

The Oklahoma Eagle

"WE MAKE AMERICA BETTER, WHEN WE AID OUR PEOPLE." - E. L. GOODWIN (PUBLISHER, 1936-1978)

SERVING GREATER TULSA SINCE 1921

LEGACY

5,419

Weeks, since the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and a denial of justice.

NATION

Bringing Black Studies to Black People

Word In Black. **A13**

NATION

RFK Jr.: Black Kids on ADHD Drugs Should be 'Re-parented'

Word In Black. **A13**

SOCIAL

THE OK EAGLE.COM
#THE OK EAGLE
#OKEAGLEPAPER

VOL. 104 NO. 08

February 21, 2025 - February 27, 2025

\$1.00

BILLS PROPOSED IN OKC COULD AFFECT CHILD CAREGIVER WAGES AND MORE

JOE TOMLINSON, **A2**

Lawmakers will have about \$120 million less to appropriate in the fiscal year 2026 budget



LOCAL & STATE

Billie Parker: A Steady Force for Celebrating African American Heritage

The Oklahoma Eagle. **A5**

LOCAL & STATE

In dispute over O'Brien decision, beef brews between Kunzweiler, Nichols

NonDoc. **A8**

LOCAL & STATE

Court Fines and Fees Reform Has Broad Support, But Fiscal Questions Persist

Oklahoma Watch. **A3**

COMMUNITY

Talk of Greenwood: Celebrating The Lives of Tulsans Every Week

Dr. Jerry Goodwin. **A16**

Last Week's Headlines

*Just in case you missed it. **A4***

Rosenwald Schools

*Historic Black Schools. **A4***

Jobs & Classifieds

*Discover career opportunities. **A11***

Faith In Tulsa

*The Eagle Church Directory. **A12***



8 10499 02044 7

FEATURED

Billie Parker: A Steady Force for Celebrating African American Heritage

Parker, A5



FEATURED

In dispute over O'Brien decision, beef brews between Kunzweiler, Nichols

Dispute, A8



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Bills Proposed In OKC Could Affect Child Caregiver Wages And More

OKC Bills
Joe Tomlinson
The Oklahoma Eagle

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt is urging state lawmakers to cut the state's 4.75% personal income tax and 4% corporate income tax by half a percentage in the current 60th legislative session. Lawmakers are concerned that bills with meaningful fiscal impact or investment could flounder.

Cont. A3, **OKC Bills**

Sports Betting Bills Advance

Betting
Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch

A series of bills to legalize sports betting in Oklahoma cleared committees in the House and Senate last week, but it remains unclear if the executive branch and tribal officials will be able to strike a deal.

House Bill 1047 by Ken Luttrell, R-Ponca City, would legalize sports wagering and grant the tribal nations exclusive rights to negotiate a gaming compact. The state would receive 10% of the adjusted monthly gross revenue from sports betting. Luttrell, who has run similar legislation since 2022, said

neighboring Kansas received \$193 million in revenue from sports betting in 2024. He said the tribes would be free to do business in "whatever way is best for their customers" if the legislation is enacted. "We're not going to tell them who to do their business with

Cont. A7, **Betting**

House and Senate Leaders Extend Legislative Deadlines

Legislative Deadlines
Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch

Republican legislative leaders are aiming to create some breathing room during the upcoming session. The first major bill deadline is March 6, giving lawmakers more than a month to review bills. Last year lawmakers had just 24 days to pass bills out of committee in their chamber of origin. House Speaker Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, said the legislative calendar was previously designed to allow lawmakers to adjourn by May 1. That lofty goal has rarely materialized. "We had this three to four-week span where the leadership in both chambers are negotiating a budget deal, and the bulk of the membership doesn't have a lot to do," Hilbert said during an Oklahoma City Chamber event on Jan. 22. "Obviously we have bills coming from

Cont. A7, **Legislative Deadlines**



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

Lawmakers will have about \$120 million less to appropriate in the fiscal year 2026 budget

FROM A2

OKC Bills

Legislators returned to the Capitol earlier this month with more than 3,000 bills filed. But they have far less money to spend. Lawmakers will have about \$120 million less to appropriate in the fiscal year 2026 budget than they did in 2025, according to numbers certified at a Valentine's Day Board of Equalization meeting.

The reduction is partly due to lawmakers' decision during the 2024 session to cut the state's portion of the sales tax on groceries. That action is estimated to save taxpayers about \$370 million, according to the fiscal impact statement on the bill from the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

Leading up to the current session, lawmakers filed bills to address the childcare shortage, combat the housing crisis, raise wages, and change education policy, among other initiatives. However, with pressure from Stitt to cut taxes further, some are wary that their bills could ever reach

“

Just like the rest of the country we have a real shortage in workforce in the childcare arena.

Rep. Suzanne Schreiber, (D-Tulsa)

the governor's desk.

Rep. Suzanne Schreiber (D-Tulsa), who has championed childcare, is hopeful that the bills she filed to bolster the recruitment and retention of childcare employees will pass.

“Just like the rest of the country, we have a real shortage in workforce in the childcare arena,” Schreiber said.

Schreiber's House Bill 1849 would allow employees at childcare facilities to have the household income requirement for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services' Child Care Subsidy Program exempted from consideration when determining eligibility — taking care of their childcare costs.

“They make an average of about \$11.47 an hour, and so while we may not be able to directly impact their hourly rate, we are working to impact what incentives we can offer them, and that is what [House Bill] 1849 does. It offers a recruitment and retention tool to the small business industry that is childcare,” Schreiber said in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle.

Schreiber added that the fiscal impact of House Bill 1849 is estimated at about \$9 million. For the Child Care Subsidy Program, DHS bases the household's income eligibility

on the federal income eligibility threshold per family size. The federal income eligibility threshold cannot exceed 85 percent of the state median income per family size.

“If you're thinking about it from the fiscal perspective, it's really a lesser investment for a high rate of return because we already have a lot of early childhood teachers whose household income may qualify them for a subsidy,” Schreiber told The Oklahoma Eagle. “And so you might think, ‘oh my gosh, every childcare worker in the state of Oklahoma is going to get free childcare. That's going to be a huge cost to the state,’ but the truth is it's really for a small portion who may be just over the income levels already.”

Proposed Tax Cut for Businesses

Schreiber also filed House Bill 1848, providing a small tax credit to businesses that pay for their employees' childcare services. Businesses could deduct up to 30% of what they pay for their employees' childcare costs.

“It's a very small credit. You could almost call it a pilot, because the total credit itself that the state could extend could not exceed \$5 million and employers could only claim [up to] \$30,000,” Schreiber said.

Cont. A5, OKC Bills

Court Fines and Fees Reform Has Broad Support, But Fiscal Questions Persist

Reforms

Keaton Ross
Oklahoma Watch

Gov. Kevin Stitt called on the Legislature to overhaul Oklahoma's court fines and fees system this month, prompting praise from justice reform advocates and questions about how the change would be paid for and implemented.

“We know that high fees keep people trapped in this cycle and contribute to higher recidivism,” Stitt said during his Feb. 3 State of the State address. “That doesn't make sense. I want to change that structure and make sure that a second chance is actually a second chance and get rid of fines, fees and court costs for good.”

Oklahoma's court system and several state agencies are partially funded through fines and fees assessed to criminal defendants. Critics have long said the funding mechanism is inefficient, disproportionately affects the poor and ties up criminal justice resources in debt collection work.

A handful of reform measures filed this session, including bills to eliminate a \$40 per month fee assessed to defendants and forbid courts from using private debt collectors, look to alleviate the financial burden on

“

We know that high fees keep people trapped in this cycle and contribute to higher recidivism.

Kevin Stitt, governor, Oklahoma

criminal defendants.

“It's an incremental step towards eliminating the fees,” said Sarah Couture, a regional director for the Fines and Fees Justice Center. “We're not able to eliminate them all this session, but this is a good start.”

Here's what you need to know about court fines and fees reform in Oklahoma:

Q. How reliant are Oklahoma's district courts on fines and fees?

A. About 25% of the Oklahoma Administrative Office of the Courts' \$82.32 million operating budget in fiscal 2024 came from court fines. That's a significant decline from 2016, when state appropriations comprised less than one-quarter of the agency's appropriations.

