

Weâ€™ve had a lot going on in the Senate and at the Capitol, and

I have several topics to update for you this week. Weâ€™re currently working on

congressional redistricting now that we have the final numbers from the U.S. Census. In

order to ensure continued transparency and openness in the process, we held several town

hall meetings statewide this summer as we prepare to redraw the boundaries for Oklahomaâ€™s

five congressional seats. The Legislature will also be accepting public map submissions through Oct.

10. Each person, who must be an Oklahoma citizen, is allowed one submission. Submissions

must include a statewide plan for all five congressional districts. More information is available

at www.oksenate.gov under Redistricting. Map submissions, comments and questions can all be submitted at

redistricting@oksenate.gov. Because the final census numbers in some parts of the state were different

than the estimates provided, the Legislature is also working on modifying some of the

previously approved legislative districts. Our joint committee will be holding another virtual townhall meeting

to discuss these necessary changes on Wednesday, Sept. 15 at 6 p.m. You can

join in at www.okhouse.gov/Publications/VirtualMeets.aspx. Another major undertaking has been the work of the Joint

Committee on Pandemic Relief Funding, which is meeting regularly. This bipartisan, bicameral committee will

provide guidance to the governor regarding decisions of how the state should spend itâ€™s

\$1.9 billion in American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) federal funding. Theyâ€™re gathering project recommendations

from the public, executive branch, state agencies and other stakeholders to decide how best

to address the health emergency and pandemic impacts on our stateâ€™s economy. The funds

have to be allocated by Dec. 2024 and expended by Dec. 2026. Youâ€™ll find

the meeting schedules, presentations, and other information at www.oksenate.gov where you can also watch

the meetings live. Comments, questions, and ideas can also be submitted for committee consideration

at www.oklegislature.gov. Interim studies are happening nearly every day. Be sure to check out

our website for schedules and other information about these important meetings. Among issues to

be studied in the Senate this coming week areâ€”equitable farm tax exemptions, state agricultural

sales tax exemption requirements, current impact and solutions for noxious weeds, over prescribing in

the medical community, PACE licensing requirements, youth suicide and current preventative efforts, plans for streamlining Wildlife Department licensing, and pesticide and herbicide drift between food and fiber crops and medical marijuana. Speaking of medical marijuana, I'm so pleased to see that Senate Bill 1033, to better protect legitimate medical marijuana businesses while providing resources to expose criminal activity, is continuing to lead to illegal grow operations being busted across the state. We must continue working to protect legitimate business owners and stop the growth of black-market activity. Another exciting legislative victory was announced this week by the state Department of Transportation (ODOT). Thanks to transportation infrastructure investments prioritized by republicans last decade, Oklahoma has moved up to No. 7 for highway bridge conditions nationwide. This means we're improving among states with the lowest percentage of structurally deficient bridges on the highway system. This is a huge victory, given we were once ranked as low as 49th with just under 1,200 of our 6,800 bridges rated as structurally deficient or poor. Today, there are only 67 bridges remaining in that category, according to the Federal Highway Administration, and they're either under construction or scheduled in ODOT's Eight-Year Construction Work Plan. I was honored to receive a plaque from the Automobile License Plate Collectors Association (ALPCA) for my work on the "Save the Monarchs" plate. Earlier this year, the license plate received the 2020 America's Best License Plate Award from the association. The Nature Conservancy was also recognized for sponsoring the beautiful license plate. For those who may not know, the Nature Conservancy owns and operates the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve north of Pawhuska in the heart of Senate District 10. Helping constituents resolve issues is my favorite part of this job. If I can be of any assistance, please contact me by calling (405) 521-5581 or emailing Bill.Coleman@oksenate.gov.