

5,321 weeks, since the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre

MILDRED MITCHELL CHRISTOPHER was 7 years old when her family's home on King Street was destroyed by a white mob.

It's long overdue for the criminals who destroyed the Greenwood community in 1921 to be held accountable. Each week we remember a departed member of our community.

PHOTO ADOBE STOCK

AS VOTING TURNOUT DIPS YOUNG OKLAHOMANS Risk Losing Political Influence

By KEATON ROSS, OKLAHOMA WATCH
YOUNG VOTER On A4



STATE

SHERIFF, JAIL HEALTH CARE PROVIDER SEEK PUBLIC MONEY TO INCREASE STAFF

By WHITNEY BRYEN, OKLAHOMA WATCH

Jail medical staff assumed Amy Lynn Cross was faking as she seized, foamed at the mouth and her fingers turned blue in a Colorado jail, a December lawsuit alleges. The 41-year-old woman, who was facing another drug charge, died of an overdose
JAIL HEALTH CARE On A3

STATE

AN OKLAHOMA MAN'S DISABILITY PROPELS HIM TO ADVOCATE FOR OTHERS

By LIONEL RAMOS, OKLAHOMA WATCH

Andre Wilson, 45, suffered a car accident in 2006 that left him in a coma and induced prolonged brain damage. The resident of Cache, a small town west of Lawton, has trouble concentrating and struggles with his eyesight, short-term memory and
DISABILITY On A7

NATION

'SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF LIFE': READ THE GRAND JURY REPORT ON THE OK COUNTY JAIL

By MATT PATTERSON, NonDoc

In its 15-page final report, the state multi-county grand jury that spent 14 months hearing testimony about the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority and the Oklahoma County Detention Center recommends the jail trust "self-terminate" and that daily
OK COUNTY JAIL On A8



PHOTO ADOBE STOCK

STATE

OKLAHOMA COURT OK'S ABORTION TO PRESERVE MOTHER'S LIFE

By KEN MILLER, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A divided Oklahoma Supreme Court on Tuesday overturned a portion of the state's near total ban on abortion, ruling women have a right to abortion when pregnancy risks their health, not just in a medical emergency. It was a narrow win for abortion rights advocates since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the landmark Roe v. Wade last year. Since then, conservative states including Oklahoma have enforced restrictions on abortion. Oklahoma's top court ruled that a woman has the right under the state Constitution to
ABORTION On A14

NATION

CLASSROOM RESTRICTIONS ASK BLACK, LGBTQ+ TEACHERS TO 'ERASE' IDENTITIES

By MAYA POTTIGER, WORD IN BLACK

From adapting to virtual learning and combatting learning loss to facing book bans and ongoing trauma, public schools have been through a tumultuous few years. As if that wasn't enough, between
ERASE IDENTITY On A12

NATION

Fear Is a Reality of Black Motherhood

A new study found parents' worries about their children are linked to their neighborhood quality.

By ANISSA DURHAM, WORD IN BLACK

"There are too many dead kids not to assume that could be yours." As a Black mother in Washington D.C., Tara Brown says she worries for her 15-year-old daughter on a daily basis. Gun violence and safety are some of her top concerns. Brown is not alone in those feelings. A recent national survey by the Pew Research Center found that parents'
BLACK MOTHERHOOD On A13



UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA STUDENT BLAKE HIEBERT, 22, sends his ballot into a machine at his Norman polling station after voting on State Question 820 on March 7, 2023. Less than 10% of Oklahoma voters 30 and under participated in that election.
PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

YOUNG VOTERS from A1

Oliver Bridges wasted little time registering to vote

The 19-year-old Noble resident said he submitted his application a few months after his 18th birthday in October 2021, making him eligible to participate in every upcoming statewide and local election. Except for a primary where he was out of town, Bridges said he’s voted in three statewide elections the past 12 months.

“Some young people might find it difficult just due to scheduling, or they might have a terrible case of ADHD that doesn’t let them focus on one thing at a time,” said Bridges, who graduated high school last year and now attends classes at Moore Norman Technology Center. “But in all reality, I believe voting can be easy.”

State voting data shows Bridges is an outlier.

Less than 25% of registered voters age 30 and under cast a ballot last November, according to an Oklahoma Watch analysis of State Election Board data. Fewer than 10% of them voted on March 7 to decide State Question 820, an initiative seeking to legalize recreational marijuana and streamline the expungement of certain marijuana-related convictions. Voters soundly rejected the question, which appeared as a rare standalone item on the ballot.

Voter turnout across all demographics generally declines in non-presidential election cycles. But in the 2018 midterm contest, about 31% of voters 30 and younger cast a ballot, indicating a decline in interest over the four years.

The issue isn’t unique to Oklahoma. In neighboring Texas, 25% of voters ages 18-29 cast a ballot in the 2022 midterm election. Young voter turnout nationwide dipped slightly last year compared to 2018, a year that saw mostly strong participation nationwide, according to data compiled by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University.

If the low turnout trend continues, the younger generation risks having less of a voice on policies that impact their day-to-day life, Rose State College political science professor Emily Stacey said.

“If you’re not participating from 18 to 30, then someone who is older and at a different point of life than you, and probably makes more money than you, is deciding what laws and policies you live by,” Stacey said. “That’s a really dangerous, commonsensical thing that I think a lot of the youth don’t understand.”

An Oklahoma Watch review found only seven of Oklahoma’s 149 state representatives and senators are 30 or younger. The average age of members of

“Some young people might find it difficult just due to scheduling, or they might have a terrible case of ADHD that doesn’t let them focus on one thing at a time.”

OLIVER BRIDGES, Noble, Oklahoma resident

both bodies is just shy of 53. State senators must be at least 25, and House members at least 21, at the time of their election.

Lawmakers recently have zeroed in on policies affecting younger Oklahomans, including passing bills to ban nearly all abortions statewide and restrict access to gender-affirming care. A sweeping education reform package that proposes incremental teacher pay raises and tax credits for parents who homeschool or send their children to private schools is working its way through the Legislature.

“If the younger generation is not only not voting, but not showing up to these political parties and not going through the motions of the candidate selection process or becoming a candidate themselves, we’re going to see less future-forward policies,” Stacey said.

Many Oklahomans had no say in choosing their state representative last November, as 69% of state House and Senate races were decided during the April filing period or primary races. Former candidates who spoke with Oklahoma Watch last summer said financial and personal demands of campaigning, along with district boundaries that overwhelmingly favor one political party, can be deterrents for potential candidates.

William Weber of Del City, said he fears there’s become a “self-feeding cycle” of young people questioning whether their vote matters and opting not to participate. Weber, 26, said there should be more communication in future elections about the collective power of the young voting block.

“Your individual vote may not matter that much unless it’s one of those historic occasions where the margin is one vote,” Weber said. “But when too many people have that mindset, that does matter.”

What Other States are Doing

Young people face inherent challenges to becoming civically engaged, said Peter de Guzman, an assistant researcher with the CIRCLE at Tufts University. They tend to move more often, have less political experience and disproportionately face transportation issues getting to the polls.

People 30 and younger also tend to be

a less reliable population of prospective voters for political organizations to reach, de Guzman said. Nearly half of respondents to a CIRCLE survey said they were not contacted by the Trump or Biden campaign during the 2020 election.

“If you’re a young person who’s never registered and not on a voter roll, you’re going to be harder to locate and more expensive to contact,” de Guzman said. “That often leads to what we see as kind of a neglect on the part of outreach to young people.”

Certain pre-registration and online registration policies have proven successful in other states, de Guzman said. For instance, CIRCLE researchers found that youth voter registration ahead of the 2020 presidential election was 10% higher in states with fully online voter registration.

Oklahoma lawmakers authorized online voter registration in 2015, but a series of technical delays have delayed the project. While prospective voters have been able to fill out an application online since 2018, they must print out the form, sign it and deliver it to their county election board office. In a statement to Oklahoma Watch earlier this year, State Election Board secretary Paul Zirix said the fully online system is in the final stages of testing but did not offer an estimated date of completion.

A bill introduced earlier this year by Sen. Julia Kirt, D-Oklahoma City, sought to set an end-of-the-year deadline for the state to fully launch online voter registration. The measure lacked backing from the State Election Board’s backing and failed to receive a committee hearing.

More than one-third of Oklahomans age 18 to 30 are not registered to vote, according to a comparison of state voter registration data with 2020 U.S. census figures.

“We think of online voter registration as a leaky funnel, where people can drop off at points in the process because they encounter a barrier,” de Guzman said. “Making it as streamlined as they can will make things a lot smoother for the potential registrants.”

Cece Kuper, a 24-year-old voter who works for a technology company in Oklahoma City, said ideally the state would

implement an automatic voter registration system. But making the current registration system entirely digital would be a positive development for youth civic engagement, she said.

“That’s where they lose us,” Kuper said of the requirement that online forms be printed and manually delivered. “This generation is very much online as a whole.”

Other policies CIRCLE has identified as helpful in encouraging youth civic participation, such as allowing people to preregister at 16 and allowing some teenagers under 18 to volunteer as poll workers, have not gained traction in Oklahoma. The state currently allows teenagers to preregister at 17 and a half.

Alex McEwen, a 24-year-old voter from Moore who voted for the first time in the 2020 presidential election, said those kinds of policies could spur more young people to become civically engaged. But the top priority for young people should be to remind their family members and friends of elections and encourage them to vote, she said.

“I see a lot of people in my age group and friend group talk about politics, but if you’re not actively using your right to vote, you’re not using your full voice,” she said.

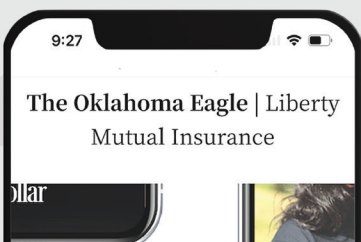
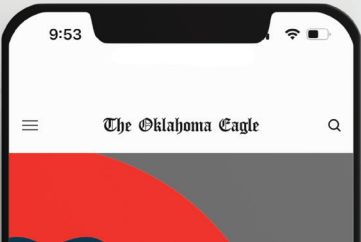
More Time Off for Voting?

One student-led group civic engagement group at the University of Oklahoma is trying to make it easier for their college peers to cast a ballot.

Michael Stoyak, programming chair for OK Votes, said the group has worked to establish a polling place on campus and cancel classes on general election days. While efforts to make the 2020 presidential election day a student holiday proved successful on many campuses, fewer university administrators agreed to a similar arrangement for the 2022 midterm elections.

