shall be June 1 through June 15, 2010. Filing forms must be received in the OPEA office no later than 5 p.m. June 15, 2010.

B. Filing forms shall include name, position sought, home address and telephone, and agency. Biographies, photos and a statement for *The Advocate* are due at the time of filing.

VI. Election schedule

A. The election will run from July 30 through Aug. 16. Ballots will be mailed on July 30 and the last day for postmark will be Aug. 16.

VII. Campaign Rules

A. Publicity in *The Advocate*:

1. All candidates shall have their picture, biography, platform and statement of qualifications published free of charge in the first *Advocate* after the closing of candidate filing. The total word limit is 200 words.

2. Candidates may purchase advertising in *The Advocate* at a cost of \$50 for one-eighth of a page. Content shall be in accordance with the preamble to these rules.

3. Advertising shall not be accepted before a candidate is

certified.

4. OPEA candidates shall meet the same deadlines as other advertisers.

5. The editor shall be responsible for determining the placement of ads.

6. Signature ads must be accompanied by a signed release.

7. The editor shall note that the content is a political advertisement.

B. Campaign material

1. Acceptable campaign material:

a) Materials shall be purchased by the candidate within the spending limits established in Section VII. D of these rules.

b) Materials shall be formatted in such a manner as not to be confused with official OPEA material.

c) Candidates shall not use official OPEA logo or stationery.

2. OPEA Information:

a) The Association will provide each candidate with a member list for the region in which the candidate is seeking office.

C. Endorsements

1. The executive director and the OPEA staff shall express no opinion on or in any way be involved in an OPEA election as a candidate advocate.

2. To prevent any perception of a conflict of interest, members of the Association Election Board shall not endorse any OPEA candidate.

D. Spending limits

1. The campaign spending limit for president is \$2,500.

2. The campaign spending limit for regional director is \$1,500.

E. Campaign expenditure forms/procedure

The OPEA Election Board shall establish a candidate campaign expense form upon which all candidates shall document all campaign expenditures. The forms shall be submitted to the OPEA

office within 10 working days after the closing date to return the ballots.

Complaints regarding spending in excess of set limits shall be made by a candidate to the Election Board for investigation no later than 10 calendar days after the announcement of election winners.

VII. Complaints

Any OPEA member may file a complaint regarding campaign behavior at any time during the campaign but no later than 10 working days after the announcement of election results. The complaint shall be in writing to the OPEA president at the OPEA office, with a copy to the Election Board chair and a copy to the executive director.

1. The president shall refer complaints to the Election Board or the Board of Directors, as deemed appropriate.

2. Failure of the Election Board to act on any election complaint shall result in the complaint being referred to and considered by the OPEA Board of Directors.

3. The Board of Directors shall render decisions on any complaints filed no later than 60 calendar days after the complaint is filed.

a) Action by the OPEA Board of Directors may include but shall not be limited to:

(1) A letter of concern;
(2) A personal conference;
(3) A referral to the Election Board for procedural violations;

(4) The chair shall submit a recommendation accompanied by any relevant documents to the Board of Directors, the complainant and the alleged violator.

b) The Board of Directors will consider the recommendation and notify the concerned parties by certified mail of its decision.

Share The Burden

Education Must Sacrifice Along With Other State Agencies

As the budget negotiations heated up at the Capitol, OPEA launched the “Share the Burden” campaign, with members visiting legislators both in Oklahoma City and in their home districts. OPEA members who couldn’t take off from work to visit the Capitol made phone calls and sent e-mail messages.

Gov. Brad Henry was sticking to his position of cutting education a maximum of 3 percent while making the rest of state government shoulder the burden of the FY 2011 budget shortfall. OPEA members told their legislators and the governor that education is important but not more important than the services state employees provide daily to the people of Oklahoma. Common education, higher education and *CareerTech* are 55 percent of the budget and cannot be exempt from reductions. If education were held harmless, other state agencies would be cut 10 percent to 15 percent for the next fiscal year.

“State services are the lifeblood of Oklahoma,” said OPEA President Connie Stockton. “State employees care

for children and the elderly. We ensure public safety and the health of each and every Oklahoman. Our message must be heard, too.”

OPEA has recommended that state leaders suspend or repeal tax credits during this time of crisis.

“Several tax credits have grown exponentially in the past few years,” said OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley. “In this crisis, all tax credits should be on the table to be suspended or capped at a reasonable rate.”

According to data from the Oklahoma Tax Commission, the income tax credit for investment and the rural business venture tax credit alone grew from \$43 million in 2006 to \$164 million in 2008. Oklahoma has 153 tax expenditures or credits of more than \$10 million totaling \$4.5 billion in 2008.

“Suspending or capping selected tax credits could save the state between \$150 and \$200 million,” Zearley con-



OPEA member Cara Norris-Ramirez, right, talks with Rep. Scott Martin about sharing the burden in state government.

tinued. “This revenue could keep child welfare workers on the job, pay to care for our veterans, help monitor drinking water and keep our roads clear in next year’s snow and ice storms.”

