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**LOCAL & STATE**  
**Behenna Drops Manslaughter  
Charges Against 7 Officers**  
*By TRES SAVAGE, NonDoc*  
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**NATION**  
**Rewriting Narratives  
About Black Youths,**  
*By JOSEPH WILLIAMS, WORD IN BLACK*  
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ERNIE FIELDS SR. poses with his trombone.  
The Oklahoma native would go on to become  
a major band leader. PHOTO PROVIDED

## ERNIE FIELDS: Jazz Icon, Trailblazer, Tulsa Loyalist

GARY LEE  
ERNIE FIELDS

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PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

# THE PROGRAM PROVIDES Pathways To Career Success In Underserved Communities

CAREERS & COLLEGE *from AI*

A new career development initiative is giving a group of Tulsa high school seniors much-needed skills to enter the workforce and prepare for higher education. The Genesys Program, a nationwide endeavor, is training 17 seniors from Booker T. Washington, Central and Will Rogers high schools and setting them up in internships with Tulsa companies. The students, mostly composed of minorities, including many from the northside, will complete the training part of the program in early August and start their internships shortly after that.

All Tulsa Public Schools students entering their final year of high school, the participants began the eight-week skills development program in June, according to a press release. The objective is to provide them with professional and highly skilled technical job placement. Each student will participate in a yearlong paid internship with local employers after the training. The program also provides the students with college and career counseling.

Genesys Works, a nonprofit based in Menlo Park, Calif., has run similar programs in Houston, Chicago and other U.S. cities. A Genesys spokesperson touted the new initiative for Tulsa and described the goals to the Eagle: “The program provides pathways to career success in underserved communities,” the spokesperson said. Eighty-four percent of those in the first year of the program for Tulsa will be racial or ethnic minorities. The second-year class is expected to enroll 80 more students.

Jeffrey Artis, president and CEO of Genesys Works, noted that nationwide more than 70 percent of alums of the program graduate from college and report median annual earnings of \$55,000 six years post-program. Three out of four participants are first-generation college students, and more than 90 percent are people of color. The Tulsa program roll-out is the first in Oklahoma, although the program serves thousands of disadvantaged students nationwide.

Genesys Works initially targeted Booker T. Washington, Central, and Will Rogers high schools for student recruitment into the

program this year.

Those selected for the program represent a wide range of Tulsa students. Three of this summer’s participants are:

Floyd Avelar, 18, is a senior at Will Rogers High School. “I am working for Genesys Works for an opportunity to learn more about the business industry,” Avelar said. “My plan is to go to college and study botany.”

Aureliyah Hopkins, 17, is a student at Central High School. “After high school, I plan to attend college and become a dermatologist or a realtor,” she said. “I joined Genesys Works for the opportunity to grow my business skills and prepare for college.”

Mia Alvarez, 17, attends Booker T. Washington High School. “Post-graduation, I want to attend college and intend to pursue a career in the law field,” she said. Genesys Works has helped me improve my professional skills and feel more confident entering the workplace.”

Artis is anticipating expanding the program in Tulsa. “We expect to see an increase in interest based on our participants’ outcome this year and plan to expand to additional schools next summer.”

To be eligible for the program, a student must be entering his/her senior year, on track to graduate, legally eligible to work in the U.S., and have a flexible or reduced schedule to accommodate internship hours. Eligible students participate in an interview to determine their career aspirations, motivations, and potential fit for the program.

**The Program**

The eight-week skills development program will include 60 hours of guidance, counseling, and planning toward future career paths, including college selection and application assistance, certification training and placement, and financial aid support.

One highlight of this summer’s program in Tulsa was mock interviews that Genesys Works organized between the students and potential employers in July. The event included volunteers from Consumer Affairs, Blue Cross Blue

**The eight-week skills development program will include 60 hours of guidance, counseling, and planning toward future career paths, including college selection and application assistance, certification training and placement, and financial aid support.**

Shield, ONE Gas, and Community Care. Each student participated in two mock interviews to practice the career readiness skills they learned during summer training. Students gained meaningful feedback from volunteers and improved their interviewing and communication skills.

Students will begin their internships in August, working approximately 20 hours a week for \$14 per hour.

Tulsa Public Schools Superintendent Deborah Gist and Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum sat on the local steering committee for the program and hailed its merits.

“This program is going to provide opportunities for TPS that exist right here in northeast Oklahoma,” Bynum said. Gist characterized the program as offering “more meaningful work-based learning opportunities while growing a skilled, career-ready talent pool for local employers.”

Artis added, “There has been a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and support for our expansion into Tulsa by both local employers and the public school system.” Some local employers sponsoring internships include the Williams Company, Consumer Affairs, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma, and Helmerich & Payne, Inc. The George F. Kaiser Foundation and Ascension St. John also supported the program’s expansion into Tulsa this year.

The Genesys Works interns will work in enterprise asset management, IT support, and business operations roles at organizations like Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Community Care, Consumer Affairs, Helmerich & Payne, and Williams.

Artis summarized program outcomes to The Oklahoma Eagle: “At the program’s conclusion, students join a network of more than 10,000 alumni where they receive ongoing support, networking opportunities, and resources to help them succeed in their college and career journeys.”

For more information, visit <https://genesysworks.org/>



PHOTOS ADOBE IMAGES

# “I can’t believe **you won’t just talk to us and help us.**”

ASHLEY DALY, parent, Tulsa Public Schools District

## ACCREDITATION *from AI*

The state’s largest public school district will have to wait until August for its annual accreditation review. The state Board of Education voted Thursday to delay a decision on the district’s status after the state’s school’s chief raised concerns.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters said Tulsa Public Schools intentionally misled the department about funding spent on diversity, equity and inclusion programs. After the meeting, Walters said all possible actions remain on the table, including an unaccredited status. This would cause the school to shut down and lose funding and recognition from the state.

Tulsa Public Schools already received an accreditation warning last year, for a staff training on implicit bias that the board found to violate House Bill 1775. The law restricts teachers and school staff from teaching eight specific concepts, including that one race or sex is superior to another and that any person should feel discomfort, guilt or anguish because of his or her race or sex.

Ryan Pieper, executive director of accreditation at Oklahoma State Department of Education, presented this year’s accreditation recommendations after the division reviewed each district. Accreditation is used to evaluate if schools meet standards set by the department.

There are five levels of accreditation, from accredited with no deficiencies to unaccredited. Pieper clarified that unless a school is unaccredited, it will receive full funding and can remain open.

In a two-hour public comment, several community members voiced their concerns for Tulsa Public Schools. Ashley Daly, a parent in the district, was brought to tears during her comment.

“I can’t believe you won’t just talk to us and help us,” Daly cried. “This is not how

## In April, the board directed all districts to report any spending on diversity, equity and inclusion.



you treat parents.”

Walters described Tulsa Public Schools as “plagued with scandal” and said their poor performance represents how the district is run.

In April, the board directed all districts to report any spending on diversity, equity and inclusion. On Thursday, the board voted to create more specific language about the programs included within these reports. Walters said Tulsa Public Schools was not transparent in their preliminary response.

“What we have seen is a district that has failed its students, they’ve failed the parents and they’ve failed the teachers there,” Walters said.

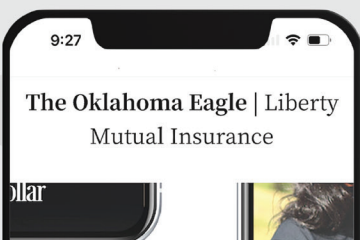
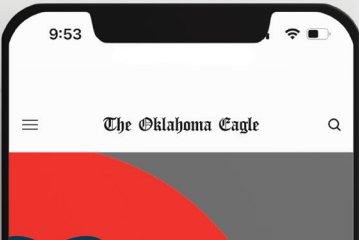
Responding to the state’s directive, Tulsa Superintendent Deborah Gist reported the district did not spend any funds on such programs, according to a letter sent to Walters. In the letter, Gist also expressed that the district’s definition of diversity, equity and inclusion differed from what Walters and the State Board of Education outlined.

