

**State of Oklahoma  
House of Representatives**

February 14-18, 2011  
Weekly Wrap

Oklahoma faced the largest deployment since the Korean War this Wednesday as more than 3,200 Oklahoma National Guard members prepared to leave the state for a few months of training before being deployed to Afghanistan. Thousands gathered in Oklahoma City for the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Deployment Ceremony. Our thoughts and prayers will be with them and their families in the difficult days ahead.

Thank you for your calls and notes this week. I am more familiar with the bills that are on the agendas to my assigned committees or have reached the House floor; but, I'm happy to research and listen to your concerns on other bills.

Legislative activity has picked up in our second week as we double committee schedules and agendas to make up for time lost to earlier cancellations due to dangerous weather conditions. I will highlight just a few bills below. **These are bills that have been heard in committees.** Many others are not on calendars at this point. I appreciate your letters on the bills you read about. Remember, you can find the status of a bill by going to our website and tracking the bill by #. Bills are moving quickly from committees to the House floor calendar!

- ⌚ **Speaker Steele named eight members of a special bipartisan committee** that will investigate the allegations that led to state Rep. Randy Terrill being charged with felony bribery. This is not a criminal investigation. The group is charged with gathering evidence and ultimately making a recommendation to the full House if the Committee finds sufficient evidence exists that the legislator in question "has engaged in conduct which impairs the ability of the member to perform the duties of his or her office, or substantially impairs public confidence in the Legislature." I am honored to serve on this committee.
- ⌚ **Education bills to watch: HB1456** – Oklahoma's public schools would be given an annual grade of "A" to "F". This is based on a similar plan in Florida. **HB2115** – would allow school districts to combine school superintendents and be compensated.
- ⌚ **Smoking Regulation - HB2135** – would allow local communities the right to set local smoking regulations. Oklahoma is one of only two states in the country with restrictions that do not allow local decisions on tobacco regulation. This bill passed out of the House Public Health and Safety Committee and now goes to the floor of the House. I support this bill.
- ⌚ **Pensions:** Many bills have been filed and will be heard on the subject. Top in the news are **HB 2132** – would require that all COLAs be fully funded when authorized. **HB1011** would provide a funding source for COLAs. Under the bill, a portion of the revenues

received by the Commissioners of the Land Office would be dedicated to funding COLAs for retired teachers. (First time a dedicated funding source for COLAs in state history.)

**Further bills of interest** (passed out of committee), HB1221 will affect future firefighters by increasing from 20-25 years their retirement date, decrease their employer contribution rate from 2.5% to 2% while increasing firefighters contribution from 8-12% and capping maximum benefit at 50%. HB1662 decreases retirement benefits of law enforcement officers. HB1003 changes pensions from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. HB1004 – changes pensions for future elected officials from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. HB1006 denies future COLA's until 80% funded.

I authored HB1199 which passed the Judiciary Committee and the House floor on Thursday. This bill now moves to the Senate. This bill would allow judges to consider granting former legal guardians visitation rights to a child.

Remember – we have a long way to go in this legislative process. Many debates, committee meetings and conversations must take place before any of these bills become law. All bills must pass through both chambers, with hearings and majority votes, to reach the Governor's desk.

Let's hope the winds of March will be gentler and more welcoming than the February blizzard. While the snow piles are melting away, the dreaded potholes remind us Oklahoma weather is a challenge we all share.