“No part of the budget should be held harmless from the cuts,” said Zearley. “To make it through the next year, Oklahomans must come together in shared sacrifice to protect essential services and our most vulnerable citizens.”

OKDHS Employees Launch Share The Burden Campaign

At the OPEA/OKDHS Day at the Capitol April 27, legislators told participants a “share the burden” approach was the best way to address the serious funding challenges the state is facing in the next two fiscal years.

“Both common and higher education have been held harmless,” Rep. Randy Terrill told participants. “If they don’t take their part of the cuts, the effect will be devastating to core state services.”

OPEA members who work for the Department of Human Services brought their message to the state Capitol about the devastating impact of proposed budget cuts. According to information from the agency, OKDHS could be facing a \$96 million budget hole for the fiscal year

“I would like to see education take their fair share of the cuts. You have my commitment on this.”

• Rep. George Faught

beginning July 1.

Over lunch, participants had an opportunity to hear the latest on the budget negotiations from legislators, many of whom changed their schedules at the last minute to visit with state employees.

Sen. Brian Crain, chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, shared with the group the problem of holding half the budget harmless to reductions. With education at 55 percent of the budget, restricting the cuts to the other 45 percent of the budget would be devastating to critical state services, he said.

“Everyone needs to share this burden,” said Crain. “We support you in the share the

(Continued On Page 15)

OKDHS Employees Launch Share The Burden Campaign

(Continued From Page 14)

burden approach.”

“We lose federal matching funds in services to older folks if you cut the ADvantage program” said Rep. George Faught. “I would like to see education take their fair share of the cuts. You have my commitment on this.”

“Thank you for being here,” said House Appropriations Chair Rep. Ken Miller. “What you do for the citizens of Oklahoma is important. We need to do what is best for Oklahoma citizens.”

“Fees on services, to be certain that they pay for themselves, are being considered,” said Rep. Jason Nelson in response to a question about revenue

County DHS office.

“We have tremendous decisions to make. We want to sit down and work with you and make sure you are a part of the process.”

Reps. John Wright, Ann Coody, Weldon Watson and Mike Jackson echoed concern for OKDHS funding and support for the critical services

provided by the agency. Sandra Benischek-Harrison of the OKDHS Office of Legislative Relations and Policy briefed participants on details of the current budget cuts and the proposed reductions for FY 2011.

Following lunch and meetings with local legislators, the group held a press conference to discuss their concern for services provided by OKDHS.

Three OPEA members from OKDHS spoke about the impact of the proposed budget cuts on the services they

provide.

“The proposed cuts to the ADvantage program are troubling,” said Tom Dunning, programs administrator with OKDHS Home and Community-Based Services. “Last year, we served 22,000 seniors, helping them live independently in their homes. Cuts to the ADvantage program would force citizens into nursing homes, which is not only more expensive but a great fear for seniors.”

“The children we work with are the most vulnerable. They have been abused and neglected, and our number one priority is to be certain they are safe.”

• Lora Adams
Child Welfare Supervisor

“The children we work with are the most vulnerable,” said Lora Adams, a child welfare supervisor from Oklahoma County. “They have been abused and neglected, and our number one priority is to be certain they are safe.”

She outlined the progress child welfare has made under the new practice model. One thousand fewer children are in out-of-home placements, the lowest number in 10 years. In addition, Oklahoma is now third in the nation in moving children to permanency.

“It’s already increasingly difficult to get our job done in 40 hours,” Adams added. “There is absolutely no way to get it done in 36. Children are counting on us. We will be losing valuable time from these children. We are all that they have. If they call us and can’t get to us because we are furloughed, what does that say to them? It tells them no one cares.”

“I am from a rural county of 21,000 people,” said Craig Mahl, county director for Beckham and Roger Mills counties. “Of those

21,000 people, 5,400 are on medical assistance. In FY 2009, we put \$9.7 million into the local economic base in benefits and food stamps. With the decline in the economy, food stamps alone have increased by 72

percent. In 2000, I had 17 staff in family support. Now I have 10-and-a-half. With furloughs, it will be more and more difficult to deliver the services.”



Craig Mahl discusses the state government budget with Sen. Tom Ivester.

enhancement. “We are also considering suspending tax credits. The only thing that is not on the table is a tax increase. The budget problem is so bad that there is no one solution.”

Nelson added that he favored a rational approach to the budget, funding the most critical services first.

“These are tough times,” said Sen. Harry Coates. “We need to put the money where it has the best effect and gets the best bang for the buck.”

“It is helpful when we visit offices in our districts,” Sen. Brian Bingman added, pointing out that he was looking forward to a meeting in the Creek

“Cuts to the ADvantage program would force citizens into nursing homes, which is not only more expensive but a great fear for seniors.”

• Tom Dunning • OKDHS Home and Community-Based Services

Child Welfare Workers Go To Bat For The Kids They Serve

Oklahoma child welfare workers concerned for their jobs and the children they protect visited the state Capitol in Oklahoma City May 5.