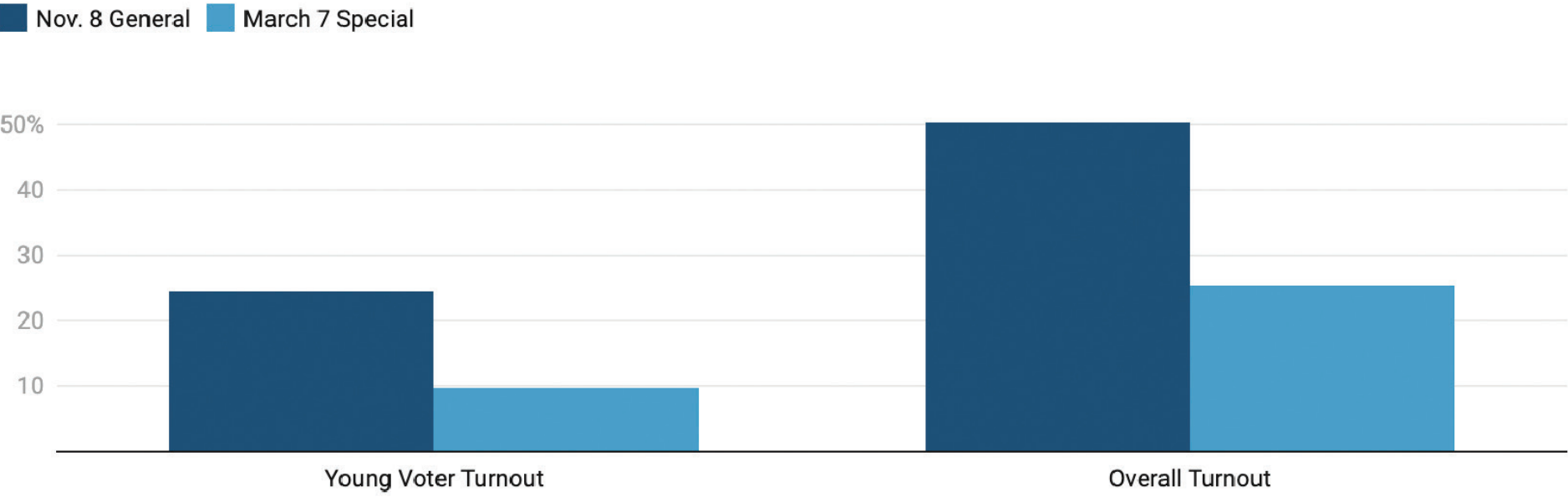
“One of the reasons I think students might not be getting out to vote is on Tuesday there are a lot of classes, and sometimes professors don’t always give exemptions for students, or students might feel as though their professor is not going to give them an

YOUNG VOTERS continued on A3



Oklahoma Young Voter Turnout Lags

Most Oklahoma voters between the ages of 18 and 30 did not participate in the Nov. 8 general election and March 7 special election, state voting data shows.



Data current as of March 20, 2023.
Chart: Keaton Ross/Oklahoma Watch • Source: Oklahoma State Election Board • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

State Law requires employers to provide up to two hours of time off to vote on election day.

YOUNG VOTERS *from A2*

exemption to go vote,” he said. “That has been an issue.”

State law requires employers to provide up to two hours of time off to vote on election day or during early voting, but there are several exceptions. Time off may not be granted if there’s a three-hour voting period before or after an employee’s shift, and the employer may alter a worker’s shift to accommodate voting. Oklahoma also offers no-excuse mail-in absentee voting for all state and local elections.

Bridges, the 19-year-old from Noble, said he juggles a full work and school schedule and can emphasize with someone feeling like they don’t have enough time to vote. But even more important than solving the time issue, Bridges said, is providing young people with the confidence and resources needed to make an informed voting decision.

“I think it’s more of a social issue. We hear things like teenagers are really stupid and they shouldn’t be given any responsibility, 18-year-olds shouldn’t vote, that sort of thing,” he said. “I hear that a lot from people in older generations and I think that puts a lot of negative emotion on voting for younger people, and makes you feel like whatever decision you make you could be fooling yourself.”

Weber, the 26-year-old from Del City, said he’s hopeful that young voter turnout will spike in the 2024 election cycle and the generation will soon have a greater say in Oklahoma politics.

“I think if more young people were stubborn about having their voices heard, we might actually be able to affect change in this state,” he said.

“I think if more young people were stubborn about having their voices heard, we might actually be able to affect change in this state.”

OLIVER BRIDGES,
Noble, Oklahoma resident

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TURN KEY,
FAILURES
LAWSUITS
NEXT
STEPS

JAIL HEALTH CARE *from A1*

after a bag of methamphetamine broke inside of her body.

In Fort Smith, Arkansas, medical staff neglected 50-year-old Larry Price Jr., leaving him alone in a cell as he lost nearly half of his body weight, according to a lawsuit filed by his family last month. Price, arrested after cursing at and verbally threatening police during a mental health crisis, died of dehydration and malnutrition.

After nearly three weeks in the Cleveland County jail, Terrance Osborne died of congestive heart failure, one of two chronic diagnoses he suffered before he was arrested for suspected public intoxication, his family’s January lawsuit claims. Swelling in his face and legs left the 44-year-old unable to move, go to the bathroom or access food and medication, according to the lawsuit.

The target of those lawsuits is the same health care provider responsible for thousands of incarcerated Oklahomans, including two women who died in December while waiting for mental health evaluations at the Cleveland County jail.

The deaths of Shannon Hanchett

and Kathryn Milano caused Cleveland County officials to reevaluate the treatment of detainees. Now, the sheriff and the health care provider are asking commissioners for more taxpayer money to expand care.

Sheriff Chris Amason asked the county’s board of commissioners for an additional \$500,000 annually for more nurses and mental health professionals on Turnkey Health Clinics’ jail medical team.

In a Tuesday meeting, Rhett Burnett, a Turn Key official who oversees operations in Oklahoma and Kansas, told board members that good care is provided at the jail but an increasing population warrants more.

Founded in 2009 by state lawmaker Jon Echols, Turn Key Health Clinics operates in 100 detention facilities in nine states. The Oklahoma City-based company is the target of lawsuits in at least three states where patients have died under the care of its medical staff. A former Turn Key nurse told Oklahoma Watch that inadequate staffing left patients with substandard care.

Caring for people in custody requires reliance on first responders, hospitals and mental health care

facilities for treatment beyond the abilities of the jail, Amason said. People detained in the jail can refuse treatment and medical staff cannot override a patient’s decision without a court order, which further delays care.

“Correctional health care is a highly litigious environment,” Turn Key attorney Austin Young said in an email. “Allegations do not equate to evidence, and we believe this is reflected in our litigation record. We are proud of the exceptional care that is provided by our devoted health care providers.”

Amason said that when the company approached him about the needed changes, which would raise Cleveland County’s annual payments to Turn Key to more than \$1.4 million, Turn Key employees pointed to insufficient staffing, especially on the night shift.

One Nurse, 500 Patients

Turn Key is required to provide only one nurse to care for the jail’s hundreds of detainees, a contract provision that hasn’t changed since 2009 when the facility’s population was about half its current size.

“It’s very, very low for the acuity of

JAIL HEALTH CARE *continued on A5*

African American Baseball

By **BOB BURKE**, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE

Most African Americans were historically excluded from playing baseball with their white brothers until Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in leagues in 1947.



Long before Robinson paved the way for African Americans to play baseball at all levels, “blackball” was a source of great pride for African Americans in Oklahoma.

In black high schools and in sandlot leagues young African Americans excelled on the diamond, often overcoming the influence of poorly maintained fields and improper equipment. An example is Willie Wells, who played for sandlot teams in Oklahoma City in his teenage years before becoming one of the best shortstops in the history of the Negro Leagues. In 1997 he joined the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Black minor-league clubs in Oklahoma, organized as early as 1910, served as an informal farm system for the Negro Leagues. Teams in Oklahoma City and Tulsa regularly sent star players to teams such as the Kansas City Monarchs. Wilber Joe “Bullet Joe” Rogan left his native Oklahoma City to play for the Monarchs and rivaled Satchel Paige as the best

pitcher in the Negro Leagues in the 1930s. In 1998 Rogan was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Oklahoma franchises such as the Oklahoma Giants and the Tulsa Black Oilers had loyal fans. Games between black teams drew huge crowds to baseball fields normally used by white teams. In 1929 the Douglass High School band led a parade to an Oklahoma City ballpark, and newspaper publisher Roscoe Dunjee threw out the first pitch to launch a new season for the Oklahoma City Black Indians.

The popularity of blackball in Oklahoma began to decline during the Great Depression, because fans had no extra money for leisure activities. After Pres. Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal provided jobs for the needy, the Oklahoma City Black Indians regrouped and kept a sporadic schedule against All-Black teams such as the Tulsa Black Oilers, Guthrie Black Spiders, and Boley Wonders.

After World War II and Jackie Robinson’s entry

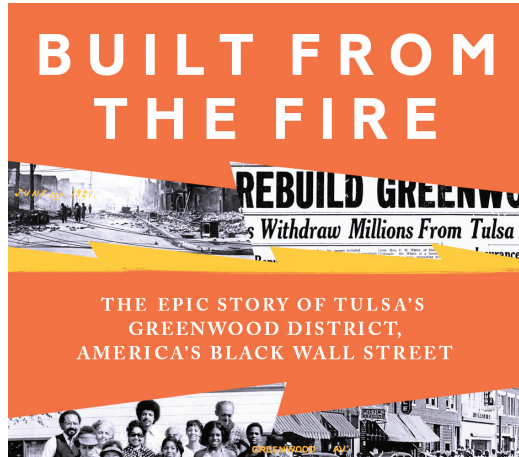
into the major leagues, the decline of blackball came quickly. The last recorded Oklahoma Negro Leagues game was played at Tulsa’s Oiler Park on June 5, 1962. However, Oklahoma continued to provide star African American players for the integrated major leagues. Henry “Hank” Thompson, an Oklahoma City native, was the first black player for both the New York Giants and the St. Louis Browns. Willie Stargell, born at Earlsboro, was the two hundredth player inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. He is one of only a handful of men in baseball history to play for only one team for twenty seasons. Stargell died in 2001.

From Oklahoma City’s Millwood High School came Joe Carter, who hit one of the most memorable home runs in World Series history. His ninth-inning homer won the 1993 World Series for the Toronto Blue Jays.

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THE OKLAHOMA CITY EAGLES, 1952 YMCA champs. (23157.128.1, Jimmy Stewart Collection, OHS).

Featured Last Week



Black Wall Street & Greenwood's Epic Story



TPS Board Makes History, Appoints Diamond Marshall, Dist. 2 Seat



New Program to Provide Legal Training for Tulsa, OKC Students

The Oklahoma Eagle

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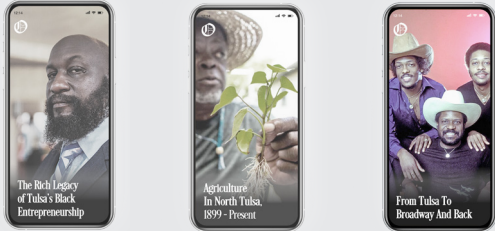
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A WOMAN COMFORTS HER FRIEND outside of the Cookie Cottage in Norman, which became a memorial after owner Shannon Hanchett died in the Cleveland County jail. The December deaths of Hanchett and Kathryn Milano, who was also incarcerated at the facility, caused county officials to scrutinize the jail’s health care. PHOTO **WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH**

TURN KEY

TURN KEY provides comprehensive health care services to diverse inmate populations, with services tailored to each client’s need. Our top focus is quality of care and quality levels of service, while providing accountability for use of taxpayer resources.

