

Ag or not?: State Sen. George Burns, R-Pollard, filed legislation last week to exclude medical marijuana production from the agricultural sales tax exemption. Burns said the money thus collected by the state could be used to weed out illegal grow operations. "We need to ensure this industry is well-regulated," said Burns. "There have been numerous reports that illegal grows have brought additional drugs and crime into our state, and it's time we put our foot down and say enough is enough. "We need to have sufficient funding available to give the (Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority) and Bureau of Narcotics the resources to go into these grows and make sure they are compliant."

Smart money: The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education approved a fiscal year 2023 appropriation request of \$897.9 million for the state's public colleges and universities. That would be an increase of \$85.2 million, or 9.5%, but still well below the record appropriation of almost \$1.1 billion in FY 2008. The additional funds requested include \$30 million for general operations, \$20 million to address nursing and physician training, and \$4.5 million for teacher education programs. Work: Oklahoma's unemployment rate dropped to 2% in September as about 6,000 more people entered the labor force, according to the latest household survey figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The labor force figures, which have taken on new significance in a tight labor market, were actually down from the same month a year ago but up from August. Tulsa's unemployment rate was 2.1%.

Separate establishment survey data put the number of Oklahomans on nonfarm payrolls at 1.56 million, up 27,000 from a month ago and 41,400 ahead of September 2020. The Tulsa metro area added 5,400 jobs over the past month, to 444,400. Campaigns and elections: State Education Secretary Ryan Walters, a Republican candidate for state superintendent, was quick to take up the cause of six Oklahoma City Public Schools teachers who were fired for refusing to wear face masks as required by the district. "OKCPS has shown their students can safely attend schools without masks or vaccines and it is my sincere hope that Superintendent (Sean) McDaniel would value the personal freedoms of his

employees and offer them the same respect he has shown other OKCPS families and return these teachers to the classroom," Walters said in a written statement. Meetings and events: An Emergency Rental Assistance Program signup for veterans is scheduled for 9:30-10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.-noon on Wednesday at Veterans Park Central Center, 1068 E. Sixth St. The event is sponsored by the city of Tulsa, Restore Hope Ministries, the Tulsa Landlord-Tenant Resource Center and Tulsa Parks. The Oklahoma Republican Party is sponsoring a "Boots and Bling" fundraiser Dec. 10 at the Redneck Yacht Club, an Oklahoma City nightspot. Tickets are \$25-\$1,000 and may be reserved through Eventbrite. Information on the Creek County Democratic Party's annual scholarship competition is available on its Facebook page or by emailing CreekCountyDemocratScholarship@gmail.com. The competition is open to high school seniors residing County who are either registered Democrats or have a parent or guardian who is.

Bottom lines: U.S. Sen. James Lankford said CVS pharmacies have rejoined the TRICARE prescription drug network, thus resolving an issue for some veterans. State GOP Chairman John Bennett, in his weekly video address, acknowledged that the party has come under pressure from what he called "RINOs and the establishment" because of his aggressive targeting of Republican incumbents but said, "I am not going anywhere." Gov. Kevin Stitt asked the U.S. Secretary of State to delay implementation of a vaccine mandate for Oklahoma National Guard members. The state's Chief Protocol Office shifted last week from the secretary of state to the Department of Commerce. State Rep. Tom Gann, R-Inola, said he'll file legislation to block businesses from requiring employee vaccinations without full Food and Drug Administration approval, which until recently would have included COVID-19 vaccines. State Sen. Nathan Dahm, R-Broken Arrow, filed legislation that would require schools to teach the "atrocities of communism." Featured video: Get Government & Politics updates in your inbox! Stay up-to-date on the latest in local and national government and political topics with our newsletter. Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.