OPEA members Michelle Schmidt and Stefanie Stone met with Rep. Ron



OPEA members Michelle Schmidt and Stefanie Stone visit with Rep. Ron Peters.

Peters regarding the possible privatization of the state's child welfare services, which has been proposed in HB 3258, authored by Rep. Gus Blackwell and Sen. Dan Newberry. The bill would require the Oklahoma Department of Human Services to contract with for-profit corporations for foster care, therapeutic foster care, residential treatment centers, group homes, independent living adoptions, case management and related services statewide in the next three years. The bill has elicited response from several OPEA members and resulted in more than 200 e-mails and phone calls to legislators from people who oppose the bill.

This was not the first meeting between Peters and child welfare employees. With Sen. Brian Crain, he authored HB 1734, a bill that instituted reforms in OKDHS child welfare last year, and he met with several child welfare employees to make sure the best incentives were utilized when working with Oklahoma's most vulnerable children. The reforms proposed in HB 1734 were suggested

by an extensive audit of Oklahoma's child welfare system completed by the Oklahoma Legislative Services Bureau last year.

Everyone at the most recent meeting agreed that HB 3258 would hamper progress made based on the reforms in HB 1734 and that the bill is not reflective of the suggestions made in the audit.

"The reforms made by HB 1734 are only recently being implemented yet already showing great results. OKDHS needs more time to continue the growth we are seeing. Making such a drastic change will destroy all progress," Schmidt said.

Peters agreed and discussed the progress that has been made since HB 1734 was passed. For example, the daily shelter population decreased from 98 in June 2009 to 40 in February 2010, there has been a round-the-clock centralized hotline established and Oklahoma is outpacing the nation in kinship foster care.

"We are all finally on the same page, and bringing in other entities would cause much confusion and frustration for the families we serve," said Stone, "It would lead to complete chaos."

"Working with a legislator who cares about the child welfare system and meets with child welfare employees to measure progress is wonderful," said Lora Adams, an OPEA member and child welfare supervisor who has worked with Peters in the past. "By meeting with frontline employees to assure reforms are feasible, legislators are able to pass more comprehensive and effective legislation. Reforms can drastically affect the care children receive and should be well thought out and planned. It is alarming that a bill such as HB 3258, which is promoted by lobbyists representing a for-profit, out-of-

state corporation, can make it so far through the process without taking into account the criticism raised by Oklahomans involved in child welfare and an audit that focused on the Oklahoma system."

OPEA will continue to fight against the passage of HB 3258 and give child welfare workers a voice in this matter.

"It is great to see Oklahoma's child welfare workers contacting their legislators and taking an active role to help defeat HB 3258," said OPEA Membership Representative Haley Blood, a former OKDHS employee. "Many Oklahoma child welfare workers have seen firsthand the problems in states that have decided to privatize."

"When I dealt with Kansas on one of their children placed in our state, we could never determine who was the child's worker and who was the private contracted worker. Neither of them could tell me who was responsible for the child, and it delayed us getting answers on how to help the child when she was in need," Adams stated.

There have been several recent issues with child welfare in Nebraska, as well. Visinet, a private, Omaha-based youth services agency that coordinates care for foster children, went bankrupt and announced in April that it was closing. As a result, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services is being forced to take the cases back temporarily, affecting more than 2,000 children.

"I don't believe the state of Oklahoma should take such a large risk when we have already implemented reforms that have led to great progress," said Blood. "Why would we adopt reforms that were not suggested by a thorough examination of our child welfare system and have caused such problems in other states?"

OPEA Joins Group Opposing SQ 744

The Oklahoma Public Employees Association has joined forces with a diverse group of associations, individuals and organizations across the state in opposing State Question



744, a funding mandate that would require Oklahoma to bring its per

pupil spending in public schools up to the national average.

The One Oklahoma Coalition includes the Oklahoma Farm Bureau, the TRUST Road and Bridge Coalition, the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber and the State Chamber of Oklahoma.

The OPEA Board of Directors passed a resolution April 16 opposing SQ 744. Estimates have shown that SQ 744 would cost the state approximately \$850 in the first year. Oklahoma already is facing a \$2-billion shortfall, and most state agencies have had to deal with 10-percent cuts in their budgets in fiscal year 2010. They are preparing for cuts of 10 percent or more in fiscal year 2011. As a result, state employees are facing furloughs, VOBOS and RIFs that have left them understaffed and overworked.

“State Question 744 should not pass,” said OPEA Region 8 Director Harold Wright. “If it does, it will put a financial burden on the state and state agencies and cause many essential programs that serve the citizens of Oklahoma to be cut.”

For more information on the One Oklahoma Coalition or State Question 744, visit www.nosq744.com.

Approved April 16, 2010, by the OPEA Board of Directors

Protect the Future - SQ 744 Resolution

Whereas, the goal of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association is to protect the future of our state by maintaining critical core state services the citizens expect and deserve. These services include public safety, care of Oklahoma’s most vulnerable, consumer and food protection, transportation and support for Oklahoma’s working families.

