

Paper work: Legislators requested more than 3,000 bills and joint resolutions for the second session of the 58th Legislature, which begins Feb. 7, the tracking service e-Capitol reports.

That total is on-par with the number requested prior to the second session of

the 57th Legislature two years ago, and is in addition to more than 2,400

bills and resolutions carried over from the 58th's first session last spring. Not all

of the requests will ultimately be filed by the Jan. 20 deadline, but the

number nevertheless represents a substantial workload for legislative staff and lawmakers in the coming

months. Teacher pay: The Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency, which heavily influences legislative leaders'

policy decisions, told lawmakers last week that Oklahoma teachers' compensation, at least in the

early years of their careers, are competitive except in one respect — the cost

of dependents' health insurance and other benefits. LOFT recommended greater opportunity for professional develop

and higher pay for long-time educators, and urged collecting more information from teachers leaving

their jobs or the profession all together. Financial planning: The first estimate of revenue

for fiscal year 2023, appropriations for which will be made during the coming legislative

session, will be presented to the state Board of Equalization on Dec. 27. FY

2023 begins July 1, 2022. Security or suppression: A "scorecard" issued by the conservative

Heritage Foundation may offer clues on upcoming voting legislation in Oklahoma and elsewhere. While

Heritage couches its rankings in terms of security, voting rights advocates see it as

a roadmap for voter suppression. Oklahoma tied for 17th on the list, although it

may well deserve to be somewhat higher since it's in the process of implementing

one major recommended item — membership in a multistate database known as ERIC. Among

the deductions for the state are exceptions to its photo ID law for voting,

not using credit agencies and other sources to verify addresses, and the inability of

the Legislature to sue the state election board or to block settlements if the

election board is sued by someone else. Whose history: In denouncing state Rep. Jim

Olsen's bill to keep The New York Times' 1619 Project out of Oklahoma's schools,

colleges and universities, Oklahoma Democratic Party Chairwoman Alicia Andrews said, "I'm not sure which is worse: the idea that Jim Olsen is sincere in his quest to rewrite and whitewash history, or that he is chasing the headlines that such a ridiculous bill will certainly garner." Olsen, incidentally, is not the only lawmaker trying to get into the school curriculum business. Sex and diversity, for instance, are on the mind of state Sen. Rob Standridge, R-Norman. Standridge filed two bills last week, including one that would prohibit public schools from having or promoting materials "that address the study of sex, sexual preferences, sexual activity, sexual perversion, sex-based classifications, sexual identity, gender identity or books that contain content of a sexual nature that a reasonable parent or legal guardian would want to know about or approve of before their child was exposed to it." The second would prohibit public colleges and universities from requiring courses in "gender, sexual, or racial diversity, equality or inclusion" unless they are central to a student's major. Similar legislation failed in the Legislature's most recent session. And, as reported earlier, state Sen. Nathan Dahm, R-Broken Arrow, wants to dictate teaching about Thanksgiving and bring in third-party contractors to handle "founding document" instruction. Trail driver: State Sen. Kevin Matthews, D-Tulsa, has launched an effort to get Oklahoma's remaining Black towns, as well as Tulsa's Greenwood Rising and Oklahoma City's Clara Luper Center, on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. The effort formally began earlier this month with an open house event in Boley, the largest of the 13 remaining Black towns. At one time, Oklahoma had at least 50 such communities. "The plan is for other all-Black communities to showcase their own histories and contributions," Matthews said. Campaigns and events: Republican U.S. Senate candidate Jackson Lahmeyer's Facebook page posted a photo of him with former President Donald Trump. The accompanying post says Trump is "watching Oklahoma very closely and I now need to prove to the President that I can beat RINO (incumbent) James Lankford." Lahmeyer adheres to the unproven claim, widely discredited by experts in the election process, that the 2020 presidential election was in some way "stolen" from Trump. Lankford

has advocated investigating the claims but has been noncommittal about the extent of their validity. In other news, the Federal Election Commission dismissed the Oklahoma Republican Party's complaint against Abby Broyles and her 2020 U.S. Senate campaign. The Oklahoma GOP contended Broyles, who is a 2022 candidate in the 5th congressional district, received discounted advertising rates from her former employer, Oklahoma City television station KFOR. The FEC said it found no evidence of that. Bottom lines: State Rep. Sean Roberts, R-Hominy, said he wants a cost of living adjustment for retirees in the state's pension plans. ... State Agriculture Secretary Blayne Arthur warned that conditions are approaching those of 2005-06, when Oklahoma had one of the worst wildfire outbreaks in its history. ... The Oklahoma Historical Society, which has taken deep funding cuts over the past decade, is asking the Legislature to authorize a \$46 million bond issue for maintenance and repairs of OHS museums and assets. ... The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, which has been trying to get money to fix its deteriorating parking garage since at least 2007, said 40% of the structure is now unusable with the cost of repairs estimated at \$20 million. â€” Randy Krehbiel, Tulsa World 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.