

Work continues at the state Capitol as we inch closer to the bill request deadline in December. Everyone's getting anxious to start filing bills. Since my last article, we've held two more Health Care Working Group meetings. In the first meeting, we had three speakers from different hospitals. Dr. Kayse Shrum, President of the OSU Health Sciences Center and Secretary of Science and Innovation in Governor Stitt's Cabinet, talked about OSU's efforts to create a pipeline for medical students and to help increase access to healthcare in rural Oklahoma. In addition to figuring out ways to increase the number of physicians in rural areas, which is a major problem in Oklahoma, OSU has also utilized Project ECHO to better educate rural primary care physicians on how to treat and prevent various medical issues. Jay Johnson, President and CEO of Duncan Regional Hospital, and Chuck Spicer, President and CEO of OU Medicine, discussed the functions, missions, history and payor mixes of their health systems as well as the unique challenges of both rural and urban hospitals. They also shared their perspectives on how to maximize federal dollars to shore up struggling hospitals and improve health care in Oklahoma. During the last meeting, we heard how two of Oklahoma's tribal governments are addressing health issues among their citizens. Presentations were made by the Senior Advisor and Policy Analyst for the Chickasaw Nation Division of Health and the Senior Policy Analyst from the Office of Self-Governance for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Due to scheduling conflicts, we won't have a meeting this coming week. However, our plan is to try to have a few more meetings. Unlike interim studies, working groups don't have a deadline when they must be completed. So far, there are at least 20 more interim studies planned between now and Friday, November 8, which is the deadline to have all studies wrapped up. These will cover, among other topics, the cost of prescription medications, medication assisted treatment for addiction, accessing Community Reinvestment Act funds, learning, cellular and electronic devices in state prisons, fines and fees in the criminal justice system, Farm to Table reforms, urban agriculture and retirement security. On Monday, I

spent some time with new DHS Director Justin Brown and a couple of members of his team from Oklahoma City. We visited with DHS workers in both the Ponca City and Newkirk offices. Director Brown's visit was very well received and it's obvious to me he has a great vision for DHS and its workers, along with the many Oklahomans it serves. Earlier this month, I also traveled to Dallas for a meeting I initiated between the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). Each year, NAB rotates the city that hosts the national radio convention known as The Radio Show. I wanted them to hear from Oklahoma City about the new Omni Hotel and new Convention Center being built and for them to take a look at moving this show to Oklahoma City. The folks with the CVB gave an excellent presentation and put Oklahoma City on their radar for future conventions. The national radio convention typically attracts about 2,000 attendees annually. I recently invited Pro Tem Treat to Ponca City to speak to the Ponca Politics Committee of the Ponca City Area Chamber of Commerce. We want to thank him for taking time out of his busy schedule to drive up here to visit with us. You can contact me at the state Capitol by calling (405) 521-5581 or by email at bill.coleman@oksenate.gov. Follow me on Twitter @SkiatookJournal. E-mail lindsey.chastain@skiatookjournal.com Catch the latest in Opinion Get opinion pieces, letters and editorials sent direct to your inbox weekly! Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.