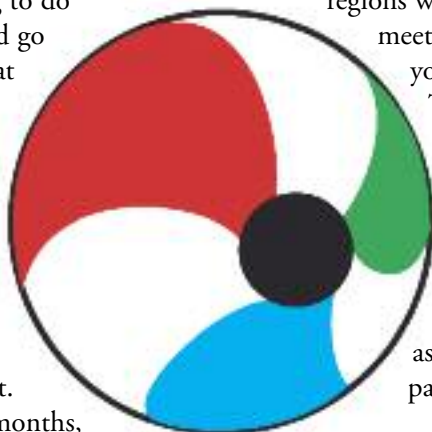
Whereas, the passage of State Question 744 would devastate these vital core services provided to the citizens of Oklahoma by removing essential funding from state agencies.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association is opposed to SQ 744 and joins with the One Oklahoma Coalition to defeat the proposal.

You Can Make A Difference This Summer

What are you going to do this summer? You could go on vacation, hang out at the pool, take in a ball game or just spend time with friends and family. But as an OPEA member, there are things you can do to help your Association become more active and vibrant.

Over the next few months, OPEA members in the Association’s newly-created



regions will hold their regional meetings. Why not attend yours and get involved? There will be Platform meetings, where you can help plan the direction of your Association. There will be chapter meetings and chapter events such as picnics, rallies and parades in your local area. And, since this is an election year, you can get involved in the campaign of a

candidate who supports state employees.

As if these events were not enough, OPEA will hold its 35th anniversary Convention on Aug. 28 in Oklahoma City. At the Convention and Delegate Assembly, members will plan next year’s Legislative Agenda, discuss policy issues and have a great time meeting new friends and OPEA members and renewing old friendships. Plan now to attend and help OPEA become more of a force in state government.

Summer is not just for rest and relaxation. In 2010, it’s a time to “stand up, show up and get involved.”

ODOT Carries On OPEA Tradition



The Oklahoma Department of Transportation, the birthplace of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association, is also one of the fastest-growing agencies in the state in terms of OPEA membership.

Several ODOT facilities boast 100-percent OPEA membership, including those in Paul's Valley, Davis, Wilburton and Durant. OPEA's newest 100-percent-membership facility is ODOT Wagoner County Maintenance.

Thirty-five years ago, eight ODOT employees took a risk and started the Oklahoma Public Employees Association.

OPEA's new members from ODOT in Wagoner County are Gary Thayer, Jackie Goff, Mickey Graham, Jack Lamb, Zach Miller, Billy Jackson and Dianna Porter.

"We are going to carry on the mission our ODOT colleagues began. OPEA is the only mechanism that is working for state employees. Without OPEA, you have to wonder what state employees would have today," said OPEA member Don Jones.



OPEA member James Kroth, center, recently received an assistance check from the Correctional Peace Officer Foundation. On hand for the presentation were OPEA Executive Director Sterling Zearley, left, and Richard Loud, field rep for CPOF.



Employees at the Disability Determination Division of the Department of Rehabilitation Services in Oklahoma City enjoyed an OPEA pizza lunch April 8.

Whistleblowers Beware: Follow The MPC Rules

The Oklahoma Supreme Court has issued a ruling that will have a far-reaching effect both on classified and unclassified state employees.

Susan Shephard, an unclassified employee at CompSource Oklahoma, filed a suit in Oklahoma County District Court, alleging that her supervisor's decision to terminate her for reporting illegal travel claims violated the public policy prohibiting termination of whistleblowers and interfered with her employment contract with CompSource.

The Oklahoma County District Court granted summary judgment in favor of CompSource, ruling that Shephard had an adequate remedy under the Whistleblower Act, which precluded a

wrongful termination suit. The Court also ruled that the supervisor should not face personal liability because CompSource endorsed the decision to fire Shephard.

Shephard appealed the decision to the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals, which affirmed the District Court's decision.

The issue before the Oklahoma Supreme Court was whether the Whistleblower Act provides an adequate remedy to protect unclassified state employees from wrongful termination.

Shephard presented evidence to support her claim that CompSource and the supervisor wrongfully terminated her for reporting illegal travel claims. In response, CompSource and the supervisor offered evidence that Shephard

began but did not complete the appeals process to challenge her termination as provided in the Whistleblower Act. Both the trial court and the Court of Civil Appeals concluded that the Whistleblower Act provided Shephard with an adequate remedy.

What does this mean to you as a state employee? If you feel that you have been terminated in violation of the Whistleblower Act, you must file and complete the appeal process with the Oklahoma Merit Protection Commission as outlined in Title 74 O.S., Section 840-2.5 and Merit Rule 455:10-3-6.

For more information on this issue or to discuss any of your rights as a state employee, contact OPEA Employee Relations Coordinator Clyde McLendon at (405) 524-6764.