JAIL HEALTH CARE *from A3*

care you have with people that are in jail typically,” said Richard Forbus, a former jail commander who recruits new clients and acts as a spokesman for the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. “That’s a very minimal level of care.”

Turn Key often provides more staff than its contract requires, according to an hourly report provided to Oklahoma Watch. Two nurses and a medical assistant are on duty most weekdays. Every night, a medical assistant supports a nurse during a portion of the late shift.

But the report shows there are times on weeknights and weekends when one licensed practical nurse is responsible for the entire jail, which topped 500 in December when Hanchett and Milano were detained.

Sheriff Amason’s proposal to commissioners would amend Cleveland County’s contract with Turn Key, which was renewed in July. New staffing mandates would limit the time a nurse can be the only medical staff at the jail to eight hours per week. Two new positions would help care for patients overnight. And a mental health counselor would be at the jail five days per week instead of three under the proposal.

Burnett, a Turn Key director and

former Cleveland County undersheriff, presented the plan to commissioners in a packed meeting Tuesday. Burnett briefly held the position of acting sheriff after his boss, former sheriff Joe Lester, resigned following a state audit that found misspending including overpayment for inmate medical services.

“It is a very, very hectic and busy place with the needs that come from the inmates, and this would help us handle it better,” Burnett said.

Norman baker Hanchett, known to friends and customers as the “Cookie Queen,” was in medical cell four at the Cleveland County jail when she was found unconscious on Dec. 8, according to a state health department report.

The 38-year-old mother of two was arrested the day after Thanksgiving by Norman police on charges of obstructing an officer and false reporting after calling 911 repeatedly to request a welfare check on her son. The arresting officer wrote in a court document that Hanchett was suffering from a mental health disorder.

In jail, Hanchett was placed on suicide watch, according to the health department report.

After a mental health evaluation by Turn Key staff, she was taken off suicide watch and moved to a medical cell closer to the nurse’s station. She

“...I couldn’t do any good.”

- **KIMBERLY GOETZ, Turn Key nurse**

was dehydrated, and medical staff were giving her Gatorade, the report shows. Hours before Hanchett was scheduled to have a mental health assessment required to be transferred to a treatment facility, first responders pronounced her dead. The state medical examiner has not yet ruled on her cause of death.

Two weeks later, Milano, a 66-year-old grandmother, didn’t respond when a Cleveland County deputy knocked on the door of the medical cell where she was detained.

On Nov. 22, Milano was arrested by Norman police for allegedly violating a victim protection order but the jail refused to take her due to health issues. She was taken to a hospital, according to court documents. Milano was arrested again on Nov. 25 by Noble police on suspicion of burglary after her next door neighbor accused her of stealing from him. That time, the jail admitted her. Milano needed dialysis but refused treatment, court records show. She was scheduled for a court-ordered mental health evaluation.

On Dec. 20, Milano was found curled up on her side, her face blue and blood dripping from her nose, according to a state health department report. A Turn Key nurse tried to revive Milano by rubbing her sternum. The nurse and a deputy performed compressions until first responders arrived, according to the report. Milano’s family disputed a statement provided by the sheriff’s office that claims she died at Norman Regional Hospital as a result of a pre-existing medical condition. The medical examiner has not yet released her cause of death.

‘I Couldn’t Make Any Difference’

At least nine other Oklahoma jails contract with Turn Key Health Clinics, including the Oklahoma County Detention Center, which is under investigation for health and safety violations.

Kimberly Goetz worked as a nurse for Turn Key and oversaw the nursing unit in the Oklahoma County jail for about six months in 2018. She said she quit after a woman having a seizure nearly died waiting for first responders to arrive because there was no doctor on site. Staff were not allowed to distribute medication or check on detainees without a corrections officer present, she said. She and her coworkers were often stuck waiting for an officer to become available before they could respond to patient needs, Goetz said.

Nurses sometimes lost track of who had received medications because there weren’t enough staff to care for approximately 1,600 patients, many of whom came into jail with medical or mental health conditions that worsened the longer they were locked up, Goetz said.

Jail staff ignored requests for help or accused detainees of faking it, Goetz said. Patients requesting a

medical appointment waited for weeks or even months, she said. Others were unable to afford the \$15 co-pay, which is collected by the county from detainees’ commissary accounts.

“I felt like I couldn’t make any difference or do any good because I was always being told to stop doing the work,” Goetz said.

A state multicounty grand jury is investigating the jail after a 2021 state inspection uncovered bedbugs, mold, overcrowded cells, unsafe staffing levels and other violations. A month after the inspection and days after a deadly hostage situation, Turn Key representatives threatened to terminate their contract with Oklahoma County unless the jail hired more detention officers. It did, and Turn Key remains the jail’s health care provider.

Echols, Oklahoma’s house majority floor leader, started Turn Key Health Clinics with attorney Jesse White and Trent Smith, a former University of Oklahoma football player and current member of the state Board of Education. Echols remains the company president and a shareholder.

Echols, R-Oklahoma City, said he works for the company’s CEO mostly outside of Oklahoma to minimize perceived conflicts of interest.

Turn Key founders each donated \$1,000 to Tulsa Sheriff Vic Regalado’s campaign in 2016 before county officials changed restrictions that made Turn Key eligible to bid on the contract. Turn Key won the contract. Echols denied any impropriety.

JAIL HEALTH CARE *continued on A6*

“It is a very, very hectic and busy place with the needs that come from the inmates the Harold Hamm Diabetes Center and the Edmond Medical Center.

- **RHETT BURNETT, Turn Key executive**





RHETT BURNETT, a Turn Key Health Clinics director and former undersheriff, asked the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners to spend more taxpayer money on jail health care at a crowded meeting Tuesday. PHOTO WHITNEY BRYEN/OKLAHOMA WATCH

In November the U.S. Department of Justice launched a federal investigation

JAIL HEALTH CARE from A5

He said the previous bid restriction excluded all Oklahoma companies.

Regalado said Turn Key has improved the care of people in custody in the Tulsa County detention center, which includes two mental health housing units. Among Oklahoma’s 93 jails, only Tulsa County is accredited by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

Lawsuits Target Turn Key

The mental health of people detained in the Fort Smith, Arkansas, jail where Price starved wasn’t Turn Key’s responsibility, an attorney for the company asserted in an email to Oklahoma Watch. The company denied culpability in Price’s death saying in an emailed statement, “crisis management and mental health evaluations/assessments were to be contracted by Sebastian County and performed by an independent community mental health provider, not by Turn Key.”

In a court filing responding to the family’s lawsuit, the company claimed Price was combative and refused medication for schizophrenia. Price refused to eat or drink, had an IQ under 55 and was disabled, according to his family’s lawsuit. The case remains in litigation.

Second-degree manslaughter charges were filed and later dismissed against Turn Key staff in the 2016 death of Anthony Huff, who was strapped to a restraint chair in Garfield County jail for 48 hours without adequate food or water, court records show. Charges

were also filed and dismissed against the sheriff.

In 2014, under its former name, ESW Correctional Healthcare, Turn Key settled lawsuits filed by the families of Curtis Gene Pruett, who died, and Lacey Danielle Marez, who fell into a coma under their care in Cleveland County.

Other lawsuits filed against Turn Key by incarcerated Oklahomans or their families blame medical staff for the paralysis of a man detained in Muskogee County and the deaths of men imprisoned in Canadian County and Creek County.

Since Hanchett and Milano died, letters from attorneys asking Cleveland County to preserve documents signal likely legal action in those cases.

“All loss of life is tragic, and Turn Key always wants to look at each event and see if there is a way to prevent it from happening again,” Echols said. “We also need to continue our efforts to help get patients out of jails that don’t need to be there.”

In November, the U.S. Department of Justice launched a federal investigation to determine whether Oklahoma fails to provide community-based mental health services to people in Oklahoma County, leading to unnecessary admissions to psychiatric facilities and police contact. Investigators will also examine Oklahoma City and its police department’s response to people in crisis.

In Hanchett’s case, jail staff asked for a mental health assessment, but Turn Key officials and Amason said they could not disclose how long before her appointment the request was made.

Up to 70% of people in custody at the Cleveland County jail have a mental health or substance abuse disorder

A judge ordered Milano’s evaluation on Dec. 15, five days before she died, according to court records.

Jail Mental Health Unit Planned

This isn’t the first time Cleveland County officials have considered expanding care for those struggling with mental health while in jail.

Six years before the deaths of Hanchett and Milano, a former sheriff and Turn Key representatives brought commissioners a plan to bring mental health services to the jail. The proposal prompted Commissioner Rod Cleveland to negotiate a better price for the service. Turn Key officials offered to provide limited counseling at no additional cost.

Soon, commissioners will have another chance to bolster jail health care.

Commissioner Rusty Grissom, who took office last month, took his first tour of the jail Feb. 13. Grissom said the north Norman facility was in good order.

After two Cleveland County Detention Center administrators resigned in January, Amason hired former Norman police lieutenant Cary Bryant to evaluate the jail’s mental health procedures and make recommendations. Bryant teaches law enforcement officers to detect signs of mental illness, how to calm someone who is struggling and when state law allows officers to detain someone in crisis against their will.

Up to 70% of people in custody at the Cleveland County jail have a mental health or substance abuse

disorder, estimated Amason, who has overseen the jail since taking office in 2020. They don’t all experience a crisis while in custody, but maintaining their stability has long been a concern for the sheriff.

Last fall, commissioners allocated \$8 million in federal pandemic relief funds to jail health care, including a mental health unit with separate housing for those suffering mental distress. Medical staff would be stationed in the unit providing more supervision and faster response times for people incarcerated in that area of the jail, Amason said.

The county has an open request for quotes for a jail consultant to develop a more detailed plan.

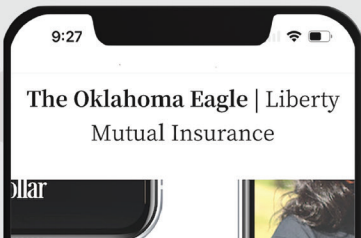
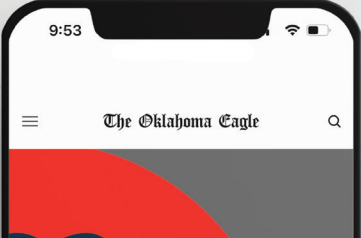
Cleveland County’s proposed mental health unit is not a treatment center, Amason said. It would be aimed at easing suffering for people while they’re in custody, and until they can be transferred or released and referred to certified treatment providers.

“I never wanted to be a mental health treatment center,” Amason said. “I mean, I don’t think people should come to jail to get mental health treatment. But we do have a responsibility to do what we can to provide them the best service while they’re in our care.”