Court collections dropped significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic as district courts closed and the unemployment rate soared. Payments to the state's judicial fund kept declining post-pandemic, dropping from \$29.5 million in fiscal 2021 to \$20.7 million in fiscal 2025.

Oklahoma court officials requested a \$4.14 million special appropriation from the

Legislature to offset continued declines in court collections. Diana O'Neal, the state's administrative director of the courts, told lawmakers she expects just \$15.5 million to be available in the Oklahoma Judicial Fund in fiscal 2026.

“From 2011 through 2019, collections were coming in very consistently,” O'Neal said. “It's been all over the board since COVID.”

Q. What other state agencies are partially funded by court collections? And how much does that add up to for criminal defendants?

A. Several public safety agencies, including the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, Oklahoma District Attorney's Council and Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training, are partially funded through fee assessments. The attorney general's office receives a \$3 fee per conviction to fund its victim's advocacy and services unit.

The dozens of fees add up quickly. A person convicted of misdemeanor public intoxication

Cont. A6, Reforms

The Oklahoma Eagle

Rosenwald Schools: Historic Black Schools

By CYNTHIA SAVAGE, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



During the first half of the twentieth century educational opportunities for African American schoolchildren were stifled by racism, a shortage of money, and inadequate facilities. Beginning in the mid-teens, however, Black schools throughout the south received much needed financial assistance from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. In 1913 Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company and philanthropist for a variety of causes, began providing limited funding for the construction of Black schools in Alabama. Due to the success of this endeavor and the persistent need in Alabama and other southern states, the Julius Rosenwald Fund was formally established in 1917. The fund

was active in the states of Oklahoma, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The Rosenwald Fund's initial activity was to aid in the construction of new buildings for Black schools. Although the fund did not supply all the money necessary for the erection of new buildings, it did provide sufficient money to act as an impetus for the local district to better their facilities. In Oklahoma the Rosenwald Fund aided in the construction of 198 education-related buildings in forty-four counties between 1920 and 1932. Of the 198 buildings, 176 were schoolhouses, ranging in size from one-teacher to twenty-two-teacher, sixteen were teacherages,

and six were shops. The Rosenwald school building program ended in Oklahoma and nationally in 1932. In addition to constructing schools the Rosenwald Fund contributed money for Black school libraries, transportation to separate consolidated schools, African American teacher education, and Black colleges and universities. The fund also had programs related to health and medicine, race relationships, and miscellaneous other activities related to human well-being. The Julius Rosenwald Fund continued in operation until 1948 when, as intended by Julius Rosenwald, all monies had been spent, and the trustees dissolved the fund.

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.

Rosenwald Hall at New Lima (19687.TO.N033.671.4, Chester R. Cowen Collection, OHS).

Featured Last Week



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN BUSINESS WITH AI

Get ready for a day that transcends boundaries, fuels creativity, & celebrates the unstoppable spirit of women. Join us at the forefront of innovation, where inspiration meets action. RSVP today!

GBC 2025 INNOVATEHER WOMEN'S SUMMIT

Join us for this free 3rd Annual GBC Women's Summit virtual event featuring inspiring and motivational speakers, enlightening panels, networking connections and more.



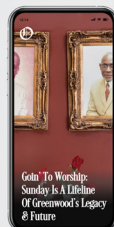
Beyond Apology Commission: A Shift from Debate To Action

GBC 3rd Annual Women's Summit Set for March 4 Virtual Venue

HUD Funding Delays Fuel Oklahoma Housing Concerns

The Oklahoma Eagle

Enjoy articles, events and featured content online



Online

WEB: www.theokeagle.com
FACEBOOK: #TheOKEagle
TWITTER: #OKEaglePaper

The Oklahoma Eagle

Founded in 1921

- James O. Goodwin**
Publisher 1980-Present
- Robert K. Goodwin**
Publisher 1972-1980
- Edward L. Goodwin, Jr.**
Co-Publisher 1980-2014
- Edward L. Goodwin, Sr.**
Publisher 1936-1972
- Theodore B. Baughman**
Publisher 1921-1936

Business

- Jerry Goodwin**
Principal
- M. David Goodwin**
Principal
- Ross D. Johnson**
Principal
- David W. Cole**
General Council
- Marsh Media**
Advertising

News

- Gary Lee**
Managing Editor
- Ray Pearcey**
Sr. Contributor
- Russell LaCour**
Contributor
- Victor Luckerson**
Contributor
- John Neal**
Contributor

Photography

- Cory Young**
Photographer

Print

- Sam Levrault**
Production Director

Circulation

- Kirstein Lynn**
Subscription Manager

Digital

- Web**
TheOKEagle.com
- Facebook**
[TheOKEagle](https://www.facebook.com/TheOKEagle)
- Twitter**
[OKEaglePaper](https://twitter.com/OKEaglePaper)

Contact

Letters to the Editor
editor@theokeagle.com

Advertise
advertise@theokeagle.com

Circulation
publishers@theokeagle.com

Subscribe
theokeagle.com/subscribe

The Oklahoma Eagle | Founded in 1921 | Vol. CIV No. 08

THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE is published weekly on Fridays by The Oklahoma Eagle, LLC, P.O. Box 3267, Tulsa, OK 74101. General office is 624 E. Archer St., Tulsa, OK 74120. Periodical Postage (WSPS 406-580) is paid at Tulsa, OK. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the above address. Delivery subscription rates (Continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands). All subscriptions may include Premium Edition issues throughout the year.
Mail Subscriber Rates: Single copy \$1 | Yearly \$52 | 2 Years \$100

©2025 The Oklahoma Eagle, LLC. All rights reserved. No portions of this periodical may be reproduced with expressed written consent.

Delivery
For questions about deliver, billing and our membership program, please contact us at +1 (918) 582-7124, ext. 241.

Submissions
Submitted content may be edited for space, clarity and for considerations of liability. All submissions become the sole property of The Oklahoma Eagle, which reserves the right to run all or part of any submissions due to timeliness or newsworthiness.

Letters to the Editor
Want to write a letter to be published in the paper and online? Email us online to submit.

Advertising
For print and online advertising information, go to theokeagle.com/media-kit/ or call . +1 (918) 582-7124.

The Newsroom
Know something important we should cover? Send an inquiry to theokeagle.com/subscribe.

The Oklahoma Eagle

“A difficult environment” for any kind of investments, incentives and tax credits

FROM A3

OKC Bills

The House Appropriations and Budget Human Services Subcommittee unanimously approved House Bill 1849 on Feb. 10, while the Appropriations and Budget Finance Subcommittee approved House Bill 1848 with a 5-2 vote on Feb. 13. As both bills have a fiscal impact, they will be heard by the full House Appropriations and Budget Committee in the coming weeks, but pressure surrounding tax cuts could impede those bills' progress, Schreiber said.

“I think it's difficult in the environment that we're in where there's a pressure to cut income tax from the governor's office — and to the extent that the majority party isn't interested in that — they are seeking fiscal conservative spending that's consistent with saying they don't have enough money to cut income tax,” Schreiber said. “That makes an environment for any kind of investments, incentives, tax credits, difficult,” she added.

Schreiber said these concerns are consistent among Republicans and Democrats in the legislature.

“I'm just going to be honest. I'm watching colleagues on both sides of the aisle have to have difficult conversations about that. I'm hopeful that we can take it as far as we did last time, and even further, but the environment around this is hard,” Schreiber said. “I will say, the same is true that the childcare industry is in an even more crisis state than it was last year. So for something that's pretty affordable, I think it's worth evaluating.”

Other Bills to Watch

Senate Bill 28, filed by Carri Hicks (D-Oklahoma City), would allow schools to provide free lunches to students whose families' annual income during the preceding tax year did not exceed 250% of the federal poverty level. Currently, students qualify for free lunches if their families earn less than 130% of the federal poverty level. In comparison, students whose



PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

families earn less than 185% of the federal poverty level qualify for reduced-price lunches. According to a Senate Fiscal Summary of the bill, there would be an estimated impact of \$102 million in Fiscal Year 2026.