Tracking The Legislature

Birth date legislation: At press time, SB 1753, authored by Sen. Debbe Leftwich and Rep. Randy Terrill, was stalled in the House by partisan bickering. However, leadership has assured OPEA that the issue will continue to move forward. Several other bills have been identified as possible vehicles for the legislation.

Retiree COLA: A 4-percent cost-of-living adjustment for OPERS retirees was in conference. SB 1637, authored by Sen. Cliff Aldridge and Rep. Lisa Billy, had not encountered opposition and was waiting for its final trip through both houses.

Christmas holiday: Legislation that ensures that state employees have two days off for Christmas, HB 3052, authored by Rep. Dan Kirby and Sen. Todd Lamb, was making its way through the legislative process.

Deferred compensation: HB 3385, authored by Rep. Randy Terrill and Sen. Brian Bingman, which would allow employees to voluntarily work during a furlough, has moved to conference. The bill would compensate state employees with annual leave at a rate of an hour-and-a-half for each hour worked during a furlough.

Child welfare privatization: HB 3258, authored by Rep. Gus Blackwell and Sen. Dan Newberry, would privatize child welfare services in Oklahoma. The bill started out with foster care, with OKDHS preparing a plan to privatize some services. OPEA has joined forces with other groups to protect jobs and vulnerable clients in child welfare. Several House members are opposed to the bill, but the concept could return next year.

Statewide VOBO: Legislation to help fund voluntary out (VOBO) benefits in state agencies has been signed by Gov. Brad Henry. HB 2363, authored by Sen. Mike Johnson and Rep. Ken Miller, would allow state agencies to access a special fund to pay for VOBOs.

Under the provisions of HB 2363, agencies could apply for funds to cover benefits in a one-time VOBO offer. The funds would be limited to a total of \$22 million, which would be appropriated in a trailer bill. Employees must be eligible for retirement to participate in the plan. Agencies would have to reduce their FTEs for three years by the number of employees who participate in the plan.

The benefits that would be reimbursed through the fund include:

- ✘ Payment equal to 18 months of the

health insurance premium for the employee only, in a lump sum;

- ✘ The employee's next longevity payment, which would not be prorated;
- ✘ A maximum lump-sum payment of \$5,000.

In addition to the benefits funded by the Legislature, the bill states legislative intent that agencies use existing funds to enhance the VOBO package, based on years of service.

Health insurance: At press time, several bills aimed at reforming state employee health insurance were still in conference. The intent of the legislation is to implement the provisions recommended by the State Employee Health Insurance Task Force, which met over the summer. With paychecks stagnating and some employees facing furloughs, OPEA has been working to ensure that state employees do not lose money from their paychecks.

CompSource privatization: The vehicle for action on this issue appears to be HB 2658, authored by Rep. Daniel Sullivan and Sen. Glenn Coffee. The most recent version allows state agencies to obtain workers' compensation insurance on the open market or self insure. In addition, the bill extends the Privatization Task Force for another year.

Board And Staff Launch Strategic Planning Process

The OPEA Board and staff launched their strategic planning process with a weekend-long strategic planning session at the April Board meeting that will help the Association chart its course for the next five years.

The plan will focus on the following areas: communications; program; financial; marketing and public relations; Board development and governance;

staff; and volunteers. Participants set general goals for these areas and will continue working at the June board meeting.

"This will set some primary goals for us to focus on in the

next five years," OPEA President Connie Stockton said. "It's a plan that will undergo some changes as it goes along and will

help OPEA become a stronger Association. We believe the plan will provide a framework for gaining new members, strengthening our grass-roots efforts at the local chapter levels and ultimately result in greater clout at the Capitol."

The Board will be working on the

plan over the next few meetings and should have a complete product to present at the Delegate Assembly Aug. 28 in Oklahoma City.

"It's a plan that will undergo some changes as it goes along and will help OPEA become a stronger Association."

• OPEA President Connie Stockton

The OPEA Mailbox

Members' Letters To Legislators



What is going on? Wake up. If one tightens their belt – everyone should be tightening their belt. That includes legislators and teachers, as well as other state employees. Critical services my agency provides to both the general population and our state's most vulnerable citizens could suffer if the burden of budget cuts is not shared. Suspending tax credits and balancing the cuts across all functions of government will be painful, but it will help mitigate the crisis. Several tax credits have grown exponentially in the past few years. In this crisis, all tax credits should be on the table to be suspended or capped at a reasonable rate. Suspending or capping selected tax credits could save the state between \$150 million and \$200 million. This revenue could keep child welfare workers on the job, pay to care for our veterans, help monitor drinking water and keep our roads clear in next year's snow and ice storms. No part of the budget should be held harmless from the cuts. To make it through the next year, Oklahomans must come together in shared sacrifice to protect essential services and our most vulnerable citizens.