WHITNEY BRYEN is an investigative reporter at Oklahoma Watch covering vulnerable populations. Her recent investigations focus on mental health and substance abuse, domestic violence, nonprofits and nursing homes. Contact her at (405) 201-6057 or wbryen@oklahomawatch.org. Follow her on Twitter @SoonerReporter.

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ANDRE WILSON, whose vision was impaired after a car accident, the ability to concentrate and his short-term memory, was inspired to advocate for others with disabilities. PHOTO LIONEL RAMOS/ OKLAHOMA WATCH

THE ROAD TO REHABILITATION *Is Too Often Unpaved & Lacking A Clear Guide*

DISABILITY from AI

regulating emotions. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires states, counties and cities to accommodate people like Wilson, so they can engage effectively with publicly funded entities like courts, police and libraries. But in Oklahoma, Wilson said, that doesn't always happen. Frustrated with Lawton's lack of accommodation, the stay-at-home dad advocates for himself and others with disabilities.

In an Oklahoma Watch feature "A Mile In Another's Shoes," an initiative to give voice to the voiceless or call attention to the plight of those affected by public policy, Wilson described life before the accident, what changed for him after and how it set him up to become an advocate. (Portions have been edited for brevity and clarity)

I was born in Sumter, South Carolina. We lived with my grandmother because my mother was a teenage mom. My mom and my dad, they were never married. My mom eventually married my stepfather when I was around the age of five or so.

My mom was a military spouse. We went to Colorado, then we went to Germany. Then from Germany in the late '80s, when the Berlin Wall was knocked down, we ended up moving to Oklahoma.

I went to MacArthur High School in Lawton where I played basketball. I worked at the Boys and Girls Club in Tulsa for a little while after I left Southwestern University in Weatherford.

Once I got a job at Halliburton and started working a lot of hours, I moved back to Lawton. I bought my own property. I was working like 12 hours a day, just working, working, working at Halliburton, then on my house to change out floor tiles, replace bathroom fixtures and paint the walls. I'd get two hours of sleep and go back to work.

One day, a friend invited me to visit him in Oklahoma City. After work, I went home, worked on the house, didn't get any sleep, then drove to Oklahoma City. I needed to go back to Lawton and try and get some sleep, so I could get ready for work the next day.

It was maybe 1 a.m. or 2 a.m., and it was raining that night. I remember driving down I-44 from Oklahoma City to Lawton. I went to sleep. And next thing you know, I felt like I was dreaming, like I was in a field, just floating.

From what I was told, I drove into the field and up a ramp, hit the railing of the bridge and went airborne. I didn't even touch the overpass at the top and landed on the other side, in the field again, upside down.

The Highway Patrol found me the next morning. They cut me out of the

It was painful trying to rehabilitate. I had to learn how to talk again. I had to learn how to walk again. I had to learn to do a lot of things over again.

- ANDRE WILSON, Cache, Oklahoma

car then flew me back to Oklahoma City to Presbyterian Hospital before transferring me to a hospital in South Carolina at my parents' request. The doctors induced my coma. I had so many broken bones I could've died from the pain and shock.

It was painful trying to rehabilitate. I had to learn how to talk again. I had to learn how to walk again. I had to learn to do a lot of things over again because I couldn't do them anymore. Before my accident, I was very nonchalant about things. I don't know why I was like that, but nothing really ever bothered me. I didn't take a lot of things as seriously as I should have. What I gained is being more present in the here and now.

Sometime in 2007 I got out of rehab. I left against the doctor's orders because I was missing my son, who was 2 years old at the time of the accident and was still in Oklahoma. That's all I kept thinking about. I was like, 'whatever happens, I'm going to go back to being in his life.' So, I went back to work at Halliburton. That's when I started really experiencing the difference in my cognitive abilities.

I couldn't stay awake. I was getting agitated. I was angry all the time. I would start sweating a lot, and my heart started beating really fast. I couldn't explain it. After the accident, I wouldn't let anything go. People started getting really tense around me. They eventually laid me off because I was going off on everybody.

I decided to go back to school. I went to Cameron University to start my career over. I studied psychology and physical education. My professors were very caring. For four years I got straight As. Cameron was really good about accommodating people with disabilities. They gave me more time to take my test and put me in a different room to reduce the noise.

The accommodations at Comanche County court and the City of Lawton were basically nonexistent. I was fighting for custody of my son, and going to court while dealing with the effects of a traumatic brain injury was super overwhelming. People, they didn't understand. I would say, 'I have a disability, I just need you to slow down,' or 'I just

need you to explain to me what you mean.' They would look at me like I was crazy. The disrespect.

For years, we tried to file police reports at the department related to my custody case. I would tell them I had a disability, but they didn't seem to care. They weren't including everything I was telling them in their reports. I eventually had to write the reports on my own and staple them to the official document for the police department.

It wasn't until July 2019 that I spoke about it at a city council meeting for the first time. I started researching the Americans With Disabilities Act, and started advocating for myself. At first, I didn't know all the ins and outs and what the law covered. What I did know to do was document every interaction I had with the police and the city. It was as I was reading and understanding the ADA that I started to know the different ways discrimination takes place. At the meeting, I was trying to educate the city of Lawton, to tell them it's in their best interest to learn about unseen disabilities like traumatic brain injuries, like I have. That way they could help and provide services and programs for people.

Before the meeting, I reached out to the city's ADA coordinator. I asked them for more time to speak because sometimes, if I'm trying to speak off the top of my head, it takes me a minute or two to gather my thoughts and formulate what I'm going to say. He said to make a request for accommodations. He didn't foresee any problems. Well, when my wife and I went to the meeting at 6 p.m., we found out the time had been switched to 2 p.m., and we didn't know that, so we missed it. We made plans to go to the next one. I was assuming they already knew that I wanted extra time. So before I got started, the mayor was like 'you have three minutes to speak.' I told him I had put in a request for more time. He said the rules allow for three minutes and for more time to be added there would have to be a vote on it, so he denied the request for accommodation. I was like, 'Wow, I'm about to speak to the city about ADA accommodations, and they're blatantly

violating it right there while I'm about to speak.'

I started hearing all these stories and being told that people just don't know what to do. There were people with similar stories as me, and they didn't know what to do. They didn't know how to file a complaint with the city. I did so much research I knew exactly what they should do.

My youngest son's godmother, her mother is in a motorized wheelchair. She needed to go to her doctor's appointment. She lives less than a mile away from her doctor, but she couldn't leave her house because the sidewalks were either non-existent or broken. And she would have to ride in the street, which she didn't want to do as an older woman who could get hit by a car. She was nervous about filing a complaint. When she was finally ready, I went over there and took down all the information about the sidewalks and what she was trying to do and filed a complaint on her behalf.

Not too far from Cameron University, on the other side of this bus strip called Gore Boulevard, there are places with no sidewalk. I saw a guy, he was driving his motorized wheelchair in the street. I told my wife, 'let's stop really quickly,' I walked toward him and said, 'I'm Andre Wilson. I am just trying to find out what is your experience riding a wheelchair in the city of Lawton. Are there any experiences of discrimination that you can tell me about?' He said he is almost always about to get hit by cars, that he has to ride in the middle of the street. He had the same complaints as the other lady who also had a motorized wheelchair, so I used what he was saying to me and filed a complaint with the city.

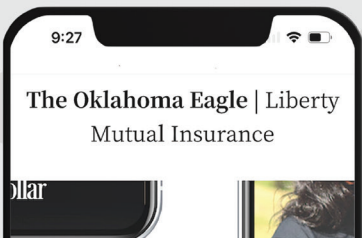
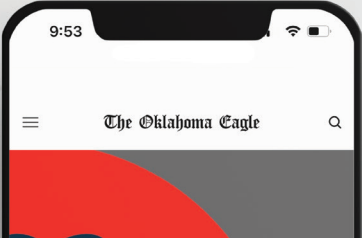
It makes me feel empowered to give this knowledge to somebody else and fight for their rights for them, for them to have dignity. That's all you have to do is treat people with dignity.

LIONEL RAMOS is a Report for America corps member who covers race and equity issues for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at 405-905-9953 or lramos@oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at @LionelRamos_.

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STILL, QUESTIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY LINGER... WITH NO CLEAR ANSWERS AVAILABLE



BENCHES WITH HANDCUFFS sit in corners and other high-traffic areas of hallways in the Oklahoma County Jail.
PHOTO **TRES SAVAGE**

OK COUNTY JAIL *from A1*

operations be returned to the County Sheriff’s Department.

No individuals were indicted by the multicounty grand jury, and so far no charges have stemmed from the investigation, which was led by Cherokee County District Attorney Jack Thorp following the recusal of former Oklahoma County District Attorney David Prater, who originally requested the inquiry.

Called the “jail trust,” the OCCJA took over daily administration of the long-beleaguered Oklahoma County Jail from the county sheriff in 2020. In that time, 37 detainees have died, and questions have arisen about the trust’s ability to operate the facility. From the grand jury’s perspective, those questions have been answered.

“Based upon the review of the OCDC and the OCCJA, the MCGJ recommends that the OCCJA self-terminate, that the governor approve this termination, and that supervision of the jail be returned to the Oklahoma County sheriff,” the report states.

Members of the grand jury, which meets for 18-month terms to assist in a variety of criminal investigations involving law enforcement agencies across the state, recognized some improvements in the jail but declined to assign credit for those improvements to the trust’s actions.

“It appears that, in some regards, improvements have been made to jail operations,” the report states. “However, those improvements do not appear to be related to the OCCJA. It seems more likely that they are the result of greater amounts of money dedicated to facility improvements.”

Ben Brown, the current chairman of the jail trust, declined to comment on the report when reached by phone Thursday evening, but a statement from him was included in a press release from the jail’s administrator.

“The jail trust cooperated with the Grand Jury investigation and will carefully review the report,” Brown said. “The members of the trust and new management at the jail will continue our work to improve jail operations.”

Trustee Sue Ann Arnall said she would prefer that the trust remain in place and continue to oversee the jail’s operations rather than dissolve itself as the grand jury report recommends. Arnall has also pushed for detainees to have more time outside their cells, which is something she said could be in jeopardy if the trust were to dissolve.

“The trust has to approve it as a majority,” Arnall said. “If we did go back to the sheriff, he still has a lot of people who ran the jail in the past on staff, and they didn’t think it was possible or proper for people to be out of their cells for six or eight hours a day. But with this new administrator and staff, people are out of

No individuals were indicted by the multicounty grand jury, and so far no charges have stemmed from the investigation.

their cells four to six hours a day, and it’s going to go up. It’s created a different culture in the jail. It’s a huge improvement. When people are out of their cells, there is not as much depression. We’ve started new programs that weren’t possible before.”

Arnall said the trust has had a better relationship with new Oklahoma County District Attorney Vicki Behenna than it did with Prater, who was publicly critical of the jail’s operation and the trust. Prater requested and later recused himself from the grand jury’s proceedings.