“Equity is our district’s most closely-held core value,” Gist wrote. “Equity is about fairness and giving every student what they need, when they need it. It is simple to say, but challenging to achieve; each day, we rededicate ourselves to this worthy goal.”

Overall, 376 school districts were accredited with no deficiencies, 143 districts with one deficiency and 65 with multiple deficiencies.

Members of the public lined up in the hallways and outside the building for the meeting. Walters addressed the lack of space in the meeting room, but was not clear on how the board would improve the situation at future board meetings.

**YASMEEN SAADI** is a Scripps-Howard Fund intern and Emma Bowen fellow. Yasmeen is a journalism major at the University of Missouri-Columbia where she is a K-12 Education and Youth reporter at the Columbia Missourian. Contact Yasmeen at ysaadi@oklahomawatch.org or (913) 208-6316. Follow her on Twitter at @YasmeenESaadi..



# Boley: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

By LARRY O’DELL, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



A celebration of Oklahoma’s African American music traditions, Juneteenth on Greenwood began in 1989 under the direction of the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame. Every June that organization in conjunction with the North Tulsa Heritage Foundation hosts the free event, featuring local, regional, and nationally renowned entertainers. Greenwood Avenue, near the Greenwood Cultural Center, in the historic district of Tulsa once known as “Black Wall Street,” serves as the central location for the outside annual celebration. This Juneteenth celebration commemorates the June 19, 1865, announcement of

the emancipation of Texas slaves, a celebration date that spread throughout the region. Joint legislation introduced by State Senators Maxine Horner and Penny Williams in 1988 created the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame, which strives to “educate the public about significant contributions of Oklahoma jazz musicians,” and “provide a system for the state of Oklahoma to preserve, protect, and illuminate the true art form of jazz, blues, and gospel music.” The Jazz Hall of Fame is housed at the Greenwood Cultural Center. As a part of the celebration the Oklahoma Jazz Hall

of Fame recognizes Oklahomans whose roots are in jazz, blues, and gospel music. Many of the artists participate in the music festival. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Juneteenth attracted as many as eighty thousand people for three days of jazz and blues concerts supplemented with “soul food” venues. The jazz festival continued to evolve and draw nationally notable musicians every year. Juneteenth on Greenwood, while a significant event, has been one of several programs staged throughout the year by the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame.

**THE OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY** is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma’s history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

**JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION**, Adobe Images.

## Featured Last Week



OK AG Joins Lawsuit Over Tribal Gambling Agreements



Oklahoma’s Teacher Salary and Per-Pupil Expenditures



State Board Takes Accreditation Actions, But TPS Delayed

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# Decision Guided By Oklahoma's Justifiable Deadly Force By An Officer Statute

CASES DROPPED from A1

New Oklahoma County District Attorney Vicki Behenna announced her decision today to dismiss manslaughter charges her predecessor had filed against seven police officers in three separate fatal shootings.



OKLAHOMA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY VICKI BEHENNA announces her decision to drop charges against seven police officers charged in three fatal shootings of county residents Friday, July 28, 2023. PHOTO TRES SAVAGE

**OFFICERS** with the Oklahoma City Police Department shot 15-year-old Stavian Rodriguez in November 2020 and 60-year-old Bennie Edwards less than a month later. A police officer in The Village shot 49-year-old Christopher Poor in July 2020.

To reach her decisions to dismiss all three cases, Behenna said she sought help reviewing evidence from a “team of lawyers,” as well as Clarence Chapman, a retired sheriff’s deputy from California who operates National Justice Consultants, Inc.

“In addition to reviewing the facts of the case, in addition to having an expert review the evidence in the case, we reviewed Oklahoma law. There is a specific statute — [Title 21, Section 732] — that is entitled ‘justifiable deadly force by [an officer],’” Behenna said. “That statute sets forth the groundwork and the law that we have to [follow] in evaluating whether an officer has used excessive force or the force that they used is justifiable. That law basically says that if a suspect is trying to escape or evade arrest and the suspect is believed to have committed a crime involving serious bodily harm or the threat of serious bodily harm, force — even deadly force — can be justifiable. The statute also says that if an officer reasonably believes the force is necessary to protect him or herself from serious bodily injury or to protect somebody else from serious bodily injury, then deadly force can be justified.”

Behenna started her Friday by revealing her decision to and discussing that statute with Cameo Holland, the mother of Stavian Rodriguez, a teenager who became locked in a southwest OKC convenience store during a botched robbery. Surrounded for several minutes by more than two dozen OKCPD officers, Rodriguez was instructed to exit the locked gas station. He eventually climbed out of a window, placed his pistol on the ground and was fatally shot by several officers when he reached toward his pants. He did not have another weapon.

Holland, who said Behenna discouraged her from having her attorney join Friday morning’s meeting, said she felt “disbelief” and was “having a really hard time” after learning the news.

“It feels like they killed my son all over again. That’s what it feels like right now,” Holland told NonDoc prior to Behenna’s public press conference. “When a district attorney looks at you, and when they tell you that the justice system is failing you, and they apologize for that, that’s a clear sign that there’s something wrong with the laws. When you look at who proposes a lot of these ideas, it’s their own police union.”

Behenna, who was not supported by the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 123 during last year’s campaign, said the analysis produced by Chapman formed about “half” of her decision to dismiss the cases with prejudice, which means they cannot be refiled by her even if new evidence came to light in the future.

“Part of it is in consultation with an expert. I don’t think an expert on the use of force had ever been retained in those cases to evaluate the facts and look at it frame-by-frame, as our expert did,” Behenna said. “In addition to that, as I stated under (Title) 21, (Section) 732, it states specifically that officers who are effecting an arrest on someone who is trying to escape an arrest and who has, or who has attempted, bodily injury, a police officer can use deadly force and that force would be justified based on those factors.”

Holland said some parts of Behenna’s explanation confused her Friday morning, especially considering that Behenna does not have the same experiences and background as former District Attorney David Prater, who filed the manslaughter charges against five OKCPD officers in March 2021 and had twice previously convicted local police officers for fatal shootings.

“David Prater was a police officer for a long time, so that was part of my confusion, too,” Holland said. “If someone who was a police officer and was very familiar with the

side of things that she is not — if he would file charges, why would he do that if he didn’t feel like there were charges to be filed?

“And she just said, ‘Well, I’m not sure. I can’t tell you what he was thinking.’ And I was like, ‘Well, he didn’t leave some notes behind to have conversations?’ And she said, ‘Yeah, we had lots of conversations. He left plenty of notes.’ But she just said, ‘But he never told me about this statute.’ And it took until me leaving and just having a minute to think, ‘Why would somebody need to tell you about that if you’re the district attorney?’ Especially a statute that I’m aware of. I’ve seen it before. It’s been around since 1990.”

Calling Behenna’s decision “disappointing,” Prater told NonDoc that he met with Behenna for about one hour in November following her election to review the video footage of the Rodriguez shooting.

“At no time after that was I called or was there a request for additional information or any information regarding decisions in any of the police-involved shooting cases,” Prater said.

The former district attorney, who sometimes clashed with local police leaders for prosecuting and convicting officers, said he could not explain why Behenna said state statute would prevent her from pursuing the cases.

“There were no statutes and no case law in any way that convinced me that we should not charge everyone that we charged. We have been aware of the law, we reviewed the law constantly when making charging decisions on police officers and others, and there were no statutes or case law that precluded these officers from being charged,” Prater said. “We believed there was probable cause to file the charges, and we believed also that we would be able to bring them over at preliminary hearing to be held over at trial.”

Prater said that while Behenna consulted Chapman, who once served as chief of police for the UCLA Police Department, she did not ask him about the cases beyond the meeting in November.

“I was unaware that this was going to occur today,” Prater said. “Neither Mrs. Behenna, nor anyone from her office, called or contacted me regarding this matter or asked any questions about our filing decisions or asked any questions about something that they may have missed that justified our filing of charges.”

At her press conference, Behenna declined to discuss her office’s terms of engagement with Chapman or how much he was paid for his services.

“I don’t know that that’s really relevant here,” Behenna said.

Earlier Friday, Behenna’s office declined to release a copy of its professional services contract with Chapman, arguing that it is exempt from the Oklahoma Open Records Act. NonDoc had requested the contract last week.