Senate Bill 35, also filed by Hicks, would raise the state's minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$15 an hour. While filing this bill will allow legislators to give input on wage increases, voters will also have the opportunity to raise the minimum wage through State Question 832 on June 16, 2026. If approved, State Question 832 would provide a stair-step increase to \$15 by 2029 — beginning with an increase to \$12

in 2027, \$13.50 in 2028, and \$15 in 2029. Future wage increases beyond \$15 an hour would be tied to the U.S. Department of Labor's consumer price index.

Senate Bill 201, filed by Sen. Adam Pugh (R-Edmond), would raise the minimum teacher salary from \$39,601 to \$50,000 and increase salaries for more experienced teachers. The bill was approved unanimously by the Senate Education Committee, which Pugh heads, on Feb. 11. However, the title was stricken. According to a Senate Fiscal Summary of the bill, there would be a \$640 million impact in Fiscal Year 2026.

House Bill 1165, filed by Rep.

Gabe Woolley (R-Broken Arrow), would require public schools to obtain proof of U.S. citizenship or legal immigration status from a parent or legal guardian of a student upon enrollment.

House Bill 1962, another bill filed by Woolley, would require employers to utilize a “status verification system” to verify employees' citizenship status. The bill text states that an employer who is non-compliant with the law will receive three warnings. After the final warning, each offense will incur a fine between \$100 and \$500.

House Bill 2014, filed by Rep. Daniel Pae (R-Lawton), would require organizations that receive

funds from the Legal Services Revolving Fund to prioritize eviction cases for residential tenants. The fund helps provide legal services to indigent persons with an income level below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines in civil legal matters. Domestic and family violence and abuse cases are already prioritized under current state law. According to a fiscal analysis of the bill, House Bill 2014 is “not anticipated to have a material impact on state budget or appropriations.”

Joe Tomlinson, is a contributor to The Oklahoma Eagle.



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com

Billie Parker: A STEADY FORCE for Celebrating African American Heritage

Parker
Kimberly Marsh
The Oklahoma Eagle



(ABOVE) Billie Parker has showcased vendors, talent and community leaders for 12 years through the annual Black Wall Street Heritage and History Festival, with an annual event. Parker's 2025 event was held at the recently restored Big 10 Ballroom on Apache Street. The day long festival featured local musical and dance groups, vendors and honored 12 of Tulsa's Black moms.
PHOTO PROVIDED

(LEFT) Members of the Tuck-N-Turn Swingout Lacy Park Community Center demonstrate what they learn in the dance classes during the 12 annual Black Wall Street Heritage Festival at the Big 10 Ballroom. Picture are, L-R, Ursula Black Jones, Katrina Ali, Freddie Penn and Meghan Scott.
PHOTO PROVIDED

Billie Parker launched Black History Month celebrations in Tulsa 12 years ago. Now called the Black Wall Street History and Heritage Festival, the annual event promotes African American arts and vendors while honoring a group of community members.

Parker is an artist, entrepreneur and a steady force in the African American and northside Tulsa communities. Using her organizational skills, she has created a retail market for Black culture through the Black Wall Street Market. The market has endured under different names over the years until it moved to its current location on farmland at 56th Street North between MLK Boulevard and North Peoria Avenue. She uses a plot there to teach youth and other community members how to grow their own food via the Community Pride Market.

As many conservatives push to dismantle Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) programs, Parker is unfazed by their efforts. She is stable in her commitment to what she's always done: promote African Americans and diversity through kindness, art, peace, love and nature. With a wide-eyed smile, she gives everyone in her orbit a sense we are all ok and will continue to be.

"It's just a joyous occasion!" Parker said in an interview with The Oklahoma Eagle.

Her various activities, mostly funded out of pocket, seek to bring members of the community together to remember history, to appreciate each other, to listen to music and eat good food. This year's celebration included the honoring of Black mothers in a Mother's Matter crowning of 24 women. The women's names are listed at the end of this article. They were all guests at the event. Their faces and contributions are also commemorated on a Black Wall Street calendar that Parker created and sells at her store and at seasonal art markets.

Parker's motivation for opening her market goes back to her childhood. Growing up, she sometimes visited the TG&Y dime stores, a chain that was open from 1939 to 2002 and found a lack of merchandise for Black people that looked like Black people.

"I remember I was in the fourth or fifth grade. I went there with my mom and I said they don't have anything for black people here," Parker said. "Like figurines. Everything was white. So, I said when I get big I'm going to have everything for our people."

"I used to paint ceramics and paint them black. I used to make dolls, and they started looking like the person when I made it. That's scary. I had to stop that because they started looking just like them," she said. As she speaks, her eyes open wide in disbelief and she nearly shudders at the thought.

Parker launched her Black History Month celebrations at Lacy Park in north Tulsa. This year the festival was held at the historic, recently restored, Big 10 Ballroom on North Apache. The event draws an intergenerational crowd and non-black faces dot the landscape. One thing that would make this celebration even more special, Parker said, would be to gather of all races to celebrate African American history, progress and plans for a better future.

Next year her dream is to build on the event by attracting more groups from across the city, from every neighborhood.

"We all should be together and do something together as one. One day I'm gonna join all of them together, and invite different ones," Parker said. "This could be the beginning of a multi-cultural, intergenerational celebration of the Black Wall Street spirit," she added. It would demonstrate "the resilience of community and include more interaction and dialogue with Tulsans of other cultures and heritage," Parker added.

"We are all one. I'm thinking about it, and praying about it," she said.

Anyone interested in joining Parker to create a united historical celebration in February 2026 for the 13th Annual Black Wall Street Heritage and History Festival can contact her at bwsm2019@gmail.com or text her at 918-770-6020. Follow Parker on social media at <https://www.facebook.com/blackwallstreetmarket>

Mothers Matter honorees were selected based on their work and action with their children and other children in the community, specifically teaching them and helping them into adulthood, Parker said. The honorees and their hometowns are:

Thomasina S. Allen, White Plains, NY

Michelle Burdex, Tulsa

Amusan Faseyi, Dallas, TX

Carolyn Gant, Morris, OK

Claudia Green, Greenwood, MI

Sheila Hooks, Ardmore, OK

Akilah Johnson, Dallas, TX

Tawnie Knox, Tulsa, OK

Margaret M. Love, Porter, OK

Francetta Mays, Oklahoma City, OK

Qiana Nelson, Tulsa

Andraleque S. Parker, Tulsa

Ashlee Dorsey-Pine, Tulsa

Arthetta Pouncil, Muskogee

Rahemah Reheem, Baltimore, MD

Darlene Reynolds, Tulsa

Kuma Roberts, Tulsa

Georgena Sayles, Tulsa

Megan Scott, Denver CO

Della M. Shaw, Taft, OK

Ozetta Walker, Catoosa, OK

Elanie McFarlin Watkins, Tulsa

Jerica Wortham, Tulsa

Joyce Smith-Williams, Washington DC

Kimberly Marsh, who reported and wrote this story, is a senior contributor to The Oklahoma Eagle. She has devoted a big part of her career to chronicling the policies of Tulsa's city leaders.

Questions regarding legislative support, penalties and impact

FROM A3

Reforms

will be assessed a minimum of \$545 in fees, while someone convicted of feloniously pointing a firearm will face at least \$965 in fees, according to an analysis by the Fines and Fees Justice Center.

Q. Can a debtor be arrested if they don't pay?

A. Yes, but courts are directed to do so only if the defendant willfully neglects to establish a payment plan. Driver's license suspension is a more common penalty.

Q. How much would it cost the state to eliminate court fines and fees?

A. Collections fluctuate and fine and fee assessments vary, making it difficult to pinpoint an exact number. However, cost estimates of targeted reforms suggest it would cost tens of millions of dollars.

The state would lose about \$10 million per year by eliminating the district attorney's supervision fee, according to House research staff. A bill proposed in 2022 to eliminate various agency fees had an estimated price tag of \$9.3 million.

At an Oct. 21 interim study on fines and fees reform, Secretary of

Public Safety Tricia Everest said it could take time to figure out how much agencies need from state appropriations to fund programs. She said several fees average just 10% to 20% collection rates.

"We don't know how much, frankly, certain things cost," Everest said. "But we'd be better off sending our money directly to agencies and not depending on people who most likely can't even pay."