In the report, grand jurors investigated claims that Prater had pressured the Oklahoma State Department of Health to be tougher on the jail during its inspections. The grand jury found no evidence of that. But Arnall said more detainees have received medical OR releases since the change in DA.

“With the medical evaluation we can bring them in and reject them if they are too sick and the police will take them to the hospital,” Arnall said. “The former DA would not give us any medical ORs. Between him and Judge (Ray) Elliott, we got maybe two medial ORs, and we submitted something like 83. Since we’ve had the new DA we’ve been getting more medical ORs. That’s another reason why we’ve seen fewer deaths.”

Prater dismissed those concerns Friday. “That is an absolute inaccurate and irrelevant comment,” Prater said Friday afternoon. “The grand jury’s report speaks clearly as to the cause of the deaths they were concerned about, and medical ORs were not mentioned.”

Prater expressed frustration at “the inaction of the jail trust board members to prevent the jail deaths.”

“They’ve had the power to do something, and they’ve done nothing,” he said.

Trustee Derrick Scobey said he would defer to his comments made in the Dec. 5 meeting of the jail trust when former jail CEO Greg Williams resigned.

“We now have to turn the scope away from whomever else and we have to aim it at ourselves,” Scobey told fellow trustees in that meeting.

Scobey, who is a current candidate for Oklahoma County clerk, said that if the trust can’t do a better job running the jail, then it’s

time to turn it over to someone else.

“If we don’t get it right and get it right quickly, then the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority — also known as the Oklahoma county jail trust — should be dissolved,” he said in the Dec. 5 meeting.

In a text message Thursday night, Scobey said he stood by those comments.

Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council executive director Tim Tardibono said he was disappointed in the grand jury’s recommendation that the trust dissolve itself.

“Despite the numerous areas of agreement with the report, we must strongly disagree with the recommendation that the trust should end,” Tardibono said in a statement. “The report did not even mention the 1995 grand jury report that specifically called for a trust and for the sheriff to not run the jail. Additionally, two other task forces in 2002 and again in 2008 both strongly called for a trust. It’s unclear why more than two decades of support for a trust was left out of the report.”

Grand jury recommends against closure

The grand jury report also notes that the jail has long been out of compliance with Oklahoma State Department of Health inspection protocols and that, in theory, the department could move to close the facility with the governor’s approval.

However, the grand jury did not recommend closing the current facility in its findings. Funding for a new \$297 million jail was approved by county voters last year, but that facility will not open for several years.

Key sections of the multi-county grand jury report focus on:

- A 2008 U.S. Department of Justice memorandum of understanding
- The creation of the jail trust
- Evaluations from the State Department of Health
- Financial irregularities with use of the CFO’s personal credit card
- Deaths at the Oklahoma County Jail
- Hiring issues at the facility
- Criminal investigations within the jail

- An alleged real estate development conspiracy
- Potential obstruction of district attorney
- A 2022 Drug Enforcement Administration investigation at the jail
- Use of ARPA funds

The full grand jury report on the Oklahoma County Jail is embedded below.

Inaction of former CEO Greg Williams cited

Jurors criticized the tenure of former jail administrator Greg Wiliams who resigned in December.

“The MCGJ finds that the former chief executive officer of the OCDC did not take proactive or effective steps to curb the significant death rate in the jail,” the report states. “The MCGJ believes that inadequate staffing, funding, surveillance, and training, coupled with poor law enforcement protocols, led to the significant loss of life within the jail. Discussion of protocols is reserved within the section of this report regarding criminal investigation; however, an effective and interested administration should have taken more proactive steps to address these obvious problems in the jail. This is especially true considering the significant number (37) of deaths in the jail since management of the jail shifted from the Oklahoma County Sheriff to the OCCJA on July 1, 2020.”

The grand jury report blames inadequate screening for the pervasiveness of opioids inside the facility. According to the report, members of street gangs were hired as detention officers.

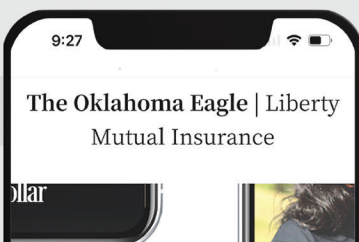
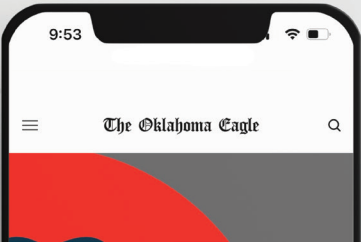
“The jury has also learned that background checks have been limited, in the interest of filling positions. Members of organized criminal gangs have been able to secure employment as detention officers and have aided in the introduction and distribution of controlled dangerous substances within the jail, leading to loss of life and requiring lifesaving use of Narcan to resuscitate persons overdosing on opioids,” the report states. “It is troubling to the MCGJ that, according to the testimony of witnesses, administrative staff were warned and allegedly ignored concerns

OK COUNTY JAIL *continued on A9*

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OKLAHOMA COUNTY JAIL ADMINISTRATOR GREG WILLIAMS speaks to county employees during a meeting of the jail trust Monday, Dec. 5, 2022. PHOTO MATT PATTERSON

MCGJ RECOMMENDATION: *Hire 100 more detention officers in order to operate the facility safely*

OK COUNTY JAIL from A8

by some investigative staff that criminal street gang members were being hired as detention officers.”

It also recommends the facility hire 100 more detention officers in order to operate the facility safely. At the March meeting of the trust, new jail administrator Brandi Garner said the facility has just under 300 employees. Jurors also recommended a higher starting salary for new employees to improve recruitment and retention.

‘No evidence of wrongdoing was discovered’ on jail relocation

With the approval of \$260 million in bonds by voters last year, a site for the new county jail has yet to be determined, although potential locations have been floated. The grand jury received an allegation of a conspiracy between community members involving the jail’s relocation.

“It was alleged that the conspiracy was linked to the campaign that ultimately led to passage of the \$260 million bond issue that put into place funding for a new Oklahoma County Jail,” the report states. “According to information provided to the MCGJ, the reasoning behind the bond issue was that the current site of the OCDC would be an excellent site for real estate revitalization in downtown Oklahoma City, that the OCDC’s location depressed the area in downtown Oklahoma City, and that its removal would lead to a construction boom for real estate developers, who saw the relocation of the OCDC as a way to develop the site, and potentially make significant profit for the development.”

The OSBI also reviewed the allegations and found no evidence of wrongdoing, according to the grand jury report.

“After a thorough investigation by the OSBI, including consultation with developers, county officials, and members of community action coalitions, no evidence of wrongdoing was discovered,” the report states. “The MCGJ determined that the area surrounding the OCDC is currently under development. The MCGJ found that, should the OCDC be relocated to an area outside the downtown Oklahoma City area, the property would likely be sold by Oklahoma County in the manner prescribed by law.”

Potential obstruction of justice detailed

In one section of the report, potential obstruction is mentioned by grand jurors in reference to the Oklahoma County Detention Center’s in-house attorney modifying reports that were later submitted to police, which potentially restricted information to investigators.

“The MCGJ considered these allegations about OCDC nhouse attorney and did not

“After a thorough investigation by the OSBI, including consultation with developers, county officials, and members of community action coalitions, no evidence of wrongdoing was discovered.”

- MULTICOUNTY GRAND JURY (MCGJ) OF OKLAHOMA REPORT, TESTIMONY RE: Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Authority and the Oklahoma County Detention Center

determine whether these allegations were ‘obstruction’ per criminal statutes,” the report states. “Clearly OCDC inhouse attorney has a duty to represent a client — in this case the OCDC, and specifically those individuals in an administrative capacity that he has a duty to advise in that circumstance. However, modification of police reports (if true) or willfully restricting access to information necessary for a prosecutor to make a charging decision could be considered obstruction.

“The MCGJ invites additional information and investigation into these allegations and requests [DA Jack Thorp] to refer this potential ‘obstruction’ to the OSBI for further investigation, and at the completion of the investigation consult with Oklahoma Attorney General and Oklahoma County District Attorney as to jurisdiction for the potential of filing charges by criminal information.”

Bana: ‘I can’t think of a corruption case that has been as deadly as this one’

The People’s Council for Justice Reform is an activist group that sprung up following the trust’s takeover of the jail in 2020. Group member Sara Bana told NonDoc she is pleased that the grand jury report was thorough and detailed, but she said she was surprised no one was indicted in connection with the 37 deaths at the jail.

“It’s sort of insult to injury for the many victims and survivors’ families that the multi-county grand jury didn’t go as far as making any indictments,” she said. “They instead identified and deferred to agencies that should pursue possible charges. I can’t think of another case of corruption that has been as deadly in Oklahoma as this one.”

With the grand jury’s work concluded, Bana said she hopes Attorney General Gentner Drummond will continue to investigate the jail.

“There hasn’t been the level of accountability when there was criminal negligence that resulted in preventable deaths,” Bana said.

Criminal justice activist Jess Eddy also

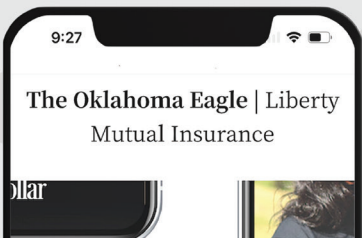
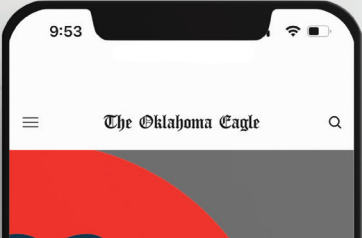
frequently speaks at jail trust meetings. Eddy said he hopes the jail trust continues its management of the facility while expressing concerns over returning it to the sheriff.

“The formation of a public, citizen-comprised board to oversee the jail — holding regular public meetings with public comment — has afforded the community drastically improved access and means of accountability,” Eddy said Friday. “The idea that a return to law enforcement control is a good step contradicts the history of how we got to a jail trust in the first place. To suggest we had any meaningful access or means to hold sheriffs accountable in the past is asinine.”

MATT PATTERSON has spent 20 years in Oklahoma journalism covering a variety of topics for The Oklahoman, The Edmond Sun and Lawton Constitution. He joined NonDoc in 2019.



