

By Eileen Werner, TCPTA VicePresident2 for Advocacy & Legislation. 1/4/2018

2017 Year-End Wrap-Up for OK Legislature:

The OK State Budget 2017-18 still not fully funded, due to \$215million in new cigarette “fees” in original budget deal being struck down as improperly imposed “taxes”. The brunt of this revenue shortfall would affect the OK State Dept Health and related agencies, which were direct recipients of cigarette “fees”.

So 1st Extraordinary Session was called to fix this budget gap, but a compromise plan missed passage by 5 votes shy of 75% supermajority needed. Legislators in 1st Special Session finally passed a “cash & cuts” budget, most of which was line-item vetoed by Gov. Fallin, except for some emergency funding to health agencies to keep them open until January, taken out of one-time cash sources such as Rainy Day Fund.

In the 2nd Extraordinary Session called on Dec 15th to try to find long-term sources of revenue to restore full funding to fill the remaining budget hole of \$110million, on Dec 22nd the OK Legislature passed & Gov. Fallin signed 2 additional measures for emergency funding using revenues from recent small increases in gross production taxes on legacy oil wells, but that will only fund the agencies until April, still some \$66million shy of amount needed to complete fiscal year June 30th. But at least the OK Healthcare Authority did not have to cut its Medicaid provider rates and can fund these services through April. And the OK DHS can continue to provide in-home services to elderly & handicapped patients through the Medicaid ADvantage Waiver program through April, rather than cancelling this vital program and forcing some into much more expensive nursing homes.

This 2nd Special Session is not technically over yet, and Gov. Fallin may call them back again in January 2018 to complete the task of finding sustainable revenue sources to fully fund the 2017-18 budget through June 30, 2018 and possibly the additional task of finding a recurring source of revenue to fund a long-promised teacher pay raise. Good Luck.

The new 2018 Regular Legislative Session will open on February 5, 2018 and end on May 25, 2018 but any 2018-19 budget appropriations and revenues raised during that session will not take effect until July 1, 2018 at the earliest.

SAVE THE DATE: Monday March 19, 2018 and possibly Tuesday March 20, 2018. The Tulsa area PTA Councils Advocacy reps are planning a joint **“PTA Day at Capitol”** to meet with our legislators in person and share our concerns with them directly in a polite but meaningful way. This is during our Spring Break vacation, so many parents, teachers and students will be off from school and able to attend during a regular work day for Legislators. There’s strength in numbers! PTA Advocacy reps from Broken Arrow, Jenks, Union, and Tulsa Public Schools will be there to help organize the event and arrange carpools. More details will be sent in Feb, but we’d like to get an idea of size of group ahead of time. So if you’re interested in going to our State Capitol in OKCity on Monday March 19th (and possibly additional day Tuesday March 20th), please send a brief email or text with your contact info to Tulsa Council of PTA’s VP2 Advocacy & Legislation rep Eileen Werner, Email: tcpta.advocacy@gmail.com or cell phone takes voicemail & text messages: 1(862)221-0907.