Q. Is there support in the Legislature for fines and fees reform?

A. Yes, but it's unclear whether the math will work out this session. Lawmakers will have about \$120 million less to appropriate in the fiscal year 2026 budget than they did in 2025, according to numbers certified last week by the state Board of Equalization.

Senate Pro Tem Lonnie Paxton, R-Tuttle, said he's talked with constituents at risk of losing their driver's license because they're unable to pay their debt. He said the Senate is interested in taking up reforms but it will have to be balanced with other priorities.

"I've got four years left in this building and the governor has

two," Paxton said. "I hope before he leaves we're able to find a solution. This is a workforce issue, a fairness issue and a humanity issue when you burden someone with what the governor called basically a debtor's prison. I totally agree that we need to find a better way to do that. People committed a crime and owe a debt to society, but we shouldn't burden them forever."

House Speaker Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, said the House is open to negotiations but that the governor's budget proposal did not outline a clear plan to replace the lost fine and fee revenue.

"It absolutely would have a cost," he said. "For our budget team, that's a policy question as well as a fiscal question."

House minority leader Cyndi Munson, D-Oklahoma City, and Senate minority leader Julia Kirt, D-Oklahoma City, said it would be very difficult to balance reducing fines and fees with the governor's priority of cutting the state income tax.

"Unfortunately they (fines and fees) pay for the courts," Munson said. "We can invest but we have to use our income tax dollars to do that."

Q. What reform measures are up for consideration this year?

- Senate Bill 973 by Todd Gollihare, R-Kellyville: Prohibits courts from entering into contracts with private debt collection agencies, which tack a 30% collections fee onto what is initially owed.

- House Bill 2127 by Chris Kannady, R-Oklahoma City: Specifies that an individual should not be imprisoned for inability to pay.

- House Bill 1460 by Tammy West, R-Oklahoma City: Eliminates several fees, including the \$40 per month supervision fee charged to defendants on district attorney's probation.

- House Bill 1462 by Tammy West, R-Oklahoma City: Directs courts to prioritize restitution payments.

Those bills face a March 6 deadline to advance out of committee in their chamber of origin.

Keaton Ross covers democracy and criminal justice for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at (405) 831-9753 or Kross@Oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at @KeatonRoss.



(ABOVE) Sports fan celebrating the performance of his team. PHOTO ADOBE IMAGES

(LEFT) Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander shoots a free throw in a home game against the Sacramento Kings on Feb. 1, 2025. Lawmakers are considering proposals that would allow bettors to place wagers on NBA games and other live sporting events. PHOTO KEATON ROSS/OKLAHOMA WATCH

A deal between the executive branch and tribal officials remains unclear

FROM A2

Betting

or regulate geofencing to traditional tribal boundaries,” Luttrell told members of the House Appropriations and Budget Select Agencies Subcommittee on Feb. 10.

A similar measure, House Bill 1101, would authorize a legislatively-referred constitutional amendment if HB1047 fails. Such an effort would not require the governor’s approval to appear before voters. Gov. Kevin Stitt has consistently opposed tribal exclusivity for sports betting.

The Senate Business and Insurance Committee advanced three bills to legalize sports betting in various forms. Sen. Bill

Sports betting in casinos or racetracks is legal in 38 states, while 27 states have authorized mobile sports betting

Coleman, R-Ponca City, said the bills will likely evolve as negotiations between the governor, tribal officials and the Oklahoma City Thunder continue.

Sports betting in casinos or racetracks is legal in 38 states, while 27 states have authorized mobile sports betting, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. A 2018 U.S. Supreme Court ruling cleared the way for sports betting to explode.

Proponents of sports betting say it’s an easy way for states to generate tax revenue and prop up education, infrastructure and other needs. Critics question the long-term effect on vulnerable populations and the potential to compromise the integrity of sports, especially college athletics.

A group of university researchers studying the issue found that sports betting did not

replace other gambling revenue in states where it was legalized, but instead reduced savings and increased credit card debt as individuals made risky bets. There’s also a preliminary link between sports betting legalization and higher rates of domestic violence.

Professional athletes have reported increased harassment from bettors. New York Knicks guard Jalen Brunson detailed his experience in an interview with The Athletic, noting that angry bettors will call him racial slurs and demand their money back if he didn’t hit a prop bet.

Luttrell’s bill calls for \$25,000 per month to be sent to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to treat compulsive gambling, up from the \$20,833 the agency currently receives.

Keaton Ross covers democracy and criminal justice for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at (405) 831-9753 or Kross@Oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at @KeatonRoss.

A focus on the budget during the first week of session

FROM A2

Legislative Deadlines

the other chamber but there’s sometimes a lull in that. So we shifted the deadlines, which I think is going to be a good change because we’ll be able to put more work in on the front end.”

Senate Pro Tem Lonnie Paxton, R-Tuttle, said the upper chamber will use extra time to focus on appropriations bills.

“During the first week of session, instead of having normal policy meetings, we’re going to be focused on the budget so all legislators, Republicans and Democrats, can ask questions,” Paxton said. “We’ll be able to dig a lot deeper into the budget to know where these numbers are coming from and why we’re doing things in certain ways.”

The legislative session convenes on Monday, Feb. 3 at noon. Gov. Kevin Stitt will deliver his State of the State address then, likely around 12:45 p.m.

Here are some key deadlines to know:

- Thursday, March 6: Deadline for bills to pass out committee of their chamber of origin
- Thursday, March 27: Deadline for bills to be heard in their full chamber of origin
- Thursday, April 24: Deadline for bills to pass out of committee in the opposing chamber
- Thursday, May 8: Deadline for bills to be heard in the opposing chamber
- Friday, May 30 at 5:00 p.m.: Sine die adjournment



Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, House Speaker, is sworn into the Oklahoma House of Representatives on Nov. 20, 2024. PHOTO LEGISLATIVE SERVICES BUREAU

Keaton Ross covers democracy and criminal justice for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at (405) 831-9753 or Kross@Oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at @KeatonRoss.



The Oklahoma Judicial Center is the headquarters of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, and the Judiciary of Oklahoma.

PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In dispute over O'Brien decision, beef brews between Kunzweiler, Nichols

Dispute
Tristan Loveless
NonDoc

KUNZWEILER BECOMES THIRD DA SUED BY MUSCOGEE NATION AMID JURISDICTION SPAT.

In a growing disagreement over who should prosecute tribal citizens, Tulsa County District Attorney Steve Kunzweiler has threatened to “drop a bunch of freedom of information requests” on the City of Tulsa as new Mayor Monroe Nichols’ administration has pushed to send more cases to tribal courts.

In December, the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals issued a landmark 4-1 ruling in *Tulsa v. O'Brien*, which held that the city has concurrent jurisdiction with sovereign tribal nations and the federal government to prosecute non-member Indian defendants in the Muscogee and Cherokee reservations, which span much of the city. In determining whether the City of Tulsa had jurisdiction to prosecute Osage Nation citizen Nichols O'Brien for DUI and other traffic offenses within the Muscogee Reservation, the appellate court applied a “balancing” test, weighing government interests regarding criminal jurisdiction for the first time. (The appellate court denied a motion to rehear the O'Brien case on Feb. 5.)

In the months that have followed, Nichols has changed course on how the city handles citations made to tribal citizens, sending all such tickets to tribal courts first for review. O'Brien’s municipal case has been dismissed and referred to the Muscogee Nation

by city attorneys, who report to Nichols’ office. Meanwhile, Kunzweiler has broadly interpreted the O'Brien decision to grant full and concurrent state jurisdiction for any non-major Indian in Indian Country, a position that led the Muscogee Nation to sue him, Tulsa County and Sheriff Vic Regalado in federal court Feb. 13.

In a Jan. 8 letter to Nichols that underscored the jurisdictional tension in town, Kunzweiler said he has witnessed “chaos and havoc inflicted upon citizen-victims in Tulsa County following the United States Supreme Court’s decision in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*.”