Banetha Buchanan

I have worked for OKDHS for 15 years. With our new practice model, we are the most qualified to serve Oklahoma's children. Child welfare workers are already in every community across Oklahoma, protecting children. Child welfare workers partner with community providers and members of the faith community to move children to permanency quickly. At great cost to the state, the House of Representatives contracted with child welfare specialists

Hornby Zeller

Associates to conduct an

extensive study of Oklahoma's child welfare system and make recommendations. DHS is currently in the process of implementing the reforms recommended by the study. The provisions of HB 3528 are not included in the study recommendations, nor is any increased privatization of child welfare services. The additional costs of developing, implementing and monitoring private contracts could take resources away from the protection of children and providing prevention and treatment services.

Marilyn Wilson

Please protect the funds for mental health and substance abuse services. This is very important for the future of Oklahoma. Protecting these service will cost taxpayers and the government far less money in the long-term. It has been proven that getting people well and off addiction will cause them to be productive and give back to the community. This is also a personal cause for me. My aunt committed suicide because of an untreated mental illness. Had she been able to get the help she needed, she would still be with her family today. Please save lives, families, children and taxpayers by protecting these very important funds.

Angie Kopp

I am troubled by the prospects of privatizing child welfare. I think there are issues in Oklahoma child welfare that need to be addressed. However, privatization is not the solution. My readings on states that are privatized (although nowhere near a research level) indicate to me that when privatized, there is no one truly responsible for the child welfare

case. My take on the solution in Oklahoma child welfare is for the agency to end the lawsuit by setting a timetable to become accredited and to meet the requirements of the CFSR. It is not a cheap solution. It will be time-consuming, may need new leadership and will need increased staff, but it would be in the best interests of Oklahoma's children. Please vote no on HB 3258.

Judith Atkinson

Education is not the only important service in this state. I have children and want a good education for them, but I am smart enough to know that dollars are not always the answer. The decision to have other agencies take on more of a budget cut than education is shortsighted. It is clear our leaders have not considered the implications to the thousands of other state workers. I have numerous employees we have lost to private industry. Others are taking on second jobs. Others are on social assistance. It is a sad day when our agency requests increases in fees to cover the shortfall and we are told no. Coming from private industry, I am disgusted by how much we waste using government contracts to make purchases. Stop carrying a banner only for education. We are already enduring furloughs due to shortsighted people on the budget committees. We cannot afford to lose more of our excellent employees due to poverty and moves to the private sector.

Brandy Wreath

Who Are You Going To Call?

OPEA members only may call the OPEA office for:

Executive Director: Sterling Zearley



Legal Advocacy Program • Grievance Assistance: Clyde McLendon



Agency Information: Trish Frazier, Policy and Agency Relations Director



Political Action: Scott Barger, Deputy Director



Legislation Information: Nancy Hughes, Executive Assistant



Schedule A Meeting: Rick Allen, Membership Representative • *Regions 2, 4, 9 and 11*



Schedule A Meeting: Haley Blood, Membership Representative • *Regions 3, 7, 8 and 10*



Schedule A Meeting: Jimmy Durant, Membership Representative • *Regions 1, 5 and 6*



General Information: Rachelle Johnson, Administrative Assistant



Joining OPEA: Nancy Hughes or Rachelle Johnson

(405) 524-6764
 (800) 880-OPEA (6732)
 www.opea.org
 13 N.E. 28th St.
 Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Association Welcomes New Board Member

The OPEA Board of Directors welcomed Jess Callahan as Region 11 director at a recent meeting in Oklahoma City.

Callahan is a native of Poteau and graduated from the



OPEA President Connie Stockton swears in the Association's newest Board member, Region 11 Director Jess Callahan.

University of Arkansas in 2005 with a degree in Exercise Physiology and Biomechanics. He has worked for the state Department of Human Services since 2006 and was sworn in by

OPEA President Connie Stockton.

"Jess is a welcome addition to our Board," Stockton said. "He brings a fresh outlook and a strong desire to help OPEA grow. We are very fortunate to have him join the ranks. I think we will see good things from him. He completes our new Board."

Recruitment Activity Is On The Rise For OPEA

During the past two months, OPEA has been very successful in recruiting new members across the state, partly because of the ongoing battle with *The Oklahoman* on the issue of release of state employee birth dates. However, getting out in the field and getting the word out to state employees also has made a huge difference for the Association.

During the month of April, more than 130 state employees decided to get involved by joining OPEA. Through the efforts of dedicated OPEA members, who are recruiting their fellow state employees, the Association is growing in size and stature.

One OPEA member earned more than \$300 simply by asking others to join. The \$15 bounty has been extended to June 30, so if you are looking for a way to make some extra money, ask your non-member co-workers to join OPEA. You'll earn \$15 every time a new member puts your name on his or her application.

If you would like to schedule a recruitment meeting in your office, call OPEA today at (405) 524-6764 or (800) 880-OPEA.

OPEA Is Seeking Stars

OPEA is looking for stars as it approaches its Annual Convention and Delegate Assembly, set for Aug. 27 and Aug. 28 in Oklahoma City.

The Star Chapter Program recognizes OPEA chapters that are making a difference in the lives of their members and state employees.