“The Open Records Act not only makes our litigation files confidential it also limits the records we must produce,” assistant district attorney Aaron Etherington wrote in an email. “The contract requested falls outside the scope of those we are required to disclose under the act. Moreover, it is protected by common law privileges for attorney work product and the deliberative process privilege.”

Behenna said Friday that, in the future, all fatal officer-involved shootings in Oklahoma County will be presented for charging consideration by the state’s multi-county grand jury, a private body of citizens that can return indictments and investigate alleged crimes.

## POLICE UNION, OKCPD CHIEF PLEASSED WITH DECISIONS

Mark Nelson, president of the FOP Lodge 123, said his union had not spoken with Behenna since election night in November so as to avoid “any perception of impropriety.” “Our members are trained to make split-second, life-or-

CASES DROPPED cont. A6

# CHARGES DROPPED

The wheels of justice often turn slow and today’s decision, while important, will not by itself ease the pain for the families and friends of Bennie Edwards and Stavian Rodriguez, the deep-rooted effect on our community, nor the profound emotional toll on the involved officers and their families”

- **WADE GOURLEY**, OKCPD Chief

## CASES DROPPED *from A5*

death decisions, even in the most unpredictable, chaotic situations,” he said in a statement. “Attacks, ambush-style assaults, and line-of-duty deaths are at record highs in our profession. It is a tragedy any time someone in our city is killed or injured, and our officers are on the streets every day doing a dangerous job while trying to prevent harm and protect the innocent.” All seven officers — six with the Oklahoma City Police Department and the seventh with The Village Police Department — have been on administrative leave since each fatal shooting. “As we have maintained since this incident, our officers followed their training and did what was necessary to protect themselves and other Oklahoma City residents,” Nelson said. “We are thankful District Attorney Behenna dropped these charges.” OKCPD Chief Wade Gourley also released a statement. “The wheels of justice often turn slow and today’s decision, while important, will not by itself ease the pain for the families and friends of Bennie Edwards and Stavian Rodriguez, the deep-rooted effect on our community, nor the profound emotional toll on the involved officers and their families,” Gourley said. “Please continue to pray for everyone involved.” Gourley said OKCPD will now focus on “healing and learning,” referencing recent efforts to implement recommendations from a national consulting group aimed at improving the department. “One of our key initiatives involved establishing a reality-based training unit, which has equipped every member of our police department with better de-escalation strategies and best-in-class tactics,” Gourley said. “Additionally, we have provided officers with more less-lethal equipment and increased the number of officers and dispatchers with crisis intervention training. We are committed to continual improvement to ensure the people of Oklahoma City receive the professional and compassionate service everyone deserves.”

## HOLLAND: ‘IT’S WORSE THAN UNFAIR’

The three fatal police shooting cases — each filed between 2020 and 2021 by Prater — have lingered for more than a year as Oklahomans waited for the state Court of Criminal Appeals to

issue its ruling in State of Oklahoma v. John Mitchell, which dealt with a fatal police shooting in Blackwell and posed a question about whether a use-of-force expert must testify at preliminary hearings for officers charged in fatal shootings. The appellate court issued its opinion in June, but because the judges deemed Mitchell’s actions “objectively reasonable,” they wrote that they “need not decide here whether the absence of such testimony requires” dismissal. This legislative session, lawmakers passed HB 2537 to amend Title 22, Section 34.1 and add an additional requirement that “excessive force” must be “established as an element of any alleged violation under the criminal laws of this state.” In all three cases, the charges were filed by Prater, who retired in January. In the November election, Behenna defeated former Republican legislator Kevin Calvey, a firebrand conservative who launched his campaign by promising to drop charges against all six of the OKCPD officers involved in the Edwards and Rodriguez shootings. Holland, the mother of Rodriguez, referenced Calvey’s remarks disparaging her son throughout last year’s campaign. “It’s not as simple as, ‘I lost my child,’ or ‘I miss my child.’ It hurts to live when your child is taken from you like that, and then to have them give you some kind of hope for almost three years that at least these people are going to have to go in front of a judge, and then going through everything — with having to listen to other people who ran for DA say horrible things about my child, and then still to get past that and to think that there is still hope that these people will not get to just go back to life like it was before Nov. 23 of 2020, that’s just hard,” Holland said. “I never get to go back. I can’t go back in time. What did they miss out on? What did this cost them? I don’t like to say it’s not fair. It’s worse than unfair.” After Friday’s press conference, Holland again heard someone

***“It’s not as simple as, ‘I lost my child,’ or ‘I miss my child.’”***

- **CAMEO HOLLAND**, mother of Stavian Rodriguez

speak ill of her dead son. Attorney Gary James — who represents Chance Avery of The Village and Corey Adams, one of the five OKCPD officers who had been charged for shooting Rodriguez — was speaking to media when Holland heard him reference how attorneys for the OKCPD officers “all kind of worked together” on their defenses. “Had to get your stories together?” Holland interjected. “Everybody had to work together to get their story together?” “Yeah, you’re right,” James said.

Holland replied: “I know, cause they’re liars, they’re murderers, they’re cowards.” “Yep, they are,” James said sarcastically. “Is your son the armed robber?”

The verbal altercation between Holland, James and one of James’ associates lasted for two minutes outside of Behenna’s office. Holland accused James of “gloating,” and she ultimately walked away before returning to enter Behenna’s office again for another conversation with the district attorney.

James said police officers “almost have to” assume that someone reaching for their pants has a gun. He acknowledged that the OKCPD officers who shot Rodriguez never saw him with a second gun after he had dropped his pistol. “No, never got to that point in time. They have to react,” James said. “There’s a case, [Estate of Larsen v. Murr], that says a police officer doesn’t have to see ‘the glint of steel’ before he uses deadly force, and I know that’s debated. I mean, everybody’s human.”

## BENNIE EDWARDS SHOOTING DEATH

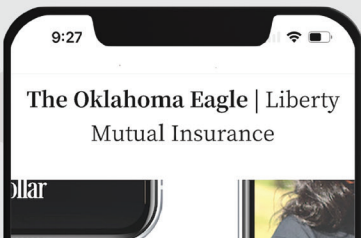
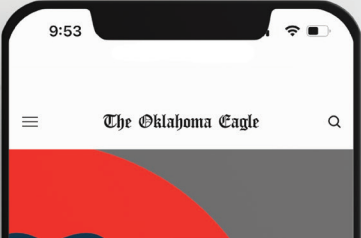
When OKCPD Sgt. Clifford Holman shot Bennie Edwards in front of a pawn shop on Dec. 11, 2020, he did not see the steel of a gun.

**CASES DROPPED *cont. A7***

The Oklahoma Eagle

## Our Mission

To amplify our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial” is the cornerstone of our continued success.





MEMBERS OF THE OKC FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE, LODGE 123, listen during a forum between Oklahoma County district attorney candidates Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. PHOTO MICHAEL DUNCAN

“I just wanted them to at least have to face accountability, and if a jury said not guilty — and honestly I wouldn’t have been completely surprised about that — it would be on your record that you were charged with a crime and not convicted.”

- **CAMEO HOLLAND**, mother of Stavian Rodriguez

CASES DROPPED *from A6*

Instead, he arrived on the scene and saw an agitated Edwards — a man experiencing homelessness and psychosis — holding a knife and talking to a pair of other officers. Holman attempted to tase Edwards, and another officer deployed pepper-spray on Edwards, who retreated toward the shopping center before briefly advancing at police, turning sharply to the left and running away through the parking lot. Holman fired multiple shots, dropping Edwards with a final bullet. Prater charged Holman with first-degree manslaughter, arguing that Edwards stopped being a threat as he ran away from officers in the parking lot. Prater did not file charges against a second officer who had deployed his gun, Master Sgt. Keith Duroy, because he said Edwards had briefly advanced toward Duroy while holding the knife. Seconds later, however, Edwards was running away from the officers when Holman shot him. On Friday, Behenna said that even as Edwards fled police on foot with the knife, it was legal for Holman to shoot him in the back because he had previously “threatened bodily injury.” “When Officer Holman arrived, they did use non-lethal force in an attempt to try to deescalate the situation. When Mr. Edwards was hit in the face with pepper spray, that’s when he charged,” Behenna said. “And in all fairness, he got within about four or five feet — we’ve done measurements of the parking lot and the distances. That’s one of the things our expert reviewed. He got within four or five feet of Sgt. Duroy before he made the sharp left turn. But again, reviewing Oklahoma law, when somebody — even a fleeing felon who has threatened bodily injury — officers can use excessive force.” A press release distributed by Behenna’s office quoted part of Chapman’s report on the Edwards shooting. “Contemporary police training and national standards of care instructs that suspects exhibiting obvious symptoms of mental illness can be dangerous and a threat to officer safety,” Chapman wrote. An autopsy revealed that Edwards, a man with

a history of severe mental illness, had plugged his ears with paper products at the time of his death.