“Despite assurances that cases would be handled, and justice would be meted out, the real reality is the public safety has waned, and victims have suffered in the post *McGirt* era,” Kunzweiler wrote. “With this restored authority (in the O'Brien decision) I will not allow the voices of domestic violence victims to go unheard my intention is to re-instill the confidence of our communities in the criminal justice system. Area businesses have been taken advantage of in the post *McGirt* era. I will make sure that their voices are heard as well. Likewise, I will enforce Oklahoma’s laws which deal with crimes such as drinking and driving and illegal distribution. To emphasize this point the district attorney prosecuting these cases in no way prohibits one of the tribes from prosecuting the same case this is the beauty of concurrent jurisdiction each entity can exercise their jurisdiction’s

interests, not to the exclusion of the other, but in tandem.”

Nichols did not respond to Kunzweiler’s letter in writing, and in a Feb. 13 interview, he suggested that Kunzweiler should have requested a meeting with him to understand why he has asked the Tulsa Police Department to forward cases with tribal defendants to tribal courts instead of the DA’s office.

“I think for a long time the Tulsa Police Department and district attorney have worked well together. I don’t really understand — and for the record I have not met with Mr. Kunzweiler — I don’t think he’s expressed anything to me about arrest records,” Nichols initially said. “All I got was a letter that he sent out to a bunch of law enforcement agencies. And so, as I’ve actively reached out to tribal nations to try and figure out how do we find a pathway forward, that is something the DA has not done for me. I certainly don’t think it’s something he’s done for tribal nations.”

Nichols, however, campaigned on “co-governing” with tribal governments in Tulsa, but shortly into his tenure the appellate court decided O'Brien’s case. Despite the court holding the city possesses criminal jurisdiction to prosecute cases against non-member tribal citizens in municipal court, Nichols said he instructed the City Attorney’s Office to forward future cases with Indian defendants to tribal courts.

“I was made this commitment when I was campaigning to get out of the courtroom on a lot of these issues,

so obviously [O'Brien is] a case that I inherited,” Nichols said. “My goal was to do exactly what I said as I was campaigning for mayor. The stated goal and policy of the city right now is that we begin to work through these jurisdictional issues outside of the courtroom (with tribal governments).”

Nichols said city prosecutors dismissed charges against O'Brien and new charges were filed in the Muscogee Nation District Court. Records there show new documents from Feb. 11 in a criminal case against O'Brien originally filed in 2021. Prosecutors have prosecutorial discretion to determine how cases proceed, including the right to decide to dismiss a criminal case when charges are filed in another court.

While O'Brien is prosecuted in tribal court, Nichols said city and tribal leaders are negotiating an official framework for transferring other cases involving tribal citizens.

“Our goal is to refer these cases to tribal court as long as those courts have the capacity to prosecute. So it’s really starting to work with the nations and say, ‘Hey, what is that capacity to prosecute?’ So how do we balance our position on respecting tribal sovereignty while also making sure that we don’t have gaps in public safety?” Nichols said. “So we are in the neighborhood of 400 misdemeanor cases involving tribal citizens. The goal would be once we get these frameworks formalized, those 400 cases go to (tribal courts).”

Cont. A9, Dispute



(FROM LEFT-RIGHT) Steve Kunzweiler, district attorney for Tulsa County, and Monroe Nichols is the mayor of Tulsa.

PHOTO NONDQC

FROM AS

Dispute

Speaking after the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council meeting on Jan. 16, Kunzweiler said he agreed with the O'Brien decision and that it indicated his office can also prosecute non-member Indians who commit crimes in Tulsa County.

"[The City of Tulsa's] argument was — and, I believe correctly and obviously, the Court of Criminal Appeals concurs with it — the City of Tulsa shouldn't have been precluded from prosecuting somebody who may have been an Indian but was a non-member of the reservation (tribe)," Kunzweiler said. "O'Brien basically said the state has concurrent jurisdiction — or the City of Tulsa and by extension the state — has the ability to enforce state laws or municipal laws on people who are non-member Indians."

Kunzweiler singled out the Tulsa Police Department as the only law enforcement agency not forwarding cases to his office when they involve tribal citizen defendants. That spurred his Dec. 31 letter to TPD Chief Dennis Larsen and his subsequent Jan. 8 to Nichols (embedded below) asking the city officials to have TPD forward "domestic violence, protective order violations, various theft cases, DUI offenses, etc." to his office for prosecutorial review.

"I have advised every law enforcement agency in Tulsa County, every single one of them. I think I have 19 agencies that are accountable to providing reporting to me, and to an agency — with the exception of one — I've been having law enforcement provide me reports on those types of cases," Kunzweiler said. "I'm hopeful the City of Tulsa and its new administration is not giving instruction to their officers not to bring cases to the state of Oklahoma, because the last thing I want to do is drop a bunch of freedom of information requests on a city to just give me their arrest reports."

Nichols said the city would comply with open records requests from Kunzweiler's office if he chooses to go that direction, but the mayor encouraged the DA to consider taking a seat at the negotiating table alongside tribal governments instead.

"I have respect if that's the way he thinks he has to do his job. I can only assume positive intentions, so I want to make sure I say that. I think our approach is just different. And if he wants to tie up the system with a bunch of open records requests that are literally only

“

[The City of Tulsa's] argument was — and, I believe correctly and obviously, the Court of Criminal Appeals concurs with it — the City of Tulsa shouldn't have been precluded from prosecuting somebody who may have been an Indian but was a non-member of the reservation (tribe).

Steve Kunzweiler, Tulsa County District Attorney

going to show that we are doing the job we are supposed to be doing every day, then that's fine," Nichols said. "I would rather actually have the district attorney around the table with me and tribal leaders to try and figure out how do we get something done that will respect sovereignty and also make sure that we can protect public safety. I think everyone that is in this community that is working on this issue all are aligned around that goal except for one person. And like I said, I assume the best intent, but I'm not trying to make this a political issue. I'm not trying to fight with the DA. I'm trying to make sure this city is safe and that we respect the folks that we share Tulsa with and hold people accountable for breaking the law."

Anti-McGirt base revolution: O'Brien sparks uncertainty on criminal jurisdiction in Oklahoma

In a statement after the Court of Criminal Appeals released its O'Brien decision, defense attorney Brett Chapman called the ruling part of an "anti-McGirt base revolution" going on in Oklahoma's courts.

"Their ruling marks a stark departure from the principles established in the landmark Supreme Court decision in McGirt v. Oklahoma," said Chapman, who represents O'Brien. "This stands in stark contrast to this court's recent assertion that there is no anti-McGirt 'base revolution afoot.' Today's decision proves otherwise."

Like O'Brien, Jimcy McGirt was a non-member tribal citizen when he was

prosecuted by the state on child sex crimes, and the U.S. Supreme Court overturned his criminal conviction in 2020 by finding that the Muscogee Reservation was never disestablished and that Oklahoma lacked criminal jurisdiction over major crimes committed by tribal citizens within Indian Country. (O'Brien's alleged crimes are not offenses covered by the federal Major Crimes Act.) While both McGirt and O'Brien were non-member Indians prosecuted for crimes on the Muscogee Reservation, proponents of state jurisdiction have argued that the McGirt decision only applied to crimes specifically listed in the Major Crimes Act.

Kunzweiler argued that the O'Brien decision represented a return to normal more than a sea change in Indian law.

"With all due respect, I think Oklahomans in 1907 completely understood what they were doing, and we didn't have this (criminal jurisdiction) issue until the McGirt case came up," Kunzweiler said. "I think the Court of Criminal Appeals has provided at least a template on explaining why the state should be able to exercise concurrent jurisdiction. There is nothing that we are depriving the tribes of."

While Kunzweiler argued that criminal jurisdiction over Indian lands in Oklahoma was settled law after 1907, history is a little murkier. William King Hale, the mastermind of the murders depicted in Killers of the Flower Moon, famously underwent several

Cont. A10, Dispute

McGirt v. Oklahoma

McGirt v. Oklahoma, 591 U.S. ___ (2020), was a landmark United States Supreme Court case which held that the domain reserved for the Muscogee Nation by Congress in the 19th century has never been disestablished and constitutes Indian country for the purposes of the Major Crimes Act, meaning that the State of Oklahoma has no right to prosecute American Indians for crimes allegedly committed therein. The Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals applied the McGirt rationale to rule nine other Indigenous nations had not been disestablished.