“The Board of Directors of OPEA recognizes the importance of rebuilding our chapter infrastructure so we can influence legislators and change the future of state employees from gloom and doom to the sky’s the limit,” said OPEA President Connie Stockton. “This program provides a way for our chapters to earn recognition as well as raise money for their local chapter.”

Bronze Star Chapter Award - Chapters that pass eight of 10 qualifying tests will earn \$100, a plaque and recognition in *The Advocate* and at the

Convention.

Silver Star Chapter Award - Chapters that pass nine of 10 tests will earn \$150, a plaque and recognition in *The Advocate* and at the Convention.

Gold Star Chapter Award - Chapters that pass all 10 tests will earn \$200, a plaque and recognition in *The Advocate* and at the Convention.

If your chapter has qualified for the Star Chapter Program, please contact the membership team – Jimmy Durant, Rick Allen or Haley Blood – so that your chapter can be recognized at OPEA’s Annual Convention.

“Even if your chapter hasn’t met all the requirements for this prestigious award, it’s not too late,” OPEA Membership Representative Haley Blood commented. “Call the OPEA office and let us help you qualify your chapter for the recognition it deserves.”

Qualifying Events

- ✘ 100-percent office membership or a 5-percent increase in membership;
- ✘ Attendance at the Convention;
- ✘ Attendance at OPEA’s Lobby Day;
- ✘ Holding two membership drives;
- ✘ Participating in one local community activity as an OPEA chapter;
- ✘ Hosting a grievance training session or attending a legal seminar;
- ✘ Attending quarterly regional council meetings, if these meetings are held;
- ✘ Submitting one article, with photographs, to *The Advocate*;
- ✘ Attending a meeting of the OPEA Board of Directors;
- ✘ Hosting a legislative reception.

A Sterling Example (Continued From Page 3)

public service.

OPEA members stepped up to the plate on this issue because we believe in protecting the rights of our state’s workforce. It’s not just employees’ rights for which we are crusading but for their safety. A person’s date of birth is the key that could unlock the door to identity theft and fraud, but it also could affect their safety and the safety of their family members if someone wants to do them harm. That’s why we have fought so tirelessly on this issue.

We have been punched, kicked and slammed by the largest newspaper in the state, as well as by other media outlets, for our stance on the date of birth issue, but OPEA members

stood united and survived this onslaught. We have raised the awareness of this issue throughout the state of Oklahoma, and we will prevail in protecting public employees’ dates of birth.

When we stand united on a common issue, the sky is the limit. We must explain to state employees who are not OPEA members the benefits that OPEA provides, and we must ask them to join us.

For 35 years, OPEA has been the lone voice for Oklahoma’s state employees. It is a job we take very seriously. When the safety of state employees and their families is at risk, we will use every method possible to protect them. Keeping their birth date private is one measure on which OPEA will not bend.

The President’s Pen (Continued From Page 3)

A friend of mine used to call people without backbones, who give up without a fight, “Mamelukes.” In the movie “Raging Bull,” a prideful Jake LaMotta, realizing he is about to be investigated for throwing a fight, refers to himself disdainfully as “the Mameluke of the Year.” Actually, the Mamelukes were Egyptian sultans who, after reigning for almost 600 years, were brutally and effortlessly routed by Muhammad Ali (the pasha, not the boxer).

22 Looking around the membership of this

Association, I do not see any Mamelukes.

Whether it is as a result of self-determination, self-interest or purely self-defense, OPEA members will fight. Because we have; because we can; because we should; because we must.

Since we have all benefited from the work of past OPEA members, there is no doubt that every state employee should join OPEA. That is why we must fight for them. That is why we exist, and that is why we invite you to join us.



OPEA's members and staffers are signing up new members across the state. Left: Membership Representative Haley Blood with Toy O'Brien, director of the Creek County DHS, who joined OPEA after a meeting with local legislators May 7. Center: Blood with new member Nancy Strother of the Rogers County DHS office. Right: New member Tiffany Stump.