STAVIAN RODRIGUEZ  
SHOOTING DEATH

In March 2021, Prater filed first-degree manslaughter charges against five Oklahoma City Police Department officers who fatally shot 15-year-old Stavian Rodriguez after he had surrendered during a robbery, dropped his handgun and reached toward his pants.

The five OKCPD officers charged with manslaughter were:

- Corey Adams
- Jared Barton
- Brad Pemberton
- Bethany Sears
- John Skuta

A sixth officer involved in the incident — Sgt. Sarah Carli — was not charged because she fired a nonlethal beanbag round, Prater said at the time. Other officers on the scene did not fire their weapons and also did not face charges. Behenna discussed few details of the Rodriguez shooting during her press conference Friday. In her press release, however, she quoted Chapman’s analysis that Rodriguez had “created a sufficiency of fear” in the minds of officers. “The act of a suspect facing and making eye contact with uniformed armed police officers while disobeying orders and lowering his hand to his waistband area as if retrieving a firearm can be reasonably interpreted (sic) as an imminent deadly threat requiring defensive action,” Chapman wrote. “The five officers acted lawfully and appropriately in the fact of an imminent and credible deadly threat.” Holland, Rodriguez’s mother, called Behenna an “incredibly nice and compassionate” person whose “emotions and words were sincere.” Still, she said, the decision to drop the charges hurt. “I just wanted them to at least have to face accountability, and if a jury said not guilty —

and honestly I wouldn’t have been completely surprised about that — it would be on your record that you were charged with a crime and not convicted,” Holland said. “And that would never go away, and that’s all I wanted. I wanted them to go through the same system that my son should have gone through, and then if that was the outcome that they were found not guilty, I could have lived with that much easier than I can live with them not even being questioned or not having to face anybody about it other than themselves.”

CHRISTOPHER POOR  
SHOOTING DEATH

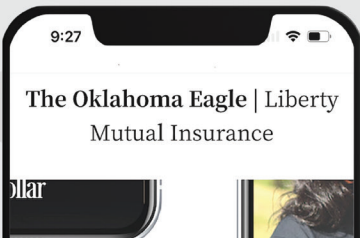
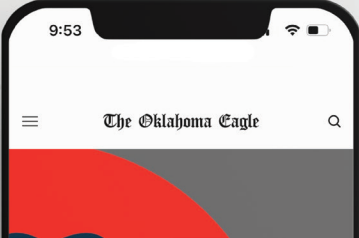
Of the cases discussed Friday by Behenna, the charges against Chance Avery, a former police officer in The Village who fatally shot Christopher Poor in July 2020, had progressed the farthest. That case had been set to go to trial last fall, but the pending Mitchell decision before the Court of Criminal Appeals delayed the process. Prior to Behenna’s decision Friday, attorneys were preparing for Avery’s “stand your ground” evidentiary hearing set for Sept. 18. In July 2020, Avery shot Poor three times after responding to a domestic disturbance call made by Poor’s wife, who was at the home to collect personal belongings. Although Poor had not been home when Avery and Poor’s wife had arrived, Poor eventually entered the house wielding an aluminum baseball bat. In response, Avery pulled his gun and told him to “put the bat down right now.” Poor said he was going to put the bat down, but Avery followed him and repeated his initial command multiple times. Poor eventually took steps toward Avery, who shot him. In Behenna’s press release, Chapman said the shooting was justified. “A suspect armed with a potentially deadly weapon advancing directly toward a uniformed and armed police officer, while disobeying orders to drop the weapon can be reasonably interpreted (sic) as a deadly threat,” Chapman wrote. “Officer Avery acted in strict accord with nationally accepted standards of proper procedures and tactics in defense of his life and

the lives of others in the face of an imminent and credible deadly threat.” Behenna said Friday that she spoke with Poor’s wife about her decision Thursday night. After meeting with Holland on Friday morning, Behenna said she also spoke with relatives of Bennie Edwards. Around noon, she met with pastors and community leaders in northeast Oklahoma City. “These families are grieving. This decision that has been made is difficult,” Behenna told media. “And no matter what this office does or says, these families are forever changed.”

**WILLIAM W. SAVAGE III (TRES)** has served as the editor in chief of NonDoc since the publication launched in September 2015. He holds a journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma and covered two sessions of the Oklahoma Legislature for eCapitol.net before working in health care for six years. He is a nationally certified Mental Health First Aid instructor.

Our Mission

To amplify our core value of equity, through journalism and editorial” is the cornerstone of our continued success.



# THE BIG BAND LEADER

ERNIE FIELDS from AI

On Aug. 1 and 2, 1939, a big band from Tulsa assembled at the studio of Vocalion Records in New York City to record an album. The singer Melvin Moore did the vocals. Trumpeter Amos Woodruff performed a soulful solo. The top song on the album was “Going Back to T-Town,” by Oklahoma musician Jimmy Webb.

But the show’s star was the 35-year-old African American band leader, Ernie Fields. By that time, the Oklahoman and his orchestra were no strangers to the jazz public. But that nine-song album was one of the first huge breaks for Fields and his band. As much as any event, the LP, called “T-Town Blues,” helped put Fields and his group on the national map.

Over the years, Fields’ bands -- first the Royal Entertainers and later the Ernie Fields Orchestra - would earn vital spots in the annals of jazz music. As one of the “territory bands” prominent in the early to mid-1900s, the Royal Entertainers mainly played in clubs in the Midwest, centering around Kansas City. But from the late 1920s to the mid-1960s, the band gained profile with Fields at the helm, and performed in clubs from the New Club Alabam in Los Angeles to the Apollo in New York City and many a ballroom and club in between. Fields’ version of the jazz favorite “In the Mood” rose to No. 4 on the Billboard chart in 1959. Besides band leader, Fields was an accomplished trombonist and pianist.

## A figure in jazz history

While Fields’ recordings and performances created an impressive legacy, the just-released “Going Back to T-Town,” a lively anecdote-rich book about the musician and band leader by his daughter, renowned Tulsa-born journalist Carmen Fields, cements his place in national jazz history.

Fields was a prolific storyteller, and his recounting of the antics of the music world and his engagements in it provided his daughter with much of the material for the book. A captivating yarn of the intriguing tales from Fields’ life, the book serves as a keepsake for Fields’ loyal fans and a refresher of his achievements for a younger generation of readers.