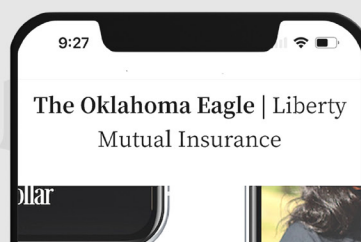


(FROM LEFT-RIGHT) Steve Kunzweiler, Tulsa County District Attorney, speaks with Attorney General Gentner Drummond ahead of a District Attorneys Council meeting Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023. PHOTO TRES SAVAGE

The Oklahoma Eagle

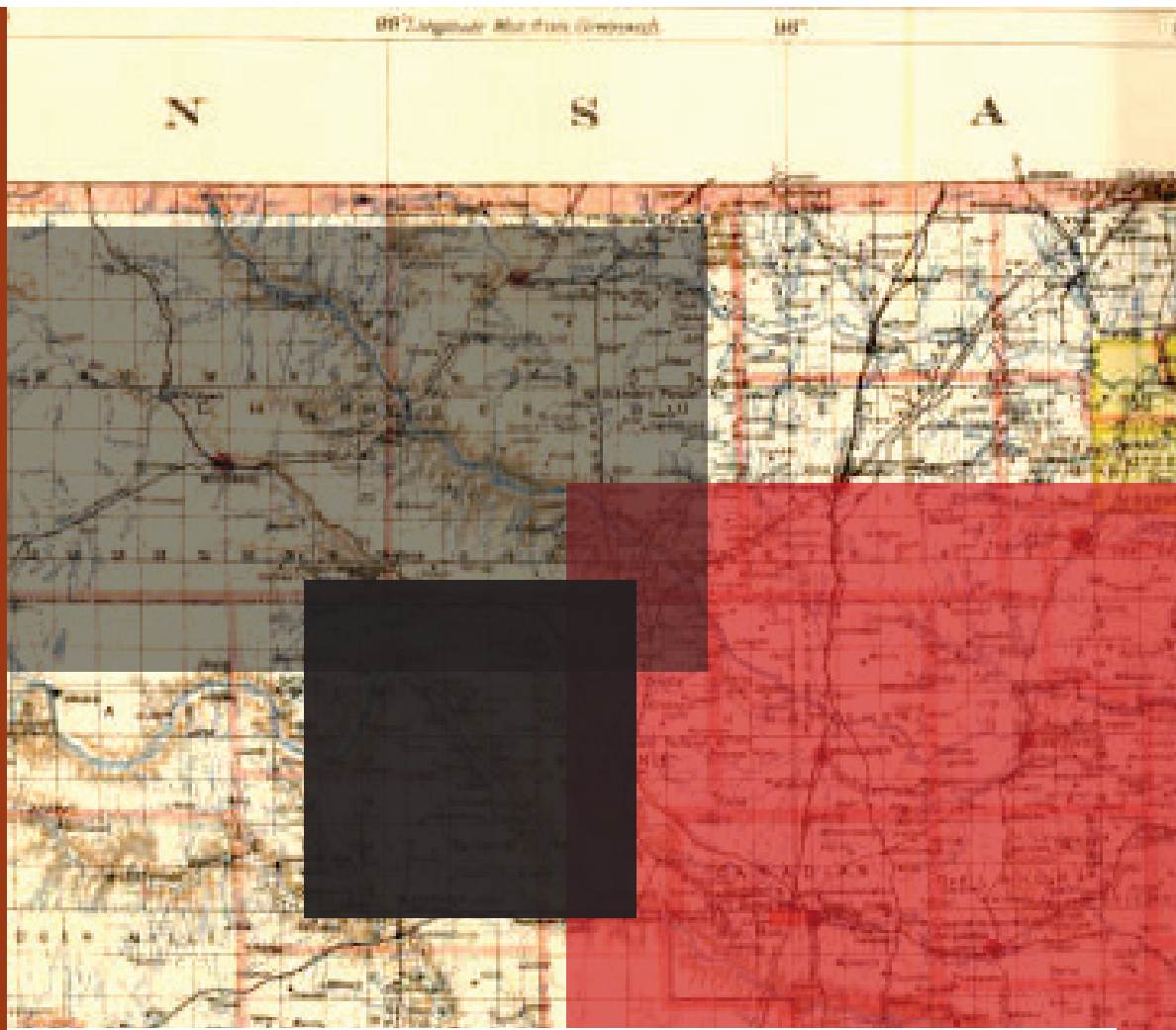
Our Mission

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



KUNZWEILER, NICHOLS

The Battle Over Concurrent Jurisdiction Takes Center Stage



rather STATE court and booked into [David L. Moss] as any other citizen.”

While concurrent jurisdiction between a state and federal government is usually not viewed as a major encroachment on the other’s sovereignty, the U.S. Supreme Court has distinguished cases that involve Indian defendants since at least 1886, when the court upheld the Major Crimes Act in *U.S. v. Kagama*. Owing to state governments’ historic hostility toward tribal governments and local prejudices against tribal members, America’s high court has previously recognized a federal duty to protect Indian defendants from state governments.

“Because of the local ill feeling, the people of the state where [tribes] are found are often their deadliest enemies,” Justice Samuel Freeman Miller wrote in the 1886 decision. “From their very weakness and helplessness, so largely due to the course of dealing with the federal government with them and the treaties in which it has been promised, there arises the duty of protection, and with it the power (to fulfil the duty).”

Kunzweiler: ‘I’ll do it the hard way’

Kunzweiler remains adamant that his office will gain access to TPD arrest records, even if they have to “do it the hard way” and file Open Records Act requests with the city. In his Jan. 16 interview, he claimed local police backed his position.

“If I’m not going to get those reports delivered to me because politics is getting in the way, I’m going to find a way to get those reports. And I’m not going to be deprived of my duty and obligation to protect the citizens of Tulsa County. And if I have to do it the hard way, I’ll do it the hard way. But I am hopeful that the city administration will direct their officers to provide me the same information as they may be providing to the federal government or to the tribes,” Kunzweiler said. “I have good reason to believe that local law enforcement is in agreement with my position. Whether it’s Oklahoma Highway Patrol or it’s Tulsa County Sheriff’s Office or even Tulsa Police Department.”

He also claimed tribal citizens are not always being “fully prosecuted” in federal or tribal court, and he echoed arguments from the O’Brien briefs about unprosecuted DUIs.

“I have my belief that very few of these crimes are being actually fully prosecuted,” Kunzweiler said. “I have enough information to suggest to me that we have people who are committing repeated DUIs and are still out on our streets. I’m not going to stand for that.” Under former Mayor GT Bynum’s administration last year, the City of Tulsa’s attorneys made a similar claim in briefs filed in the O’Brien case, which the Muscogee Nation’s attorneys described as “sounding in stereotypes about drunken Indians.”

Nichols also dismissed the claims of tribal citizens going unprosecuted for crimes committed in Tulsa.

“His position that he wants people to hear is that people aren’t getting prosecuted and everything is the Wild Wild West. That is not true. Not only is Mr. O’Brien being prosecuted in tribal court — because that is the case that is at the top of the list — we are also sitting on 400 cases and working with tribes to make sure those are also prosecuted. There is no question over who has any jurisdiction, and we make sure people are held accountable for breaking the law,” Nichols said. “I think it’s somewhat irresponsible to decide to pick enemies with the city and tribal nations. You know, I would love to partner with Mr. Kunzweiler. I think Mr. Kunzweiler is going to have to understand that being the DA does not make you the king of everything. Being the DA makes you one of the stakeholders — like being mayor or being a police chief (or) like being the leader of a tribal nation — it makes you a stakeholder in making sure this is the safest city in the country.”

DOJ suits on criminal jurisdiction loom

Kunzweiler is not the only Oklahoma district attorney to direct their office to pursue cases against tribal citizens. The U.S. Department of Justice filed a pair of lawsuits Dec. 23, against District 12 DA Matt Ballard and District 25 DA Carol Iski after both of their offices filed criminal cases against tribal citizens after the McGirt decision. The federal briefs argue the state “lacks criminal jurisdiction over Indians for conduct occurring in Indian Country” and that “continued assertion of such jurisdiction violates federal law.”