Making A Difference

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

Kathleen Adams-Abdelaal	Stacy Cheney	Sheila Gray	Lathon Knazze	Nathan Mullins	Paulette Stout
Rebecca Allen	Sharon Chester	Andrea Griswald-Hamilton	Sonya Knazze	Lourie Myers	John Sullivan
Vickie Baber-Dix	Kelle Claxton	Kristina Hall	LaSheil Knowles	Leah Nealis	Clay Swanson
Bertheophilus Bailey	Phillip Collins	Brigitte Harper	Elizabeth Koldoff	Antonia Norwood	Jennie Takyi-Micah
Tammie Ballard	Jackie Corley	Kevin Haselton	Kelli Krueger	Rick Parish	Tara Taylor
Amy Bellis	Bo Cox	Kimberly Heaton	Rebecca Laipple	Jennifer Parks	Alexia Taylor-Hardison
Kymberli Blankenship	Michal Criddle	Kathrine Henderson	Steven Lamb	Neil Patton	Cathy Thompson
Danny Bolin	Alida Cross	Jamie Henry	Jo Leonard	Glenn Phipps	Kori Thompson
Patricia Bolt	Madelyne Cudjo	Dorothy Herron	Xin Liu	Christi Pointer	Michael Todd
Misty Boomgaarden	Phylesia Dailey	Micah Hobson	William Lohrman	Jana Rains	Amy Trinh
Christopher "Eli" Bowen	Laura Davidson	John Hodges	Linda Lumen	Susan Reed	Andrea Vadnais
Marilyn Bradley	Jesse Davis	Kelly Hokit	Michelle Madden	Kathleen Regan	Taryn Wade
Steven Branscum	Terry Davis	Janie Hollars	Rhonda Mahurin	Jason Reynolds	Afton Wagner
Jeremy Brico	Regaina Demeritte	Jann Hook	Ana Maldonado	Jackie Richardson	Gisele Walko
Eldon Brittain	Regaina Demeritte	Terry Hucks	Cynthia Malloy	Melissa "Xan" Robertson	Sarah Waters
Jenice Brooks	Debra Doraty	Ricky Huddleston	Lawrence Martin	Brittany Rupp	Jessica Watson
Brenda Brown	Randal Dunigan	Guy Huggins	Frank Mayfield	Edie Ryan	Dana Weidler
Helen Brown	Shannon Elbon	Sharon Humphrey	Shirley Mayhue	Patty Salyer	David "Will" Weir
Anthony Buckner	Barbara Epperson	Angela Ingram	Kasey McDonald	Michelle Scott	Marjorie Wilhelm
Brian Buckner	Tonya Faggett	James Jenks	Phyllis McGerry	Carol Shelley	Darrell Williams
Barbara Burkhalter	William Faulkner	Angela Johnson	Laura McGuinness	Zaida Shilling	Lynn Williams
Vicki Burroughs	Tom Fitch	Sherry Johnson	Sarah McKenzie	Nicole Slade	Ashlie Williford
Wanda Cardella	Sue Garrett	Susan Johnson	Rebecca McRorey	Deann Smith	Gerald Wilson
David Carman	Mary Garrison	Joshua Johnston	Lisa Merka	Ralph Smith	Katherine Wilson
Judy Carman	Terrie Gary	Laura Jones	Amelia Messenger	Retta Smith	Richard Wilson
Sidney LaRae Carnes	Timothy Gilbert	Laura Jones	Donna Miller	Karen Solis	Ronald Wilson
Deborah Carter	Brigett Givens	Randy Jones	Kimberly Miller	Adam Soltani	
Rick Caywood	Lisa Gleisberg	Barbara Kerns	Aprile Mitchell	Cheryl Southard	
Vicki Charles	Pamela Gore	Jean Kirk	Jimmy Moss	Joe Stie	

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

Carol Baxter	Mike Daniel	David Keith	John Penix	Arlene Sturdy	Billy Whitlock
John Blurton	Clentis Elliff	Marjorie King	Richard Petete	Brenda Thornton	Twila Woolman
Daniel Carter	Richard Ellis	Helen Landers	Vicki Pettiford	Henry Turney	Marilyn Worden
Homer Carter	Earl Everett	Priscilla Martin	Sheila Rayburn	Dana Underwood	
Pat Collins	Audine Guernsey	Kathleen Meyer	Thelma Shepherd	Drue Venters	
Hellen Crabtree	Walter Hall	John Middleton	Deborah Smith	Emma Watson	
Betty Culpepper	George Hardin	Donald Miles	Connie Steffee	George Wayman	
Merwyn Curl	Linda Keesee	LaVonne Monson	Cynthia Stidham	Scott White	

Cheri and Sammy have earned cash from OPEA ...



Cheri Mathews has earned \$240 recruiting members for OPEA

Sammy Nye has earned \$435 recruiting members for OPEA

OPEA has extended its recruitment drive until June 30, giving you still another opportunity to earn \$15 for every new member you recruit. Don't miss the chance to strengthen your Association and at the same time put some extra cash in your pocket.

The Rules

- Any active or retired state employee is eligible to take part in the recruitment drive, with the exception of OPEA Board members.
- The application must have your name in the box marked "Who introduced you to OPEA?" or on the application so we can give you credit.
- For each active member you sign up you will receive \$15. Each retired member is worth \$5.
- The bonuses will be calculated by the 20th of each month and paid out ASAP. New members received after the 20th of the month will be paid in the next month's cycle.
- You can mail, fax or have members sign up electronically! It's that easy!

You can, too.

OPEA - Our Most Important Job Is Yours

Oklahoma Public Employees Association Membership Application

Please return to: OPEA, 13 N.E. 28th St., Oklahoma City, Okla. 73105 or visit www.opea.org.



First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone () _____ Work Phone () _____ Cell Phone _____

Home E-mail _____ Work E-mail _____

Agency _____ Work Location _____ Position _____

Work Location Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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: Basic - \$15 Bronze - \$20 Silver - \$27 Gold - \$29 Platinum - \$39

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

Office use only: _____Amt _____Proc _____Tran _____CC _____WLC _____NMP