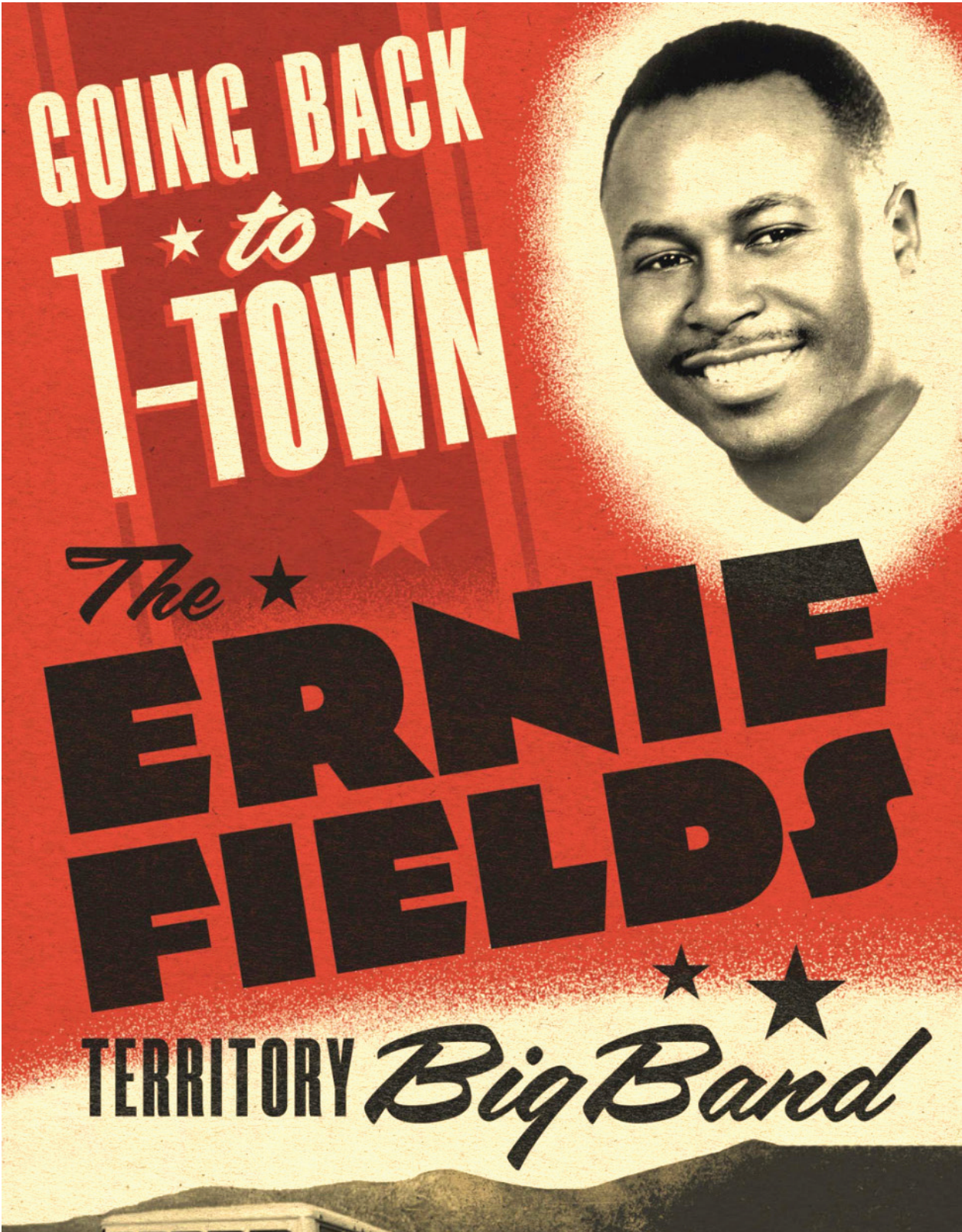
It tells how famed talent scout John Hammond, who had discovered Count Basie, among others, pushed Fields to set out from Tulsa for New York in the late 1930s pursuing national fame; of how Fields employed a young Miles Davis for a few gigs in Illinois; and how he enhanced his band stage act with side shows by one-legged dancers and other performances.

Besides the absorbing text, the book includes precious photographs of Fields and his orchestra throughout his career. In one endearing picture Fields is flashing his signature wide smile, with a trombone in one hand, greeting vocalist Ann Walls. In another, he is huddled in a corner, flanked by jazz greats Stan Kenton, Art Ford, and others, listening to the radio show “Thursday Evening Blues.”

## Fields the performer

One key aspect of Fields’ life that looms large was his utter devotion to pleasing the crowds. “He had a deep allegiance to his audiences,” Carmen Fields said in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle. “He wanted very much to please and to show that he could please an audience, whether in Portland, Ore.; Jackson, Miss.; or Old Orchard Beach, Maine. He wanted to prove that he was competent and able to adjust with the times and the tastes of the audience, the greater audience whether it was black or white.”

For Carmen Fields, the book was a project three decades in the making. After fits and starts that included a significant job change and the birth of her daughter, she focused full-time on the writing during the pandemic. Besides having no excuse for a few distractions during the period of COVID-19, one incentive to get the project done was that many of the sources,



(ABOVE) CARMEN FIELDS’ new book about her father, *Going Back to T-Town: The Ernie Fields Territory Big Band*, is available in Tulsa at Magic City Books or online via Amazon.com. PHOTO PROVIDED (BOTTOM LEFT) ERNIE FIELDS SR. and the Ernie Fields Orchestra performed for decades as “territory band” throughout the Midwest. Fields is pictured here in the early stage of his career. PHOTO PROVIDED

musicians of her father’s era, were fading away.

Fields, a former writer at The Oklahoma Eagle now based in Boston, has forged a high-profile career as a broadcast journalist. An Emmy award winner, she produces and hosts a public affairs radio program, “Higher Ground.” Still, the writing posed challenges for her.

“Having been a journalist and a broadcast journalist for the longest part of my career, I got used to writing stories in a minute thirty and two-minute blocks. And that would be the whole story... Framing a book, a whole different method of writing, was new and difficult for me.”

The resulting easy flow of vignettes and tales is the kind of work that is only made possible by the prodigious research of a lifelong reporter inspired by love and affection.

The book captures the struggles the ambitious Ernie Fields faced in forging a career in an era of economic depression and Jim Crow segregation. The band sometimes played in honky tonk joints and used make-shift transportation to get around. Particularly while touring in the South, they had to navigate many racially tense situations. One of the band’s early gigs in the 1920s was in Gladewater and Longview, Texas, just short of 300 miles from Tulsa. With the promise that they would be paid \$10 per band member, Fields borrowed gas money for the trip from his brother Clarence. Heavy rains kept many potential patrons from attending the performance. The white proprietor balked at the bill. Finally, after considerable tension, the bill was paid, and the band returned to Tulsa.

## Quintessential professional

And yet, through it all, Fields maintained a steady, impressive level of professionalism. He scouted for and hired a stellar roster of talent and pushed them to play at the top of their game. They included (briefly) Miles Davis, vocalist and drummer Roy Milton, and others who would go on to have significant careers in jazz. Fields’ ability to form and maintain a vibrant band over a career that spanned three and a half decades was one of his hallmarks.

Fields had a genuine loyalty to Tulsa and his family here despite his life on the road. All roads led back to the family’s home on North Peoria. Often when he was back home he

played gigs in clubs around the Greenwood District or other spots across Oklahoma.

Fields’ parents relocated from Texas to Oklahoma in 1905 or ’06, a couple of years after Ernie was born. Raised in Taft, he attended Tuskegee University and moved to Tulsa after college. After launching his musical career, he married, and he and his wife Bernice had two children, Carmen and Ernie Fields, Jr. “I used to love when he was home sitting on his lap and reading the newspapers,” Carmen Fields recalled.

In the long stretches when Ernie traveled, he stayed in touch by sending Bernice prolific, colorful letters from the road. The book quotes from several of them. “On the 4th of July played to about 2000 and two police men had to work during the dance to keep keep the people away from the pit,” Fields wrote to Bernice from New York. “I couldn’t hardly play that night for autographing.”

In defiance of the racial strife of the era, Fields broke the taboos of the period by hiring white musicians. He was driven to look for the best talent available regardless of race.

In early 1928, Fields employed David Duncan, a white musician, and arranger from Ponca City, as a band member. (Duncan also rented a room from Fields’ mother.) It was a bold and dangerous move in that Jim Crow era, especially for a band that regularly toured in the South. According to the book, Fields told Duncan that, if necessary, he should say he was the group’s manager. Another white player Fields hired was tenor sax, Harold Eiler. While traveling, Eiler and Fields and the band occasionally had to maneuver around Jim Crow laws against Blacks and whites traveling or performing together.

## The chronicles of other musicians

Beyond telling the saga of Fields’ life, the book includes a mini encyclopedia of the biographies of many other jazz musicians of Fields’ era. It features dozens of short takes on famous musicians like Yusef Lateef (earlier known as Bill Evans) and some lesser-known figures, such as native Tulsa drummer and bass player Robert “Baby Boy” Lewis.