THE OKLAHOMA COUNTY JAIL in downtown Oklahoma City has been a troubled facility since it opened in 1991. PHOTO MICHAEL DUNCAN



NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
March 31 and April 7, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. 2023 - 2024

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Mayor of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, sealed bids will be received in Room 260 of the Office of the City Clerk, City of Tulsa, 175 E. 2nd Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103 until 8:30 a.m. the 28th day of April, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. 2023 – 2024 CITYWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENTS

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from

Account No. 2036N0001Z.Streets.CWNARP.4283.42823243-541106; 2036A1000Z.Streets.CWARP.4281.42813243-541106; 2036A1000Z.Streets.CWARP.4282.42823243-541106; 2036S0004Z.Sidewalk.BPInfra.4281.42813243-541106; 2036S0005Z.Sidewalk.BPInfra.4281.42813243-541106; 2036D0007Z.Streets.CDBG-SA.4281.42813243-541106; 1080-5313602-044748-1003249-531313

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. and will be held through video conferencing with Microsoft Teams, invitation presented on the City of Tulsa's website at this link: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/government/departments/engineering-services/construction-bids/>

Attendance at the Pre-Bid Conference is MANDATORY. Bids will not be received from contractors who did not attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

Bids will be accepted by the City Clerk from the holders of valid pre-qualifications certificates from the City of Tulsa in one or more of the following classifications: A or C

Drawings, specifications and contract documents for construction of said public improvements of the said project have been adopted by the Mayor of said City. Copies of same may be obtained at the Office of the Director of Engineering Services at the City of Tulsa Engineering Services, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non-refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the City of Tulsa by check or money order.

Contract requirements shall include compliance as required by law pertaining to the practice of non-discrimination in employment.

The overall aspirational Small Business Enterprise utilization goal for this project is ten (10) percent.

Attention is called to Resolution No. 18145 of August 23, 1988, requiring bidders to commit to the goal of employing on the project at least fifty percent bona fide residents of the City of Tulsa and/or MSA in each employment classification.

Attention is called to Resolution 7404 of November 8, 2006, requiring bidders, their subcontractors and their lower-tier subcontractors to hire only citizens of the United States.

The City of Tulsa itself is exempt from the payment of any sales or use taxes, and pursuant to Title 68 O.S. Section 1356(10), direct vendors to the City are also exempt from those taxes. A bidder may exclude from his bid appropriate sales taxes, which he will not have to pay while acting for and on behalf of the City of Tulsa.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidders Surety Bond, in the sum of 5% of the amount of the bid will be required from each bidder to be retained as liquidated damages in the event the successful bidder fails, neglects or refuses to enter into said contract for the construction of said public improvements for said project and furnish the necessary bonds within thirty days from and after the date the award is made.

The bidder to whom a contract is awarded will be required to furnish public liability and workmen's compensation insurance; Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds acceptable to the City of Tulsa, in conformity with the requirements of the proposed contract documents. The Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds shall be for one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price.

All bids will be opened and considered by the Bid Committee of said City at a meeting of said Committee to be held in the City Council Room of City Hall in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 28th day of April 2023.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 31st day of March 2023.

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
March 24 and 31, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. 144421, TMUA-W 16-15

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Mayor of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, sealed bids will be received in Room 260 of the Office of the City Clerk, City of Tulsa, 175 E. 2nd Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103 until 8:30 a.m. the 21st day of April, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. 144421, TMUA-W 16-15 NON-ARTERIAL STREET REHABILITATION AND WATER LINE REPLACEMENT IN MAINTENANCE ZONE 4021

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 144421. Streets.5453104.40583122-541101

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Monday, April 3rd, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. and will be held through video conferencing with Microsoft Teams, invitation presented on the City of Tulsa's website at this link: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/government/departments/engineering-services/construction-bids/>

Attendance at the Pre-Bid Conference is MANDATORY. Bids will not be received from contractors who did not attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

Bids will be accepted by the City Clerk from the holders of valid pre-qualifications certificates from the City of Tulsa in one or more of the following classifications: A, C or D

Drawings, specifications and contract documents for construction of said public improvements of the said project have been adopted by the Mayor of said City. Copies of same may be obtained at the Office of the Director of Engineering Services at the City of Tulsa Engineering Services, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non-refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the City of Tulsa by check or money order.

Contract requirements shall include compliance as required by law pertaining to the practice of non-discrimination in employment.

The overall aspirational Small Business Enterprise utilization goal for this project is ten (10) percent.

Attention is called to Resolution No. 18145 of August 23, 1988, requiring bidders to commit to the goal of employing on the project at least fifty percent bona fide residents of the City of Tulsa and/or MSA in each employment classification.

Attention is called to Resolution 7404 of November 8, 2006, requiring bidders, their subcontractors and their lower-tier subcontractors to hire only citizens of the United States.

The City of Tulsa itself is exempt from the payment of any sales or use taxes, and pursuant to Title 68 O.S. Section 1356(10), direct vendors to the City are also exempt from those taxes. A bidder may exclude from his bid appropriate sales taxes, which he will not have to pay while acting for and on behalf of the City of Tulsa.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidders Surety Bond, in the sum of 5% of the amount of the bid will be required from each bidder to be retained as liquidated damages in the event the successful bidder fails, neglects or refuses to enter into said contract for the construction of said public improvements for said project and furnish the necessary bonds within thirty days from and after the date the award is made.

The bidder to whom a contract is awarded will be required to furnish public liability and workmen's compensation insurance; Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds acceptable to the City of Tulsa, in conformity with the requirements of the proposed contract documents. The Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds shall be for one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price.

All bids will be opened and considered by the Bid Committee of said City at a meeting of said Committee to be held in the City Council Room of City Hall in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 21st day of April 2023.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 24th day of March 2023.

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
March 24 and 31, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. 144863-S & TMUA-W 17-10

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Mayor of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, sealed bids will be received in Room 260 of the Office of the City Clerk, City of Tulsa, 175 E. 2nd Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103 until 8:30 a.m. the 21st day of April, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. 144863-S & TMUA-W 17-10 NON-ARTERIAL STREET REHABILITATION MAINTENANCE ZONE 8063 S

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 144863.Streets.NAr-tRhb.4275.42753122-541106; 144863.Streets.5453104.6331.42733122-541106; 2231W000014.WaterDist.Water.7400.74003122-541101

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. and will be held through video conferencing with Microsoft Teams, invitation presented on the City of Tulsa's website at this link: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/government/departments/engineering-services/construction-bids/>

Attendance at the Pre-Bid Conference is MANDATORY. Bids will not be received from contractors who did not attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

Bids will be accepted by the City Clerk from the holders of valid pre-qualifications certificates from the City of Tulsa in one or more of the following classifications: A or C

Drawings, specifications and contract documents for construction of said public improvements of the said project have been adopted by the Mayor of said City. Copies of same may be obtained at the Office of the Director of Engineering Services at the City of Tulsa Engineering Services, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non-refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the City of Tulsa by check or money order.

Contract requirements shall include compliance as required by law pertaining to the practice of non-discrimination in employment.

The overall aspirational Small Business Enterprise utilization goal for this project is ten (10) percent.

Attention is called to Resolution No. 18145 of August 23, 1988, requiring bidders to commit to the goal of employing on the project at least fifty percent bona fide residents of the City of Tulsa and/or MSA in each employment classification.

Attention is called to Resolution 7404 of November 8, 2006, requiring bidders, their subcontractors and their lower-tier subcontractors to hire only citizens of the United States.

The City of Tulsa itself is exempt from the payment of any sales or use taxes, and pursuant to Title 68 O.S. Section 1356(10), direct vendors to the City are also exempt from those taxes. A bidder may exclude from his bid appropriate sales taxes, which he will not have to pay while acting for and on behalf of the City of Tulsa.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidders Surety Bond, in the sum of 5% of the amount of the bid will be required from each bidder to be retained as liquidated damages in the event the successful bidder fails, neglects or refuses to enter into said contract for the construction of said public improvements for said project and furnish the necessary bonds within thirty days from and after the date the award is made.

The bidder to whom a contract is awarded will be required to furnish public liability and workmen's compensation insurance; Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds acceptable to the City of Tulsa, in conformity with the requirements of the proposed contract documents. The Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds shall be for one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price.

All bids will be opened and considered by the Bid Committee of said City at a meeting of said Committee to be held in the City Council Room of City Hall in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 21st day of April 2023.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 24th day of March 2023.

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:
March 31 and April 7, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS
SEALED BIDS FOR
PROJECT NO. 2036N9038Z

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to an order by the Mayor of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, sealed bids will be received in Room 260 of the Office of the City Clerk, City of Tulsa, 175 E. 2nd Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103 until 8:30 a.m. the 28th day of April, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. 2036N9038Z NON-ARTERIAL STREET REHABILITATION MAINTENANCE ZONE 9038

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account No. 2036N9038Z.Streets.NAr-tRhb.4282.4282312-541106

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. and will be held through video conferencing with Microsoft Teams, invitation presented on the City of Tulsa's website at this link: <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/government/departments/engineering-services/construction-bids/>

Attendance at the Pre-Bid Conference is MANDATORY. Bids will not be received from contractors who did not attend the Pre-Bid Conference.

Bids will be accepted by the City Clerk from the holders of valid pre-qualifications certificates from the City of Tulsa in one or more of the following classifications: A or C

Drawings, specifications and contract documents for construction of said public improvements of the said project have been adopted by the Mayor of said City. Copies of same may be obtained at the Office of the Director of Engineering Services at the City of Tulsa Engineering Services, 2317 South Jackson, Room 103, North Building, for a non-refundable fee in the amount of \$50.00 made payable to the City of Tulsa by check or money order.

Contract requirements shall include compliance as required by law pertaining to the practice of nondiscrimination in employment.

The overall aspirational Small Business Enterprise utilization goal for this project is ten (10) percent.

Attention is called to Resolution No. 18145 of August 23, 1988, requiring bidders to commit to the goal of employing on the project at least fifty percent bona fide residents of the City of Tulsa and/or MSA in each employment classification.

Attention is called to Resolution 7404 of November 8, 2006, requiring bidders, their subcontractors and their lower-tier subcontractors to hire only citizens of the United States.

The City of Tulsa itself is exempt from the payment of any sales or use taxes, and pursuant to Title 68 O.S. Section 1356(10), direct vendors to the City are also exempt from those taxes. A bidder may exclude from his bid appropriate sales taxes, which he will not have to pay while acting for and on behalf of the City of Tulsa.

A Certified or Cashier's Check or Bidders Surety Bond, in the sum of 5% of the amount of the bid will be required from each bidder to be retained as liquidated damages in the event the successful bidder fails, neglects or refuses to enter into said contract for the construction of said public improvements for said project and furnish the necessary bonds within thirty days from and after the date the award is made.

The bidder to whom a contract is awarded will be required to furnish public liability and workmen's compensation insurance; Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds acceptable to the City of Tulsa, in conformity with the requirements of the proposed contract documents. The Performance, Statutory, and Maintenance bonds shall be for one hundred percent (100%) of the contract price.

All bids will be opened and considered by the Bid Committee of said City at a meeting of said Committee to be held in the City Council Room of City Hall in said City at 9:00 a.m. on the 28th day of April 2023.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 31st day of March 2023.