On Jan. 22, the Cherokee, Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations’ attorneys filed motions to intervene in the DOJ case against Ballard and Iski. While the chiefs of all three tribes released statements on the lawsuit, Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr.’s was the most critical.

“Since the U.S. Supreme Court’s confirmation of our reservation, the Cherokee Nation has prioritized our justice system, investing \$74 million alone last year, and working with federal, state and local law enforcement to protect victims and prosecute crimes in which we filed over 25,000 cases,” Hoskin said. “It is incredibly dangerous that these district attorneys have instead chosen to ignore the law and longstanding legal precedents by seeking to prosecute criminal cases over which they do not have jurisdiction. This is not only an attack on tribal sovereignty, but a threat to the public safety of all Oklahomans. These officials are knowingly creating legal confusion for law enforcement and hurting the integrity of the cases involved — preventing proper prosecution, risking the entire case being thrown out, and forcing victims and their families into convoluted and confusing legal scenarios. I am outraged that these officials are putting political attacks against tribes before their responsibilities to Oklahomans and to law enforcement, and I am proud that the Cherokee Nation has moved to intervene in the federal suits to resolve this matter.”

Asked about the DOJ lawsuit against Ballard and Iski attempting to block their offices from prosecuting cases exactly like the ones Kunzweiler described, the Tulsa County DA seemed unconcerned about the potential for federal intervention.

“Well, that’s under the outgoing administration,” Kunzweiler said. “This wasn’t the Northern District U.S. Attorneys Office suing Matt Ballard, and it’s not the Eastern District suing Carol Iski, those DAs. It was the Department of Justice from Washington D.C. who at the basically midnight hour brings this action. I don’t think they will be able to sustain their burden even in federal court. They are, in essence, claiming that the state has zero authority to prosecute any Indian on any Indian Country (reservation) or Indian land. I think the Court of Criminal Appeals in Oklahoma did a great amount of effort navigating exactly why the state of Oklahoma ought to be able to exercise its concurrent jurisdiction.”

While the attorney filing the cases against Ballard and Iski is based in Washington D.C., the U.S. Department of Interior Tulsa office’s field solicitor is listed as “of counsel” in both lawsuits. The DOJ has not moved to dismiss either case as of publication of this article.

On Jan. 30, the Muscogee Nation filed two lawsuits against Ballard and Iski mirroring the DOJ suits, which helped ensure some form of the litigation will continue despite potential changes in federal policy amid the administration change. On Feb. 13, the Muscogee Nation sued Tulsa County, Kunzweiler and Regalado over their detention and prosecution of tribal citizens.

FROM A9

Dispute

trials and arguments over the criminal jurisdiction for his and John Ramsey’s case, which went to the U.S. Supreme Court. Hale and Ramsey’s murder of Osage citizen Henry Roan on an Osage allotment was found to have occurred in Indian Country, and their final trial occurred under exclusive federal jurisdiction.

In a modern context, though, Kunzweiler emphasized that tribal prosecutors still possess concurrent jurisdiction to bring their own charges in addition to state charges.

“So we aren’t taking anything from the tribes, but we are restoring at least our authority in this limited area back to the way it was back in 1907,” Kunzweiler said. “And so I have asked the mayor for the city of Tulsa: I want to make sure you understand this is an interest that the state of Oklahoma is going to enforce, and if we have people who are committing crimes, the state of Oklahoma will pursue that. So I’ve encouraged the mayor to make sure that his agency, the Tulsa Police Department, will provide that referral information to my office.”

While Kunzweiler praised the value of the state and tribes having concurrent jurisdiction over tribal citizens, an undated handout allegedly distributed among Tulsa County Sheriff’s Office deputies may muddy the legal waters. The handout was included as an exhibit to an affidavit filed by Muscogee Nation Attorney General Geri Wisner in the tribe’s lawsuit against Kunzweiler. Although Kunzweiler has asked for all tribal citizen cases to be sent to his office — and while Nichols has supported sending all tribal citizen cases to tribal courts — the handout instructs Tulsa County deputies to divide where cases are sent based on the member or non-member status of the tribal defendant, which stands in line with the specific facts in the O’Brien case.

“Due to a recent Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals decision, tribal members will be charged by tribal courts only if they are a member of the tribe in which the criminal offense took place,” deputies were instructed according to the handout. “For example, if Jone Doe is a Cherokee citizen and they are north of [Admiral Street/Boulevard] and in Cherokee Nation territory, and commit a crime, they will be booked and charged in Cherokee tribal courts. If John Doe is a Creek citizen and south of Admiral or west Tulsa Co. and commits a crime he will be charged in Creek tribal court, booked into [Tulsa County’s David L. Moss Criminal Justice Center] with HOLD/Creek Nation as the charge. Any other tribal citizens will not be booked or charged into tribal courts but

“

If I’m not going to get those reports delivered to me because politics is getting in the way, I’m going to find a way to get those reports. And I’m not going to be deprived of my duty and obligation to protect the citizens of Tulsa County

Steve Kunzweiler,
Tulsa County District
Attorney

Tristan Loveless is a NonDoc Media reporter covering legal matters and other civic issues in the Tulsa area. A citizen of the Cherokee Nation who grew up in Turley and Skiatook, he graduated from the University of Tulsa College of Law in 2023. Before that, he taught for the Tulsa Debate League in Tulsa Public Schools.

CLASSIFIEDS

OKLAHOMA CLASSIFIED AD NETWORK

FOR MORE INFO CALL
1-888-815-2672

WANT TO BUY

OLD GUITARS WANTED! LARRY BRINGS CASH for vintage USA guitars, tube amps, banjos, mandolins, etc. Fender, Gibson, Martin, Gretsch, others. Call or text 918-288-2222. www.stringswest.com

OZARK OUTDOOR EXPO

CAN-AM PRESENTS... Ozark Outdoor Expo. March 21-22, Springfield, MO. Hunting, Fishing, Archery, Powersports & More. Archery Tournament. Trade Show Booths Available. Info: 620-423-2355. ozarkoutdoorexpo.com

VETERINARY CARE

IF VETERINARY CARE IS UNAVAILABLE OR UNAFFORDABLE, ASK FOR HAPPY JACK®, animal healthcare to treat yeast infections, hook & round worms. At Tractor Supply®. Distributed by K&K Vet Supply (479-361-1516)

3 DAY ONLINE AUCTION

3 DAY ONLINE AUCTION- MAR. 4-6TH. Tractors * Trucks * Trailers * Farm Equip. * Shop Equip. & Tools * Vintage Signs, Tractor Parts, & Toys * Okeene, OK * WigginsAuctioneers.com * 580.233.3066

ADVERTISE STATEWIDE

Put your message where it matters most - **IN OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPERS.** We can place your ad in 134 newspapers. For more information or to place an ad, contact Landon Cobb at (405) 499-0022 or toll-free in OK at 1-888-815-2672.

CLASSIFIEDS

ABSOLUTE AUCTION

AFTER 35 YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

SMART SIGNS

WED. FEB. 26TH AT 10:00 AM

ITEMS LOCATED AT: 905 NW 74TH ST, OKLA. CITY, OKLA.
INSPECTION: MON. FEB. 24TH & TUES. FEB. 25TH FROM 8:00 AM TO 5:00 PM AND STARTING AT 8:00 AM DAY OF AUCTION

AUCTION HELD AT: DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC.
200 NW 114TH ST, OKLA. CITY, OKLA.