Fields drew much of the material for the short biographies from her father.

“Either in writing or in some of the recordings he did, dad would mention different musicians by name, and I would double back to him,” she said. “After a while I had a pretty good list of names.”

These biographies provide students of jazz with a rich resource. In particular, Tulsa musicians of the 1930s, 40s and 50s, who might otherwise be forgotten, are immortalized in these pages.

**Going Back to T-Town: The Ernie Fields Territory Big Band (Greenwood Cultural Center Series in African Diaspora History and Culture Book 2) by Carmen Fields is published by the University of Oklahoma Press.**

Available at Magic City Books, 221 E. Archer St., Tulsa, OK 74103, Phone: (918) 602-4452 or via Amazon.com or other online book vendors.





SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE GREG TREAT (R-OKC) speaks to media after a pair of successful veto override votes Monday, July 24, 2023. PHOTO TRES SAVAGE

# Second Time A Charm: SENATE Overrides STITT TO EXTEND TWO SETS OF TRIBAL COMPACTS

STITT, SENATE OVERRIDE from A1

**Beneath a gallery half-full of tribal leaders, the Oklahoma State Senate** took a second swing at overriding Gov. Kevin Stitt’s veto of state-tribal compact extensions and connected Monday, nearly one month after senators fell one vote short of extending dozens of tobacco and motor vehicle compacts through Dec. 31, 2024.

Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (R-OKC) immediately began the day’s events by moving to override Stitt’s veto of SB 26X, which proposed extending all existing state-tribal compacts on tobacco taxation one year

On June 26, the Senate voted 31-8 — one member shy of the necessary two-thirds supermajority — to override the SB 26X veto. Nine senators were absent that day, and Treat pledged minutes afterward that he would “have the votes” when he brought the Senate back for another attempt in July.

That attempt came today, and after 40 minutes of debate on SB 26X, senators voted 34-7 to override Stitt’s veto. Sen. Brenda Stanley (R-Midwest City), Sen. George Young (D-OKC) and Sen. Darrell Weaver (R-Moore) were absent on June 26 but voted in favor of the override Monday.

Minutes later, senators also voted 34-7 to override Stitt’s veto on HB 1005X, which extends existing state-tribal compacts on motor vehicle licensure through Dec. 31, 2024, as well.

“I’m certainly pleased by the vote. It gives us additional time to get this worked out. I believe that with that additional time we can do that,” Chickasaw Nation Gov. Bill Anoatubby said as he left the Senate gallery. “The conditions that existed before the compacts actually were signed years ago back in the ‘90s, it was pretty volatile. It was a pretty sad situation. Things changed when the compacts were put in place and everything normalized and we began to work together again. It was pretty volatile back then and we certainly would not want to repeat that.”

**Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton offered a similar assessment.**

*“I’m really pleased with the tone that it set today,” Batton said, emphasizing that expiration of the tobacco compacts would negatively impact both tribes and the state financially in a manner similar to the expiration of hunting and fishing compacts at the end of 2021. “That’s money that will be lost for the state of Oklahoma and for the tribes because we’re competing against Arkansas and we’re competing against Texas, so why would we not want to continue providing revenue to the state of Oklahoma through these compacts like we have done in the past? It’s just like the hunting and fishing — \$35 million was lost for the state of Oklahoma by not renewing those compacts with the tribes. We believe that’s a win-win whenever we can benefit and the state of Oklahoma can benefit.”*

Seminole Nation Chief Lewis Johnson praised the vote taken by senators.

“I believe that throughout the history of this country and this state, we seek as native people to have fair and honorable dealings with the native tribes,” Johnson said. “The Senate upheld that today.”

Stitt, however, expressed frustration with the Senate’s decision.

“Despite real concerns for the future of our state, the Senate has chosen to disregard the governor’s compact in favor of compact language the tribes wanted,” Stitt said in a statement. “I am trying to protect eastern Oklahoma from turning into a reservation, and I’ve been working to ensure these compacts are the best deal for all 4 million Oklahomans. Unfortunately, the Senate seems to disagree and used an illegitimate process to do so.”

Asked what process used by the Senate was “illegitimate,” a Stitt spokeswoman did not respond prior to the publication of this article.

While the House was not in session Monday, they are expected to return July 31 to vote on the SB 26X veto override. House members had already voted to override the HB 1005X veto June 12.

**‘I hope negotiations proceed expeditiously’**

Tribal leaders spent recent weeks asking senators to override Stitt and extend from six to 18 months the time period for additional negotiation with the governor for a more-typical 10-year extension.

Stitt, meanwhile, lobbied senators to uphold his veto and support his negotiations on revised compacts, sending a last-minute email Sunday to senators in an effort to convince them he is sincere about negotiating new tobacco compacts. (On Thursday, representatives from Stitt’s administration met with representatives of the Chickasaw Nation regarding tobacco compact language.)

After Monday’s vote, Treat said he wants negotiations to continue sooner than later.

“I hope negotiations proceed expeditiously, but that has not happened heretofore in this administration,” Treat said. “So I’m not holding my breath for that, but my hope would be that we get earnest negotiations done rapidly.”

At Thursday’s meeting between Stitt’s representatives and Anoatubby’s representatives, former Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Steven Taylor attended as a potential neutral third-party mediator. The meeting had been Anoatubby’s idea, and Taylor’s attendance had been Stitt’s.

Treat said Monday that he was not familiar enough with the negotiations to know whether Taylor should act as a formal mediator, but the Senate leader said Taylor was “undoubtedly a huge benefit to the education negotiations” that finally resulted in an agreement this May.

“I don’t know the details of where they’re at on the negotiation to know whether having

somebody of the calibre of Justice Taylor is appropriate at this time or whether it would be more appropriate later,” Treat said. “I can’t honestly assess that.”

Anoatubby referenced Thursday’s meeting between his representatives and Stitt’s representatives.

“We decided that maybe it would be better if we got together in person so last week we had our first in-person meeting,” he said. “What I hope for is that we tribes — not just one tribe — can get together and work to get some common language and get an agreement.”

Batton concurred, although he noted that each tribe will want to make sure its specific interests are represented.

“I hope that all tribes will come together because I think we pretty well stand united in what we hope to accomplish like we’ve done in the past,” Batton said. “We want it to be good for Oklahoma just like it’s good for us. We believe that it’s revenue generation for the state and it’s revenue generation for the tribes and it’s a win-win situation, so that’s the spirit we want to continue moving forward.”

Treat made the motion to override the vetoes Monday, and he also closed debate on the SB 26X override.

“That has worked since the early 1990s. We were at each other’s throats,” Treat said, referencing a pair of U.S. Supreme Court cases that led to the current state-tribal compacts on tobacco taxation. “If you read what led to those legal cases (...) we were not getting along great, and we are heading down the path with a governor right now who doesn’t seem willing to negotiate these issues in good faith, in my opinion.”

Treat referenced the political pressure faced by senators ahead of the SB 26X veto override re-vote.

“I know there have been arguments from many people,” Treat said. “I’ve received texts this week from people who are not even in my phone database telling me how wrong I am and how I am going to destroy the state.”

To that end, three members of Treat’s Senate GOP Caucus debated Monday in an effort to uphold the governor’s vetoes. Sen. Nathan Dahm (R-Broken Arrow) reiterated the argument he made June 26, citing Article 6, Section 8 of the Oklahoma Constitution, Title 74, Section 1221 of state statute and the expiring compacts themselves to argue that the governor is the proper official to extend compacts.

“The compact itself says that the governor has the power to negotiate compacts. Not the Legislature, the governor. The constitution says the governor has the authority. Statute says the governor has the authority,” Dahm said. “If we want to change who has the authority, we have to do it legally. We cannot simply ignore the constitution. We cannot simply ignore statute. We have to go about it the right way. I believe these bills are not going about it in a constitutional manner.”

Treat said that if Stitt proves incapable of negotiating with tribal nations, he and senators could choose to take Dahm’s advice and change the law to designate the Legislature as the state’s negotiating representative on compacts.

“If this body finds that the governor is not negotiating in good faith, I reserve the right as the leader of this body, and you all reserve the right, to change that law,” Treat said on the Senate floor.

