

HOT TOPIC ISSUES

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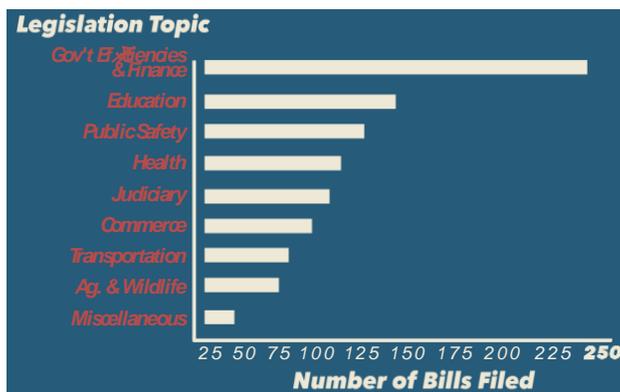
Senate Tops 1,000 Bills for Upcoming Session

This was an important deadline week for the 57th Legislature. Thursday was the deadline for members of the Oklahoma Senate to file legislation to be considered during the upcoming session.

In December, Senators made bill requests – meaning they asked for a placeholder for an idea they were working on for a piece of legislation. Between then and now, senators finalized the details of their bill. Once a bill’s language is finalized, it’s sent to the bill drafters in the Senate and officially filed. Not all bill requests are filed as bills.

This year, a total of 1,040 bills were filed along with 21 Senate joint resolutions – which are bills that, if passed, put things up for a vote of the people. At this time of year, much of the media attention pushes focus on) controversial or sensational bills that have been filed. However, there are very few bills like that and despite what you may read those, types of bills typically don’t take up much of the Legislature’s time. The vast majority of bills filed this session focus on education, health care, public safety, and government reforms and efficiencies.

Estimated breakdown of the bill counts by topic:



Here are just a few of the bills filed to keep your eye on:

- Senate Bill 1 by President Pro Tempore Greg Treat - creates the Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency (LOFT). LOFT will serve as a fiscal watchdog for the Legislature, helping them hold executive agencies more accountable for the appropriations they receive and tax dollars they spend.
- SB 456, SB 457, SB 458, SB 459, SB 460) by Pro Tempore Treat – gives the governor authority to appoint the directors of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, the Office of Juvenile Affairs, and the Department of Corrections. Allowing the governor this appointing authority provides more accountability in government.

- Senate Bill 210 from Senator Roger Thompson, R-Okemah, and Senator Wayne Shaw, R-Grove, encourages agencies to pursue “pay for success” models with private sector entities. These models are to include performance markers to incentivize better service and outcomes.
- Senate Bill 151 by Senator Gary Stanislawski, R-Tulsa, requires dependent elementary school districts to compensate independent school districts a proportional amount of funds whenever a student transfers from the dependent district to an independent district.
- Senate Bill 11 by Senator Greg McCortney, R-Ada, would change the state's cutoff date of enrolling for kindergarten and pre-K from Sept. 1 to July 1. That means children would have to be at least 4 years old by July 1 rather than Sept. 1 to enroll in pre-K. They must be at least 5 by July 1 to enroll in kindergarten. McCortney said it would give an extra three months of maturity to kids in pre-K, which teachers have told him would make a huge difference in the classroom.