(SEAL)
Christina Chappell
City Clerk

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ONLINE AUCTION 4/4 @ 6PM: 56 Chevrolet Sedan | Chevy Duramax 4x4 | Late Model Trlrs Incl. Low Boy, Flatbad, Fuel, & Livestock | 14 Polaris RZR | Sport & Utility 4 Wheelers | Triumph Motorcycle | Swather, Cultivator, Chisels, Attachments & More! WigginsAuctioneers.com | 580.233.3066

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The Oklahoma Eagle publishes news and announcements for churches currently listed in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* Church Directory. For information, please call our office at (918) 582-7124

Church Of The Living God

1559 E Reading St. Tulsa OK
(918) 584-3206

Minister RJ Smith

Sunday school - 9:30am
Sunday Worship - 10:45am
Monday Worship - 6:00pm
Wednesday Bible Study - 5:00pm

CAPERNAUM MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

1962 N. Sheridan Rd.
(918) 834-4747

Pastor Ruthie I. Howard

Sunday School
10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship
11:00 a.m.
Bible Study & Prayer Wednesday 7:00 p.m.
For Transportation (918) 402-6027

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC

Temporarily meeting at the Courtyard Marriott 3340 S 79th E Ave Tulsa OK
(918) 230-3022

Pastors Wesley & Alfie Gray would like to invite you to come and experience the Word of God in action this Sunday! God has a word for you, He Guarantee's it! You'll be glad you did!!!

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GTOMi

Gospel Tabernacle Outreach Ministries, Inc.
Traveling Outreach Ministries
609 E. Zion Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Elder Julius W. Bland
Sr., Pastor
918-810-3882

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3329 E. 30th St. North • 834-0391

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9:30 a.m.

Sunday Morning
Worship 11 a.m.

Bible Study
Wednesday
7 p.m.



Rev. Emanuel L. Collier, Sr.
Pastor

Gethsemane Baptist Church

727 East 56th St. North
(918) 425-6613

Dr. W. T. Lauderdale

Sunday School
9:00 a.m.

Church Services
11:00 a.m.

Zoe' Life Church of Tulsa

Rudisill Regional Library
1520 N Hartford Ave.
Tulsa OK 74106
(918) 409-4899

Pastor Richard and Cher Lyons

Sunday Worship: 1pm
Wed- Healing School: 6:30p - 8p

"The Righteous Are As Bold As A Lion." - Prov.28:1a

SOLID ROCK 7th DAY BAPTIST CHURCH

123 E. 59th St. North
Ph: (918) 425-2077

Pastor Rick Bruner

Sabbath School (Saturday)
9:30-10:45 a.m.

Praise & Worship 11:00 a.m.
Choir Rehearsal
Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

Northside Christ Gospel Church

3101 N. M.L King Jr. Blvd.
Tulsa OK
(918) 625-2374

Sunday School -
10 am

Sunday Morning
Worship - 10:45

Sunday Evening Prayer - 7 pm
Sunday Worship - 7:30 pm

Wednesday Prayer - 7:30 pm
Wednesday worship - 8pm

Rev. John W. Anderson

VERNON AME CHURCH

307-311 N. Greenwood Ave.
P: 918-587-1428
F: 918-587-0642
vernonamechurch@sbcglobal.net

Sunday
Church School
8:30 am

Worship Service
10:00 am

Wednesday
Bible Study
6:00 pm

Rev. Dr. Robert R. Allen Turner

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NORTH TULSA

THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US



Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott

Sunday
Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday
Prayer Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Bible Study - Noon & 7:00 p.m.

1414 N. Greenwood Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74103
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(918) 583-5181
Rev. David Wiggs
Senior Minister
Sunday Worship
8:30 and 11:00 a.m.
Sunday School
9:40 a.m.
Sunday TV
Worship
11:00 a.m.
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TIMOTHY BAPTIST CHURCH

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Sunday School
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Sunday Morning Worship
11:00 a.m.

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Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.
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19364 S. S. Mingo Road.
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Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

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Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

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Fax:
918-584-1958
Prayer Line:
918-584-PRAY
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Morning
Worship 10:45
Wednesday
Bible Study
Noon and 7:00



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5:30 p.m. Support Groups
6:30 p.m. Community Dinner
7:00 p.m. Bible Study

Sunday Worship
Church School
9:45 a.m.
Worship
11:00 a.m.

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(TOP AND RIGHT) **AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS** providing instruction to students. (PHOTO **KATERINA HOLMES/PEXELS**)



“I just don’t see how you wring your hands and lament the lack of teachers, and at the same time, really try to restrict their teaching...”

ERASE IDENTITY *from AI*

2021 and 2022, 17 states in the United States enacted restrictions on how teachers could discuss “divisive topics” — namely gender and race — in the classroom.

And in March 2023, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis doubled down on his controversial “Don’t Say Gay” bill. His administration plans to expand the bill to forbid classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in all grades, where it initially banned the topic in kindergarten through third-grade classrooms. Similar legislation is in the works in several other states.

These actions have consequences on educators, from taking a toll on their mental health to ultimately impacting the teacher pipeline — especially for teachers whose identities are being restricted. Some states are saying both: They want to diversify their educator workforce while also asking educators to “erase a significant part of themselves, their communities,” says Sharif El-Mekki, the founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development.

“This undermines and puts all of the recruitment efforts that have been going on across this country in jeopardy,” El-Mekki says.

This Has Happened Before

Throughout the history of public education, there’s been a presence of over-policing Black students. In addition, Black teachers are surveilled and policed in terms of what they can teach, what they can say, and whether they can show up and share their authentic selves and lived experiences.

“It’s almost like, as a Black educator, you have to put your authenticity to the side, both your experience and who you are,” El-Mekki says. “That’s not always wanted. And there is a consistent pattern of that in our schooling system, unfortunately.”

A new RAND study looked at the new restrictive policies in those 17 states. It found the limitations were met with a lot of confusion, despite one in three — or more than 1 million — public school teachers working in the 17 states with active restrictions. For example, of the survey participants, 34% were located in one of the states with active restrictions, but only 12% reported that their state had a restriction.

Regardless of what state they’re located in, 24% of teachers said that these limitations have influenced their choice of curriculum materials or

teaching practices, jumping to 28% when looking at respondents located in states that have restrictions.

But district bans were the top motivator, as opposed to state bans, likely because of their local or more personal nature. Among teachers who said their district enacted restrictions, 63% said the ban had influenced their instructional choices.

Further, the report found that teachers of color — along with high school teachers, suburban school teachers, and teachers whose classes deal with race and gender topics — were more likely to be aware of or influenced by these limitations. Particularly, Black teachers were significantly more likely to be aware of restrictions than white teachers, with 37% of Black teachers saying their state had restrictions compared to 27% of white teachers.

These limitations have consequences. Happy Teacher Revolution, a virtual and in-person platform, provides a space for teachers to discuss common issues with each other. And, despite the name, the platform isn’t limited to “teachers,” but includes anyone who professionally supports students — school secretaries, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals.

And these limitations were a topic of discussion even before the pandemic, says Danna Thomas, founder of Happy Teacher Revolution, who previously worked as a teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools for seven years.

“Spaces like this are important and even more in demand for educators because of the censorship, and really, the lack of autonomy for educators,” Thomas says. “That has been a huge issue for teachers, now more so than ever.”

We Could See Even Fewer Black Teachers

States across the country that want to recruit more Black and Brown teachers and create a more diverse educator workforce are the same states that are imposing these restrictions.

Wanting to hire teachers while also asking them to “erase a significant part of themselves is a poor recruitment strategy,” El-Mekki says. “And it’s also a poor retention strategy.”

These could impede the diverse teacher pipeline El-Mekki and his collaborators have been working toward, and it could also impede the overall teacher pipeline. People join the teaching profession to help students connect the dots between why we’re here and how we move forward,

“It’s almost like, as a Black educator, you have to put your authenticity to the side, both your experience and who you are.”...

... “That’s not always wanted. And there is a consistent pattern of that in our schooling system...”

- SHARIF EL-MEKKI,
Founder and CEO of
the Center for Black
Educator Development

and you can’t do that without learning where we came from as communities or a country, El-Mekki says.

“I just don’t see how you wring your hands and lament the lack of teachers, and at the same time, really try to restrict their teaching in such oppressive ways,” El-Mekki says. “It’s incomprehensible, and it’s so illogical.”

‘Doing a Disservice’

Both the pandemic and these restrictions are shaping new teachers.

In fact, Thomas says she is more likely to hear that new teachers reporting a lack of support around preparedness and emotional demands of the job, like working with students who have experienced trauma firsthand, rather than pedagogy and practices.

In states with active restrictions, Black teachers were more likely than white teachers to say they felt the limitations, according to the RAND report. And, for subject-area teachers, 50% of social science teachers said they felt the limitations, followed by 39% of English/language arts teachers.

In survey responses, around 70 teachers mentioned that the limitations targeted critical race theory. They emphasized they don’t teach CRT, but with the limitations in place, were worried they might falsely be accused of teaching it while discussing race, history, and figures who are people of color, according to the report.

In addition, a different set of roughly 70 teachers mentioned restrictions around LGBTQ+-related topics, like feeling hesitancy about discussing same-sex marriage or different family structures, displaying pride flags in their classrooms, and using educational content featuring LGBTQ+ characters.

Beyond race and gender, the topics teachers reported feeling targeted were current or historical events — like immigration, voting, elections, vaccines, climate change, and gun safety regulations — as well as scientific topics, religion, and social and emotional learning.

Oftentimes, due to these limitations, educators are sharing frustrations, concerns, and feelings of anxiety and overwhelm through Happy Teacher Network channels, Thomas says. There are also discussions of gaslighting and self-sacrifice.

“Moral distress has been huge. The body feels it,” Thomas says. “What’s been really interesting is witnessing and hearing and learning about different teachers’ physical embodiments of what [the restrictions]

have been like. For some teachers, it might be exhaustion, or these stress-related illnesses.”

Plus, studies have shown that when early childhood education teachers are experiencing burn out or low job satisfaction, they are more likely to suspend students of color than white students, and boys more than girls, Thomas says. Not talking about these explicit things that impact students, teachers of color, and LGBTQ+ teachers do a disservice to everyone involved, Thomas says.

“It’s not the right direction that we need to go in terms of reimagining not only academic success for our students, but also the sustainability for our educators,” Thomas says, “because what happens is you can’t show up with wholeness in the work that we’re doing.”

This Isn’t the End, But Kids Are Fighting Back

Unfortunately, it’s unlikely we’ve seen the end of controversial, partisan-driven curriculum and classroom restrictions.

As we head into another election cycle, it’s easy to dismiss the weight of the ongoing culture wars, since they largely fell flat in the 2022 mid-term elections. But, El-Mekki says, it’s not just the presidential cycle to consider, but also local and state school boards.

“People who think that it will [go away], they’ll be blindsided again,” El-Mekki says. “If we study history at all, this is not going away. Patterns and tactics may change, but American racism endures.”

But there is hope. Students are fighting back. Florida high schoolers are threatening to sue DeSantis over his ban of AP African-American Studies. Pennsylvania students protested the school board’s ban of “anti-racist” teaching materials in classrooms. Teens around the country started banned-book clubs.

“Students keep raising their voices, keep organizing, but we also have to be a model,” El-Mekki says. “We also have to show, yes, we’re right here with you, and we’re fighting for you, on behalf of you, on behalf of all of us.”

