

**State of Oklahoma
House of Representatives**

**May 9nd – May 13, 2011
By Rep. Jeannie McDaniel**

Weekly Wrap #14

Friends – We have been informed that *sine die* adjournment will be Friday, May 20th! We've finished the budget debate and now move ahead with final bills to end this first session. There were **no winners** in this year of economic challenges with a \$500M revenue shortfall. The total FY 2012 appropriations of \$6.5B are -3.2 percent less than our budget of FY 2011. (A long way from the \$7.1B of FY09.) The final budget with all the details will be wrapped up during the upcoming week and I'll give you a link to the financial spreadsheet that will be the roadmap for the FY12 in Oklahoma.

While our constitution requires a balanced budget each year – just like our city – there are many ways to stretch dollars to meet some of today's needs that also stretch one's imagination. Or, some folks might say, "The State is borrowing from Peter to pay Paul." With the intention of paying Paul back – or at least a portion back. This is the political banter you might encounter on the news – the truth is that each of want a robust economy with many of the benefits in the song, Big Rock Candy Mountain.

Most of us have weathered years where there was **too much month at the end of the money** in our personal lives. We've experienced unplanned costs and life-changing years where we shifted gears, held family conferences and made do with what we had in pantry or bank. While we plan over our lifespan for our retirement and put away for the "rainy day", I believe we should consider our state budget in a similar manner.

We must look deeper than just year to year but consider the overall cuts over the past few years to understand the desperation many agencies face. Many of us can offset a 3 or 4 percent cut once in a while. **But, consider this**. . .since FY09 Common Education has been cut 10%, Career and Technology Education 15.5%, Higher Education 9%, and the Dept. of Libraries 19%. OETA has been cut over 50%. Further, The State Health Department has taken a 19.9% cut, Mental Health and Substance Abuse a 10.7% cut, Department of Human Services 3.9% with many more agencies taking double digit cuts as well. Therefore, while we have carefully tried to balance services to our vulnerable and young with skill, welcomed federal relief to offset cuts in jobs and healthcare – we must plan better for the shifting economic tides that wash over us and erode short term gains.

Final notes – there are still many important bills that may or may not be heard this last week. While agreements have been reached on Worker's Comp – we have been told the bill may not be heard. There are bills that deal with firearms on technology school campuses, deregulation of many core education mandates and bond packages. There is also hope among many that line-

item budgets will be crafted to guide agencies toward legislator's goals toward spending. So – this will be a busy week. Jeanniemcdaniel@okhouse.gov