



Priorities for Oklahoma

Together Oklahoma has identified three issues as our coalition's biggest priorities in the upcoming Legislative session. These priorities are practical, politically achievable steps to move us toward lasting, broad-based prosperity.

RESTORE EDUCATION FUNDING



In the last five years, Oklahoma's per pupil investment in common education fell more than twenty percent. This was the largest percentage drop in the entire nation. As a result of these steep cuts, we are losing teachers, students are being crammed into overcrowded classrooms, and the advanced classes that prepare our kids for college are being slashed.

We need to restore our investment in education to at least what it was before the recession. Our children and state will continue to suffer if we do not pay for good teachers, provide necessary training and educational tools, and ensure safe environments for students to learn.

A scientific poll of Oklahomans showed a large majority (68 percent) believe an educated and well-trained workforce is more important for attracting business than low-personal income tax rates. If we want good jobs and a prosperous future for our children, we need to invest in education.

EXPAND HEALTH COVERAGE



Oklahomans get sicker, die sooner, and go without much needed medical care more than almost everyone else in the nation. But today we have a huge opportunity to save lives by expanding health coverage to hundreds of thousands of low-income workers and their families, at little cost to the state.

If Oklahoma covers health benefits for Oklahomans making up to 138 percent of the poverty level, we can access billions in federal funds to cover the cost. While many states are using these funds to expand Medicaid, the federal government has also shown flexibility with states like Arkansas and Iowa that are developing a private option. Oklahoma already has a great model to make this happen with the successful Insure Oklahoma program.

EXPAND HEALTH COVERAGE (CONTINUED)

Accepting the funds would be a huge boost to Oklahoma's economy. Besides receiving billions in federal health care dollars, we would dramatically improve the health and financial security of the state's workforce. Expanding health coverage is especially important for hard-working Oklahomans who we interact with on a daily basis — restaurant, fast food and retail workers, construction workers, and those who work with our children and assist our aging loved ones.

PROTECT ESSENTIAL REVENUES

A quote often attributed to the famous Will Rogers is, "If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging." Yet our state lawmakers have seemed unable to take that advice.



*"If you find
yourself in a hole,
stop digging!"*

-Will Rogers

The Great Recession beginning in 2008 opened a huge hole in the state budget that was never fully repaired. Yet politicians have continued to push tax cuts and ignore the growing problems caused by underfunded core services — such as too few foster families for neglected and abused kids, kids not prepared for college, overcrowded and unsafe prisons, rising tuition and fees, and more.

Contributing to these problems are ill-advised and unaffordable tax breaks that hollow out Oklahoma's revenue base. In particular, a tax exemption for horizontal drilling has become dramatically more expensive in recent years, as what was once a new and risky technology becomes commonplace. We are subsidizing highly profitable wells even as we cut services for Oklahoma families.

It's time to halt the march of tax cuts and reign in unnecessary tax breaks. If we value our children, safety, infrastructure, health, and economy, we need to invest in our core state services.

To make it happen, we need your help! Sign up to join the grassroots movement at www.togetherok.org or contact us at info@togetherok.org.