During his media availability afterward, Treat suggested that Stitt now has “almost a probationary period” of 18 months to negotiate more permanent deals.

Sen. Warren Hamilton (R-McCurtain) took Stitt’s side on the matter and said the historic U.S. Supreme Court decision in *McGirt v. Oklahoma* — which functionally affirmed the existence of eight reservations in eastern Oklahoma — has divided residents of the state. The decision’s immediate impact was for only the federal government and tribal governments to have jurisdiction to prosecute violations of the Major Crimes Act in cases involving tribal citizens. A subsequent Supreme Court ruling in *Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta* said the state has concurrent jurisdiction on cases where non-tribal citizens commit crimes against tribal citizens. Beyond criminal law, however, the *McGirt* decision has raised legal questions about civil jurisdiction, including mining regulation and income taxation.

“Reservation by definition is set aside and reserved for certain people. Those people are Indians. Not everybody who resides within the confines of the reservation, at present, is an Indian,” Hamilton said. “Nevertheless, the letter of the law — which is what we’ve adhered to in the *McGirt* decision when we validated these things — takes us down a path that I don’t believe that we need to go down. And it’s a step in the wrong direction. It divides us along the lines of DNA, and every time that has been done throughout history, it has been a bad thing. It has never worked out well for those who have decided to do the dividing. The evidence and history points that this is a step in the wrong direction.”

Treat concluded his debate by emphasizing the need to get acceptable deals done.

“We must demonstrate an ability and a good-faith effort to be able to negotiate with these tribes,” Treat said.

**WILLIAM W. SAVAGE III (TRES)** has served as the editor in chief of NonDoc since the publication launched in September 2015. He holds a journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma and covered two sessions of the Oklahoma Legislature for eCapitol.net before working in health care for six years. He is a nationally certified Mental Health First Aid instructor.



**SOCCER  
IN THE STREETS  
AWARDED**

Atlanta-based nonprofit earns \$20,000 grant. **A10**

**HBCUS  
ADMISSIONS  
POLICIES**

Institutions adopt new steps for admissions policies. **A11**



# Rewriting Narratives About Black Youths, One Story at a Time

The Choice Center, a Baltimore-area program, diverts at-risk youths away from trouble and towards more positive outcomes.

**REWRITING NARRATIVES** *from A1*



**THE CHOICE CENTER**, a Baltimore-area program, diverts at-risk youths away from trouble and towards more positive outcomes.  
PHOTO **THE CHOICE PROGRAM/FACEBOOK**

In Eric Ford’s world, healing centuries of racial trauma and undoing harmful narratives usually begins with a story. If that story is heard by an empathetic listener, it can change at least one person and build a strong relationship.

And in an ideal world, he believes, that story and those bonds have the power to repair broken communities, influence government policy — and, by extension, change the world.

“Once you are able to acknowledge the humanity of another person, then that’s where the healing happens,” and real, lasting change can take place, Ford says.

Ford is the executive director of a metro Baltimore-area program that diverts at-risk youths away from trouble and towards more positive outcomes. But he’s also an experienced Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation campus facilitator who uses the framework — based in telling and hearing personal narratives — as part of his work at the Choice Center, based in the Shriver Center at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County.

Adapted from a five-point framework the W.K. Kellogg Foundation developed in 2016 with civic leaders and academics, the TRHT program aims to establish a basis for lasting change that pivots from conflict and division towards healing through facilitated dialogue, workshops, and exercises. Civic leaders are using the framework in cities from Buffalo to Los Angeles, but it also has been adapted and is in use on more than 70 college campuses nationwide.

At the same time, it has become a key tool for Ford, who uses it at the Choice Center to help drive

programming and unwind stereotypes around young Black people.

“So many times, youth programs are top-down,” Ford says. “We have adults that create a youth program and what they think are best practices — what they think young people need. And one of the things we try to do here is listen to youths, give them space, and have the program designed around what works best for them and what activities they want to go on.”

But it can also help dismantle the myth of the “super-predator,” a ruthless, violent Black criminal who preys on helpless victims. In the 1990s, dramatic headlines and public outrage about crime resulted in draconian anti-crime laws and police crackdowns; those, in turn, fueled the mass incarceration of Black men and helped create the schools-to-prison pipeline.

“We’re still dealing with the fallout” of that myth, which “shaped youth programming since that time,” Ford says. Instead of intervention, rehabilitation, and mentoring of troubled youths, he says, policies were geared more towards over-policing, surveillance, and punishment.

Breaking down that myth and healing the trauma begins with listening to a young person’s individual story, Ford says. Because it often touches on poverty, neglect, abuse, or contact with the criminal legal system, the story can be more valuable than data or research in designing an effective intervention program.

Those stories begin with a “healing circle,” a carefully-curated space that typically involves people of other

**REWRITING NARRATIVES** *cont. A11*

# Soccer In The Streets Awarded \$20,000 Grant

JANELLE WARD,  
Word In Black

**SOCCER IN THE STREETS** *from A10*

Soccer in the Streets, an Atlanta-based organization that teaches children from underrepresented communities social skills, leadership and camaraderie through soccer, was selected to receive \$20,000 from Quest Nutrition this year as a part of the company’s annual Quest for Impact campaign.

The group was one of four chosen to receive funding, each of which was acknowledged for their drive to generate a lasting impact within their respective communities. Soccer in the Streets was the only organization based on the East Coast selected for a grant in this year’s cycle.

Currently operating in five neighborhoods around the city, Soccer in the Streets offers a diverse selection

of programs educating students on a variety of subjects, ranging from the sport itself to health-related topics like physical and emotional wellness and nutrition.

Chelsea Wood, Soccer in the Streets’ director of leadership and outcomes, said that soccer is an accessible sport in terms of the simplicity of the rules and the amount of equipment needed to play. But financial obstacles prevent students and athletes from being able to participate in local programs and pursue professional opportunities.

“Sport is such an important opportunity for youth to make friends, learn social and emotional competencies and develop leadership,” Wood said. “Soccer is historically expensive to play competitively. In addition to that, transportation is another barrier. Soccer in the Streets works to alleviate those barriers through our StationSoccer model. All youth should have the chance to safely play and experience meaningful relationships.”

Soccer in the Streets operates camps during the summer and runs an after-school program during the academic year.

Tracing its roots back more than 30 years in the Atlanta community, the organization has evolved into a multifaceted network of programs anchored in promoting the wellbeing of youth and the love of the sport. Wood said about 1,400 Atlanta students will be impacted by the organization’s fall programming come the kickoff of the 2023-24 school year.

“What is so amazing about our network is the diversity,” Wood said. “The City of Atlanta is so rich in culture. At our games and tournaments, you really do see the reflection of that. I love that our families take pride in their locations and are able to share that with others around the city.”

Wood said that Soccer in the Streets intends to use the funding from the grant to further develop its Girls with Goals initiative, a program within the organization’s umbrella specifically dedicated to teaching school-aged girls how to navigate a male-dominated society through sessions with guest speakers. Soccer in the Streets will also expand its outreach by opening a sixth StationSoccer location in East Lake this fall.

Additionally, Soccer in the Streets has its sights set on 2026, when the FIFA World Cup is slated to bring millions of spectators to Atlanta. The organization also wants to grow its ‘League of Stations’ to operate in ten Atlanta neighborhoods, a system of soccer fields connected by MARTA routes that are used throughout competition seasons.

“I think the best part of our program is the mentorship and positive influences our coaches are,” Wood said. “My favorite thing to do is watch our school program coaches make every kid feel seen, valued and cared for.”



PHOTO **COURTESY OF SOCCER IN THE STREETS.**

# HBCUs Revamping Admissions Policies Amid Affirmative Action Decision

STACY M. BROWN  
Word In Black

HBCU REVAMPING ADMISSIONS *from A10*



PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In the wake of the Supreme Court’s recent decision to end affirmative action in college admissions, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have taken steps to adapt their admissions policies.

With the expected increase in applicants, HBCUs reportedly are gearing up to become more selective, aiming to maintain the quality of education they provide.

