

U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe praised President Donald Trump's planned executive order denying asylum to immigrants who enter the U.S. illegally. Current law allows such people to apply for asylum, and it is not clear whether Trump can make such a change through executive order. Trump said he wants those seeking asylum to turn themselves in to border officials at ports of entry. "The asylum process should be for those who truly need it" not individuals using it after they are caught illegally crossing the border in an attempt to avoid deportation," Inhofe said in a written release.

"Smugglers and illegal aliens have attempted to use false claims of asylum to gain entry into the United States, are released pending a court date, then never show up for their court date." Accounts vary on how many asylum-seekers skip court dates, with some observers citing data indicating compliance rates of as high as 99 percent. Others say higher rejection rates during the Trump Administration is causing more applicants to take their chances living in the U.S. illegally.

New members: The committee assignments of Oklahoma's two new House members, Republican Kevin Hern and Democrat Kendra Horn, are important not only to them but the state as well. Hern, who takes office this week and may learn his assignments before the end of the year, says he's hoping for Ways and Means, Transportation or Financial Services. His predecessor in the 1st District, Jim Bridenstine, served on the House Armed Services and Science committees. Fifth District Congressman Steve Russell, who lost to Horn on Tuesday, is also on Armed Services, along with Oversight and Government Reform. Because there are only five of them, Oklahoma's House members typically try to spread themselves out, although there has been some overlap.

The House has 21 standing committees, plus several joint committees. Oklahoma's three returning members serve on eight of them.

Man of science: Third District Congressman Frank Lucas declared his candidacy for ranking member of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee. Lucas is currently co-chairman of the committee, and would likely have been in line to take over the top spot had the Republicans retained a majority in the House.

The ranking member is the minority party's committee leader. Lucas was formerly chairman of the House Agriculture Committee for the maximum six years and is also a member of the Financial Services Committee. The chairmanship of that committee is expected to pass to Chief Deputy Whip Patrick McHenry. Tulsan picked: Author and lecturer Hannibal Johnson is one of two Oklahomans and 14 people nationwide appointed to the 400 Years of African American History Commission named by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. The commission will coordinate activities associated with the 400th anniversary of the 1619 arrival of the first enslaved Africans in what became the United States. Also chosen from Oklahoma was Myron Pope, vice president for student affairs at the University of Central Oklahoma and an adjunct instructor at the University of Oklahoma. Farewell: Former U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions' departure as attorney general was a difficult one for Inhofe. The two are old friends, but Inhofe is also a staunch supporter of President Trump, who forced Sessions' resignation. Inhofe said Sessions "is a man of integrity, who used his leadership to uphold the rule of law each and every day. But more importantly ... Jeff Sessions is one of my closest personal friends and I hope he'll have more time with his grandkids."

• Dots and dashes: The Center for Responsive Politics, which monitors money in elections and governments, reported the candidate who spent the most money in his or her race won 89 percent of U.S. House and 84 percent of U.S. Senate races this year. ... U.S. Sen. James Lankford will appear with Democratic colleague Michael Bennet of Colorado at a conference on immigration reform next week. ... Rep. Eric Swalwell, a Democrat from California who made an appearance in Tulsa a few months ago, launched a presidential campaign. Two other Democrats with presidential aspirations, U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, have visited the state recently.

Get local news delivered to your inbox! Subscribe to our Daily Headlines newsletter. Sign up! * I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.