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“I Want Someone To Look Out For My Child And Every Child”

TARA BROWN, Mother, Washington, D.C.

BLACK MOTHERHOOD *from AI*

worries about their children are often linked to how they rate the quality of their neighborhoods. Some of the top concerns for the more than 3,700 respondents include their children being bullied, struggling with anxiety or depression, and getting shot.

Of the Black respondents, 29% of Black parents surveyed rated their neighborhood in the only fair/poor category.

Brown, who was not surveyed for this report, says she would rate her D.C. neighborhood in the same way. And for thousands of Black families across the country, poverty rates, and housing inequity are underlying issues.

On top of that, with school shootings, bullying, and mental health issues on the rise, parents have valid reasons to be worried. Brown says raising her daughter in Ward 8 in D.C. is difficult. Like many parents nationwide, she struggles with constant feelings of stress and anxiety over the safety of her child.

She’s Just Trying to Get to School

The D.C. school Brown’s daughter attends does not have a school bus to take the kids to school. Jayna, like hundreds of other high school students, takes the metro and bus to and from school. Last Sept., one month into her new school year, an adult man began stalking her.

Brown prepared her daughter for this. She instructs her daughter to tell adults her age, in hopes they will leave her alone. But this stalker continued to come up to her daily, saying things like “I’ve been thinking about you all weekend.” He would follow Jayna every day for months to the bus and try to talk to her.

“My daughter has social anxiety. In this case, she was terrified,” Brown says. “The sexual predators didn’t even occur to me. I was more concerned about gun violence and bullies. So, this was just another layer of terror that I deal with every day when she walks out of the house.”

For a while, Brown had her daughter take an Uber to and from school, but it was financially unsustainable. Later, it got to a point where she got Jayna a police escort, in fear of what could happen if she continued to travel alone.

During our interview, Brown’s voice cracked when she took a moment to cry about how afraid she is of her daughter’s safety. What would make Brown feel safe? The answer is simple: a yellow school bus.

When Brown was growing up, the school bus driver was responsible for all the kids who rode the bus — to make sure they got to school and back home safely. Now, no one is watching over the children who have no other option but to take public transportation. This leaves kids with one option: to fend for themselves.

“I want someone to look out for my child and every child. Sexual predators and human trafficking, those things still happen,” she says.

“And they tend to happen a lot more often to Black kids because the expectation is that no one’s going to look for them as hard.”

Despite her fears, Brown is working to not allow her fear to raise her daughter. But she says those in positions of power need to do better to ensure the safety of children. Like having a school bus.

“If they wanted to, they could.”

Near-Death Over McDonald’s

In D.C. Wards 7 and 8 have dealt with a history of gun violence. In 2022 there were 203 homicides, and as of April 4, there have been 57 homicides in 2023 according to the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia. The available data does not detail how these homicides occurred.

But residents continue to speak up about why this violence occurs. A couple of contributing factors are a lack of financial resources allocated to these wards and illegal access to assault weapons.

For Talisa Sutton-Stephenson, a Ward 8 resident, gun violence hits too close to home. With a blended family of four children, ages 15, 13, 12, and 7, Sutton-Stephenson and her husband have taken extra precautions against the violence around them, but just recently that wasn’t enough.

On Jan. 3, after her husband, Adrian Stephenson came home from work, their youngest daughter wanted to go to McDonald’s. Adrian took 7-year-old Ava and her 7-year-old cousin to the fast-food restaurant. Ava ordered a 10-piece of chicken nuggets with sweet and sour sauce and a small Sprite to go.

As a game, Adrian had the two girls read street signs on the five-minute drive home. After turning on the street where their home is, shots fired.

“My baby — the way the bullets hit the window, if she wasn’t sitting inappropriately in the seat, she would have been struck directly in her head. She was laying down in her seat,” Sutton-Stephenson says. “Also, for my husband, one [bullet] went through the passenger front window while he was driving.”

No one in their car had physical injuries. But the mental toll had only just begun.

When police arrived at the scene, Sutton-Stephenson felt Adrian wasn’t treated as the victim. 20 minutes later police corroborated that someone was randomly shooting at multiple vehicles and homes in the area. About 30 rounds of ammunition were fired. Sutton-Stephenson says because there were no fatalities the shooting didn’t even make the local news.

“If something happened to one of them, it could have changed the entire trajectory of my family,” she says. “But that’s the city we live in.”

After the shooting, Ava would not ride in Sutton-Stephenson’s car for a month. When Ava got in her dad’s car, she would lie completely down. Sutton-Stephenson says she knew her



PHOTO EYE FOR EBONY ON UNSPLASH

32% of K-12 parents surveyed by the Pew Research Center are extremely or very worried about a shooting happening at their children’s school.

daughter needed therapy. She called multiple hotlines for help, but “because she wasn’t hit, it was treated as if, for what? Almost like this is business as usual.”

Parents across the country share similar fears of their children being shot. With gun laws varying by state, inadequate mental health background checks, and persistent school shootings plaguing American families, the fear is nothing short of understandable.

32% of K-12 parents surveyed by the Pew Research Center are extremely or very worried about a shooting happening at their children’s school.

Sutton-Stephenson works two jobs to make ends meet. By day she works as a manager of strategies and logistics for the District of Columbia Public Schools. By night, she works as a sexual assault hotline supervisor for RAINN. Her family lives in a secure building. They pay for parking. Because of her day job, she’s able to have her kids play on school grounds instead of in a public park.

“We pay for all of these things that we think buffer us from what’s happening outside, but it’s not,” she says. “It’s not safe enough.”

Since the shooting, Sutton-Stephenson and her husband have been debating moving out of Ward 8. But finances and a commitment to the community hold them back. As a Washingtonian, and as someone who has worked in youth development for more than a decade, she doesn’t want to give up on her community.

“This is the city I grew up in, I feel indebted, it gave me so much. But I am not willing to sacrifice my kids,” she says. “I can’t save everyone else and not save my own.”

Protecting Children, While Protecting Parents’ Mental Health

Children are typically protected by their parents. But, for the moms interviewed for this story, there is a common thread — the mental health of parents is intertwined with the mental health of their children.

To mitigate the anxiety, Brown goes to a therapist once a month. As much as she wants to “smother her” she’s taking the steps to help her daughter become independent. And giving her opportunities to have more autonomy.

“It’s just super scary,” Brown says. “But I think she’s conscious of my fears and does a

really good job of letting me know where she is.”

Parent’s mental health concerns for their children are one of the top three concerns in the Pew Research Center survey. 51% of parents who rated their neighborhood as an only fair or poor area are very or extremely worried about their children struggling with anxiety or depression.

Pew states “Research has shown that mental health disorders are more common among children growing up in “non-supportive neighborhoods”— that is, those where residents do not help each other or watch out for each other’s children.”

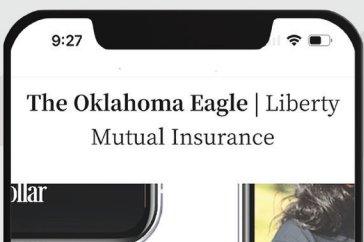
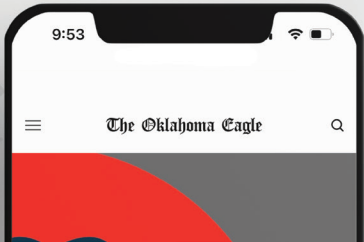
“We’re trying to provide a foundation of facts to highlight the experiences and views of parents in the U.S.,” says Rachel Minkin, a research associate at the Pew Research Center. “That can inform discussions and other research, other policymakers — our goal is to provide this data ... so others can learn and apply it.”

One thing Sutton-Stephenson and her husband do for their children is regular outings. They go to museums, watch movies at the theater, allocate time for the kids to hang out with their friends, and have family dinners at different restaurants. “It’s important to me that they don’t feel the anxiety that I feel constantly,” she says.

But it’s not just about the mental health of her children.

Every Sunday, Sutton-Stephenson has a reset day. She actively practices self-care which comes in multiple forms on a daily and monthly basis. For one, she goes to a therapist three times a month. She has a monthly massage and regularly goes to get her nails done.

“You don’t have to go far to realize, if I’m sitting in a room with 20 Black mothers, we gon’ have the same hope,” Sutton-Stephenson says. “We need to be in the room together. Oftentimes we need each other to push through what we’re going through.”





ABORTION-RIGHTS SUPPORTERS rally at the State Capitol on May 3, 2022, in Oklahoma City. A divided Oklahoma Supreme Court on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, overturned a portion of the state's near total ban on abortion, ruling women have a right to abortion when pregnancy risks their health, not just in a medical emergency. PHOTO AP PHOTO/SUE OGROCKI, FILE

A DIVIDED OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT & Abortion

In the 5-4 ruling, the court said the state law uses both the words “preserve” and “save” the mother’s life as an exception to the abortion ban

ABORTION from AI

receive an abortion to preserve her life if her doctor determines that continuing the pregnancy would endanger it due to a condition she has or is likely to develop during the pregnancy. Previously, the right to an abortion could only take place in the case of medical emergency.

“Requiring one to wait until there is a medical emergency would further endanger the life of the pregnant woman and does not serve a compelling state interest,” the ruling states.

In the 5-4 ruling, the court said the state law uses both the words “preserve” and “save” the mother’s life as an exception to the abortion ban.

“The language ‘except to save the life of a pregnant woman in a medical emergency’ is much different from ‘preserve her life,’” according to the ruling.

“Absolute certainty,” by the physician that the mother’s life could be endangered, “is not required, however, mere possibility or speculation is insufficient” to determine that an abortion is needed to preserve the woman’s life, according to the ruling.

The court, however, declined to rule on whether the state Constitution grants the right to an abortion for other reasons.

The court ruled in the lawsuit filed by Planned Parenthood, Tulsa Women’s Reproductive Clinic and others challenging the state laws passed after the U.S. Supreme

Court overturned the Roe v. Wade, which had guaranteed a nationwide right to abortion for nearly half a century.

Since then, a patchwork of laws has meant some patients have had to travel to other states to get abortions when it was outlawed where they lived.

“This ruling leaves out too many Oklahomans. Oklahomans shouldn’t have to travel across state lines just to reach an abortion clinic, and it is heartbreaking that many will not be able to do so,” said Dr. Alan Braid, an abortion provider and plaintiff in the case said in a statement.

The ruling in Oklahoma is unlikely to mean abortion becomes widely available.

In a lawsuit filed earlier this month over Texas’ abortion ban, five women said they were denied abortions even when pregnancy endangered their lives. The suit claims the Texas law is creating confusion among doctors, who are turning away some pregnant women experiencing health complications because they fear repercussions.

Emily Wales, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Great Plains called the ruling a small step toward restoring the right to abortion.

“The Oklahoma Supreme Court recognized one fundamental truth: patients must be permitted to access critical care to save their lives,” she said. “But the right recognized today is so limited that most people who need abortion will not be able to access it.”



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