

Two lawmakers said last week they plan to pursue a state-managed retirement plan for private sector workers whose employers do not offer such a benefit. Sen. John Montgomery, R-Lawton, and Rep. Marcus McEntire, R-Duncan, held an interim study on the issue last week, and said about half of the state's workers have no retirement benefit. They said that ultimately is reflected in higher spending for Medicaid and other programs. Montgomery and McEntire's proposal would set up the Sooner Choice Trust, allowing participants to deposit up to 3% of their income into investment accounts overseen by the state. No tax money would be involved. The program would be open primarily to employees of small businesses. Similar legislation introduced this spring by the two lawmakers was sidelined by COVID-19.

CARES: Tulsa County launched its tulsacountycares.org website linking residents to CARES programs and transparency resources, including an interactive map and financial summaries. Tulsa County is administering \$113.7 million in CARES Act funds for coronavirus relief. Of that, a little more than \$64 million has been committed. Separately, the Tulsa-based Indian Nations Council of Government received \$400,000 of the \$4.2 million CARES Act funding distributed to the state's regional economic development districts.

Medicaid: A Republican state senator up for reelection called on the Oklahoma Health Care Authority to halt implementation of a capitated Medicaid plan. "The Legislature, as well as practically every healthcare professional in the state, has consistently opposed outsourcing our Medicaid system to insurance companies because its supposed cost saving measures severely degrades the quality of care for our citizens on Medicaid," Sen. Rob Standridge, R-Norman, said in a letter to Health Care Authority Director Kevin Corbett. Under a capitated system, a third-party manager "usually an insurance company or health care system" is paid a flat amount per person enrolled. This creates an incentive to provide care at the lowest possible cost. Gov. Kevin Stitt and some insurance interests are pushing for Oklahoma to adopt a capitated managed care system, while opponents say it leads to a lower quality of care without the promised savings. "Not only did we see this in Oklahoma the last time this was attempted, resulting in multiple lawsuits, but

even today in our neighboring states that have gone down this path," Standridge wrote.

By most accounts, Oklahoma's previous experience with a capitated system did not go well.

Recent experiments in Kansas and Texas have also gotten less than stellar reviews. Working

Class: While Oklahoma generally boasts a relatively low unemployment rate, it rarely mentions this is partly because a lower-than-average percentage of its population is in the work force.

Pew Charitable Trusts verified that distinction held true through the end of 2019, although the share of Oklahomans in what Pew calls the prime age group (25-54) working or looking for work had increased to 77.8% up from 74% six years earlier.

That's still below the 78.6% of 2009 and the current national figure of 80%.

Furthermore, the gap between Oklahoma and the national average has widened in the past four years. For Oklahoma, two percentage points makes a difference of about 30,000 people absent from the workforce. Campaigns and elections: Tulsa mayoral candidate Greg Robinson appeared on the conservative podcast 3D Politics last week. Democratic U.S. Sen. Abby Broyles continued issuing debate challenges to Republican incumbent Jim Inhofe, who to this point has mostly ignored Broyles. Opensecrets reported 5th District Congresswoman Kendra Horn's reelection campaign has been bolstered more than \$400,000 in spending from End Citizens United, a campaign finance reform organization.

Congressional Republicans, meanwhile, were poised to launch a \$500,000 television campaign against Horn, according to The Hill. Bottom lines: State Sen. James Leewright, R-Bristow, and Rep. Logan Phillips,

R-Mounds, were elected co-chairmen of the Rural Broadband Expansion Council. ... Stitt ordered the state Department of Homeland Security to be moved from the Department of Public Safety to the Office of Emergency Management. ... Preservationists were dismayed to discover the U.S.

Department of Agriculture had, without warning, begun demolishing 14 buildings at Fort Reno, including two built in 1890. ... The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission said it has dispersed \$2.8 billion and processed 800,000 claims since March 1. ... The state received a

\$130,000 water planning grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. ... The Sac and Fox Nation received a \$50,000 grant from the National Park Service to survey possible additions

to the National Register of Historic Places. Featured video Be the first to know

Get local news delivered to your inbox! Sign up! * I understand and agree

that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement

and privacy policy.