

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

3 HOUSE BILL 1817

By: Newton

6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to waters and water rights; stating  
8 legislative findings; creating the Oklahoma Water  
9 Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer  
10 Program; stating focus of Program; providing  
11 requirements for certain training program; stating  
12 duties of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board;  
13 requiring Board partner and provide funding to  
14 certain institute of higher education; providing  
certain criteria to be met; authorizing the  
promulgation of certain rules; creating the Oklahoma  
Water Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer  
Program Revolving Fund; stating type of fund; stating  
purpose of fund; authorizing expenditures; providing  
for noncodification; providing for codification; and  
providing an effective date.

15  
16  
17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

18 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law not to be  
19 codified in the Oklahoma Statutes reads as follows:

20 The Legislature finds that Oklahoma's groundwater resources face  
21 critical threats from depletion and contamination due to unqualified  
22 workers and improper water access practices. There is a nationwide  
23 geoscience workforce shortage projected by the U.S. Department of  
24 Labor to peak at 130,000 workers by 2029, leaving Oklahoma's

1 groundwater industry struggling to fill positions with adequately  
2 trained professionals. The growing reliance on untrained workers in  
3 the groundwater industry jeopardizes the safety of homes,  
4 businesses, and communities and accelerates the degradation of these  
5 essential water resources. Immediate action is needed to protect  
6 these vital water resources and to equip the groundwater workforce  
7 with the skills necessary to ensure sustainable water management  
8 practices.

9 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
10 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1085.30b of Title 82, unless  
11 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

12 A. There is hereby created the Oklahoma Water Resources Board  
13 Well Driller and Pump Installer Program. The Program shall be  
14 administered by the Board and shall focus on funding and supporting  
15 the development and expansion of a groundwater professional training  
16 program at an accredited Tier 1 research institution of higher  
17 education in Oklahoma. The groundwater professional training  
18 program shall:

19 1. Support and expand an existing groundwater professional  
20 training program established by the National Ground Water  
21 Association;

22 2. Provide specialized education and skills-based micro-  
23 credentials for both current and future groundwater professionals,

1 including water well drillers, pump installers, plumbers, and heavy  
2 equipment operators;

3       3. Partner with state and national industry leaders to ensure  
4 workforce training is conducted using cutting-edge, industry-  
5 approved methods.

6       B. The Board shall:

7       1. Identify and establish a formal partnership with a  
8 qualifying institution of higher education in Oklahoma;

9       2. Provide funding for the program from the Oklahoma Water  
10 Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer Program Revolving  
11 Fund established in Section 3 of this act;

12       3. Provide technical assistance and other support to the  
13 institution to enhance the training program;

14       4. Work with industry stakeholders to ensure alignment of the  
15 program with current and future workforce demands;

16       5. Oversee the implementation, evaluation, and continuous  
17 improvement of the Program; and

18       6. Report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on the  
19 Program's progress and outcomes.

20       C. To implement the Program, the Board shall partner with and  
21 provide funding for the Program to an accredited institution of  
22 higher education in this state that is:

23       1. A Tier 1 research institution of higher education in  
24 Oklahoma to ensure access to specialized subject matter experts in

1 groundwater, as well as access to advanced research facilities and  
2 modern approaches to solving real-world problems in groundwater  
3 aquifer access. The institution shall have active community  
4 engagement and outreach to ensure both school-aged children and  
5 public populations are made aware of the critical occupations  
6 needed;

7 2. An institution that has an existing Memoranda of  
8 Understanding with both state and national groundwater industry  
9 partners to ensure programming is created with industry-approved  
10 skills and outcomes;

11 3. An institution that has an existing, or in-planning,  
12 opportunities for both university students and non-student  
13 populations to earn micro-credentials to showcase their achievement  
14 of industry-aligned skills;

15 4. An institution with a demonstrated history of developing  
16 groundwater workforce professionals, and the expertise necessary to  
17 produce high-quality training in groundwater and water quality  
18 subject areas;

19 5. Capable of providing training that has been created by  
20 individuals specializing in best practices in both online and in-  
21 person education for working professionals and have assessments for  
22 both program effectiveness and participant satisfaction; and

23 6. Capable of providing training that is flexible to meet the  
24 needs of the current and future workforce.

1       D. The Board is authorized to promulgate rules to effectuate  
2 the provisions of this section.

3           SECTION 3.        NEW LAW        A new section of law to be codified  
4 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1085.30c of Title 82, unless  
5 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

6           There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund  
7 for the Oklahoma Water Resources Board to be designated the  
8 "Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer  
9 Program Revolving Fund". The fund shall be a continuing fund, not  
10 subject to fiscal year limitations, and shall consist of all monies  
11 deposited to the credit of the fund by law. All monies accruing to  
12 the credit of the fund are hereby appropriated and may be budgeted  
13 and expended by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board for the purpose  
14 of administering the Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and  
15 Pump Installer Program established in Section 2 of this act.

16 Expenditures from the fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the  
17 State Treasurer against claims filed as prescribed by law with the  
18 Director of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services for  
19 approval and payment.

20           SECTION 4. This act shall become effective November 1, 2025.

22           60-1-10371        JBH        01/06/25