Last month’s ruling by the high court, which prohibits colleges from considering race during the admissions process, has sent ripples through the academic landscape.

For many universities, affirmative action has been crucial for fostering diversity and inclusion.

While not entirely unexpected, the decision poses a significant challenge to HBCUs, which have historically played a pivotal role in educating Black graduates and promoting racial diversity.

The Root reported that HBCU leaders anticipate a surge in applications from students seeking environments that encourage open discussions about race during the admissions process.

The schools have long served as bastions of support for Black students, especially in the face of systemic challenges like underfunding, housing shortages, and aging infrastructure.

Compared to predominantly white institutions, The Root noted that HBCUs have also struggled with subpar cybersecurity measures and limited WiFi access, further adding to their uphill battle.

“If our applicant pool doubles, we could not double our student body without seriously compromising the quality of our education,” David A. Thomas, the President of Atlanta’s prestigious Morehouse College, told the outlet.

With Morehouse College expecting a significant surge in applications over the next three years, maintaining its commitment to providing an economically diverse student body is at the forefront of its agenda, Thomas asserted.

To combat some aspects of the Supreme Court’s ruling, Aminta Hawkins Breaux, president of Bowie State University, suggested the inclusion of an essay component in admission applications as a possible measure.

She said that approach would allow students to reflect on their experiences and articulate the importance of race in their lives and aspirations.

Additionally, in an interview on WIN-TV, Brent Swinton the executive director and vice president for Institutional Advancement at Bowie State, noted the success of the university’s “Campaign for Excellence.”

“We are two and a half years ahead of schedule and have already reached the initial campaign goal of \$50 million,” Swinton said. “We’ve attracted international and national partners. Our applications are off the chain.”

“We have partners who are concerned and who want to invest in an institution that is moving the needle for education,” Swinton added.

Meanwhile, Morgan State University’s Admissions officials reportedly are contemplating using essay prompts or letters of recommendation to encourage applicants to engage in meaningful discussions about race.

As the spotlight shines brightly on HBCUs after the affirmative action verdict, officials at those schools maintain that they are determined to rise to the challenge and continue their commitment to fostering diverse, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating environments.

“Historically Black colleges and universities are carrying an outsized burden to diversify so many industries in America,” Howard University President Wayne A.I. Frederick, said in a nationally televised interview.

“We represent only 3% of the higher [education] institutions, but we are responsible for 25% of the bachelor’s degrees,” he said.

Frederick called the court’s decision, “unfortunate.”

He added that, “by not allowing race to be considered in admissions elsewhere, you can put an even more outsized burden on historically Black colleges and universities who don’t have the capacity to carry that type of a burden.”

Frederick further acknowledged that HBCUs admissions decisions now will become more complicated.

“Obviously, we all are going to be kind of avoiding lawsuits, and so trying to have a very sterile process,” he asserted.

“It is going to be almost impossible, and trying to create one is going to be far more difficult today given this ruling. So, I think that we are all going to have to look at the rules very carefully.”

Finally, Fredrick told CNN that the ruling could put an additional burden on HBCUs to produce more graduates to work in various industries and set up institutions to worry about legal challenges that could be presented over admissions.

“So, it is going to be a road that is going to require a lot more resources. I think that institutions that don’t have as many resources could be blindsided by lawsuits about this,” Frederick said.

# It’s not unusual for participants to form lasting bonds or even shed tears

REWRITING NARRATIVES *from A10*

racers or experiences. With trained facilitators guiding them, participants use prompts — gentle at first (“What’s your birth order? When was the last time you laughed hysterically?”) but gradually intensifying — the participants open up about their lives. The commonalities and empathy develop further through one-on-one breakout groups.

Finally, the large group reconvenes, and stories are shared. For some, Ford says, the experience changes perspectives, demolishes biased perceptions, and sometimes can change lives. It’s not unusual, he says, for participants to form lasting bonds or even shed tears.

“It’s a powerful experience. The racial healing truly happens by lifting the voices of young people and changing the narrative,” Ford says. “Now, hopefully, people from other backgrounds can see them in a different light. It’s helping to make young (Black) people more human to people who may not have had that contact with them. They can see them in a different light.”

“Now we can work together to change the public policy, because public policies have been based and steeped in these myths and stereotypes,” he says.

The TRHT framework also enters into Choice Circles programming when the storytelling becomes the foundation for participants’ artwork — paintings, collages, music, poetry, and spoken-word performances, that tell the youths’ stories, Ford says.

The young people, he says, are encouraged to dream big — and not only for themselves.

# “It’s a powerful experience. The racial healing truly happens by lifting the voices of young people and changing the narrative.”

ERIC FORD, Executive Director Public Policy Programs, Shriver Center, The Choice Program

“We sometimes bring in artists who help young people design mosaics and art projects that reflect what they want to see in their communities,” says Ford, who is also an on-campus TRHT facilitator working with several area schools. “We try to give them multiple opportunities of expression. And we’ve used those stories and that information to build our programming and advocate for them.”

That advocacy can lead to changes in policies surrounding youths at risk for contact with the criminal legal system, says Ford, a juvenile justice reform advocate who served on several state-level advisory committees. While reforming the system can seem a steep hill to climb, it begins with racial healing, bridging differences between dissimilar people, and “restoring the humanity that was taken away through white supremacy.”

If those conversations and relationship building don’t happen, “then nothing’s going to change,” he says.

This story was produced in partnership with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

# THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE CHURCH DIRECTORY



**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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Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

## GTOMi

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

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

## MOHAWK FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

3329 E. 30th St. North • 834-0391  
Sunday School 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.

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## 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.  
"The Seventh Day Is Still God's Sabbath"

## 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

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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  
918-582-5129

[www.fbcnt.org](http://www.fbcnt.org)

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## BOSTON AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1301 S. Boston  
(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.  
KTUL Channel 8

## TIMOTHY BAPTIST CHURCH

821 E. 46th St. N. • 425-8021  
REV. TWAN T. JONES  
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.  
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.  
"We've come this far by faith"

## NORTH PEORIA CHURCH OF CHRIST

2247 N. Peoria  
Tulsa, Okla. 74106  
(918) 425-1071  
Warren Blakney, Minister  
Sunday Bible School.....9:00 a.m.  
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.  
Sunday Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.  
There's no place, like this place, anywhere near this place.

## Pettie Chapel CME



19364 S. S. Mingo Road.  
Bixby, 74008  
Phone: (918) 366-8870  
Rev. Robert Givens  
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

"Where Peaceful Waters Flow"

## Church In Power

732 E. 31st North  
Tulsa, OK 74106 - (918) 835-1525

Service times: 9am Sundays, 7pm Wed, and Special Supernatural Breakthrough Services every last Friday and Saturday of every month at 7pm and Sunday at 9am  
Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.

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Children's Church, CIP Praise Dancers, and CIP Praise Tem.

For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.

"Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22



Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi

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Fax: 918-584-1958  
Prayer Line: 918-584-PRAY  
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
Morning Worship 10:45  
Wednesday Bible Study Noon and 7:00



## In The Spirit Christian Church

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1020 South Garnett  
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Phone: (918) 836-6823  
Fax: (918) 836-6833

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

Sunday Worship  
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Worship 11:00 a.m.

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Rev. Sharyn Cosby-Willis,

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## NOTICE

Published in The Oklahoma Eagle:  
July 28 and August 4, 2023.

NOTICE TO BIDDERS  
SEALED BIDS FOR  
PROJECT NO. 2036N6035Z & 2037B0322Z

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 25th day of August, 2023 for furnishing all tools, materials and labor and performing the work necessary to be done in the construction of the following:

PROJECT NO. 2036N6035Z & 2037B0322Z NON-  
ARTERIAL STREET REHABILITATION MAINTENANCE ZONE 6035

The entire cost of the improvement shall be paid from Account  
No. 2036N6035Z.Streets.NArtRhb.4282.42823122-541106  
2036N6035Z.Streets.NArtRhb.4283.42833122-541106

A MANDATORY Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled for Monday, August 7th, 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.

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 25th day of August 2023.

Dated at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 19th day of July 2023.

(SEAL)  
Christina Chappell  
City Clerk

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