(W. Side Service Rd of the Bdwy Ext. between 122nd & Hefner)

CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE AUCTION, BID LIVE ON-LINE AT WWW.DAKIL.COM

EQUIPMENT IN EXCELLENT CONDITION
Sign & Banner Equipment, Printing Equipment, Shop Equipment, 2006 Acterra 45' Boom Truck w/155,947 miles & 1,270 hrs; 2009 Jeep Wrangler 4x4 (located at 200 NW 114th St, OKC). Buyers premium will apply.
PLEASE SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILED LISTING & PICTURES

Dakil AUCTIONEERS
405-751-6179
www.dakil.com

CLASSIFIEDS

REAL ESTATE AUCTION

WED. MARCH 5TH AT 10:00 AM SHOWN BY APPT. ONLY
AUCTION HELD AT: DAKIL AUCTIONEERS, INC. 200 NW 114TH ST, OKLA. CITY, OKLA.
(W. Side Service Rd of the Bdwy Ext. between 122nd & Hefner)

DEL CITY

4645 TINKER DIAGONAL, DEL CITY: Approx. 6,642 SF Building Setting on Approx. 0.37 Acres MOL with Immediate I-40 Access, Less than 5 minutes from Tinker Air Force Base or Downtown OKC. Truly One of a Kind Building. Approx. 2,800 SF of Office/Display Space Downstairs including 3 Private Offices and Ample Storage. Upstairs is a Luxury Penthouse with 2 Bedrooms, Office and Living Area, Full Kitchen, Full Bathroom w/Soaker Tub and Separate Shower, Powder Room and 3/4 Bath. Private Secure Parking w/Greenbelt. Truly Unique Property.
4400 VFW DR, DEL CITY: Approx. 8,000 SF Masonry Commercial Building w/Asphalt Area & Greenbelt. Setting on Approx. 1.98 Acres MOL.

SHAWNEE

712 E. HIGHLAND, SHAWNEE: Auto Dealership. Approx. 1.5 Acres MOL Completely Paved with 335' Frontage on Highland. Improvements Included Approx. 13,050 SF Automotive Center which includes Approx. 5,950 SF Office Area & Approx. 7,100 SF Service Center includes Operational Paint Booth & Frame Machine. Property is zoned PUD/

3303 N. HARRISON, SHAWNEE: Approx. 4,000 SF Building. Great for Retail Space or Restaurant. Has Ample Parking and has been Recently Renovated.
3331 N. HARRISON, SHAWNEE: Approx. 4,000 SF Metal Building w/Parking, Warehouse, Etc. Fenced in Area for Storage. Location has served as a retail location for years.
3031 N. HARRISON, SHAWNEE: Approx. 2.9 Acres MOL of Raw Land. Possible Shopping Center of Housing.

GUTHRIE

221 N. 2ND ST, GUTHRIE: Approx. 30,732 SF 3-Story Building. Fully Renovated Exterior. Interior space is a blank canvas with Unlimited Possibilities for Event Center, Multi-purpose Entertainment or Church. Ample Parking with Plenty of Room for Outdoor Venues.

210 & 210 1/2 OKLAHOMA AVE, GUTHRIE: Approx. 5,200 SF Commercial/Residential Building in Historic Guthrie. Downstairs is Approx. 2,600 SF of Office/Retail Space. Upstairs is Approx. 2,600 SF Luxury Living Quarters w/Private Entrance & Private Parking. Recently Remodeled.

820 S. DIVISION ST, GUTHRIE: Approx. 5,481 SF Former Service Center Building w/Store/Office Area & 2-Overhead Doors. Setting on Approx. 1.96 Acres MOL.

TERMS: 5% down, 30 days to close. Closing cost and title insurance split 50/50. 10% Buyers premium.

Dakil REAL ESTATE 405-751-6179
www.dakil.com



The Oklahoma Eagle

People. Narratives. News.



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com



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

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

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

Place your church directory with us today! Advertising your church in *The Oklahoma Eagle* will get you results! Call (918) 582-7124

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory
 Participation in the Directory allows free church announcements and church news. Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

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.
 Church Ministries: Children's Church, CIP Praise Dancers, and CIP Praise Tem.
 Pastor Bukky and Wunmi Alabi
 For Further Information call (918) 835-1525.
 "Have Faith In God." Mark 11:22

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

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

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"

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

List Your Church Today!
The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory
 Participate in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.
 • Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
 • Priority over non-listed churches for news.

Words of Wisdom Ministries FC
 Temporarily meeting at the Courtyard Marriot 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!!!

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.

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

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"

Two service styles to meet your spiritual & community-building needs.
 2952 S. Peoria Ave. Tulsa, OK | allsoulschurch.org
ALL SOULS
 Love beyond belief
 10 am Worship & 11:30 am Humanist Hour
 allsoulschurch.org

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory
 List your church in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.
 Participation in the directory allows free church announcements/ church news.
 Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory
 Participation in the Directory allows free church announcements and church news. Post events and celebrations. Priority over non-listed churches for news.

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

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"

Mount Zion Baptist Church
 419 N Elgin Tulsa, Oklahoma
 Lerry M. Cole, Pastor
 Office: 918-584-0510
 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
 Rev. Sharyn Cosby-Willis

List Your Church Today!
The Oklahoma Eagle Church Directory
 Participate in *The Oklahoma Eagle's* weekly church directory. List in one of the largest church directories in Oklahoma.
 • Participation in the Church Directory allows free Church announcements and Church news. Post your church events and celebrations.
 • Priority over non-listed churches for news.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH NORTH TULSA
 THE CHURCH WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US
 Pastor Anthony L. & Mrs. Kelly Scott
 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
 Teaching Minds Changing Hearts Touching the World

In The Spirit Christian Church
 "Come And Experience The Spirit"
 1020 South Garnett
 Tulsa, Okla., 74128
 Phone: (918) 836-6823
 Fax: (918) 836-6833
 Eclectic Praise, Extraordinary Worship, And Spirited Preaching.
 Wednesday Services 10:00 a.m. Spirit Seniors 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.
 Ministries: Administration, Children's Church, Children's Choir, Spirited Kids, Guest Services, Intercessors, Men's Fellowship, Outreach and much more...

SMILING HEARTS
The NICK BLAKELY Foundation
 Our vision is to turn every potential tragedy of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) into a story of survival.
 www.nickblakelyfoundation.org

FEATURED

RFK Jr.: Black Kids on ADHD Drugs Should be 'Re-parented'

Unsubstantiated claims and broad generalizations

RFK, A13



FEATURED

The Road to Recovery: Altadena Families Struggle to Rebuild After Wildfires

Altadena Wildfires, A15



Adam Banks, Stanford Prof., regularly flies 5 hours, one-way, to teach an African American studies class, and build community, in Cleveland, his hometown.

PHOTO: STANFORD UNIVERSITY/ADAM BANKS

Bringing Black Studies to Black People

Black Studies
Aaron Foley
Word In Black

On weekends, Stanford University professor Adam Banks flies from the California campus to Cleveland, on a mission to teach a college-level African American studies class to the Black community — for free

A Cleveland native, Banks returns home to help the Black community establish a “third space,” a place that’s not work or home, where Black people can be themselves. The classes range from how technology has influenced the Black experience to Afrofuturism, literature and culture.

Every other weekend, give or take, Stanford University professor Dr. Adam Banks boards a jetliner for a 4-hour, 40-minute flight from the San Francisco Bay Area to Cleveland, his hometown, to teach Black history and concepts to eager students.

His topics range from the influence of digital technology on the Black experience to Afrofuturism, Black music, and literature. His classroom, though, isn’t on the campus of Cleveland State

University, Banks’ alma mater; in fact, it isn’t at any of the city’s other 19 colleges and universities.

Banks regularly commutes 5,000 miles, round-trip, to hold what he sometimes calls “digital cyphers” — free, college-level lectures and classes for the Black community, in UnBar, a Black-owned coffee shop. The sole prerequisite: support the cafe by buying an item or two.

The goal, Banks says, is to connect people in the Larchmere neighborhood to one another, and create a communal safe space.

“I hope the primary benefit is just community for its own sake,” says Banks, who teaches African American studies at Stanford. “When we’re scattered in so

Cont. A14, **Black Studies**

RFK Jr.: Black Kids on ADHD Drugs Should be Re-parented

RFK
Jennifer Porter Gore
Word In Black

Last year Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said, “every Black kid” is prescribed SSRI medications, “which are known to induce violence.”

The new Health and Human Services secretary — a vaccine skeptic with troubling views on race — will oversee a White House-directed study of medications commonly prescribed for

Cont. A14, **RFK**

Space to think and be affirmed together



FROM A13

Black Studies

many directions, and so much of our lives is mediated in the digital space, to be around the table together over time is what I hope is the primary benefit.

“And one of my value propositions, if you will, is you can think together around the same kinds of things that college students and grad students are getting at the different places where I’ve taught — for free.”

Banks has done some form of community conversation outside the classroom for more than 20 years of his teaching career, which includes stops at Syracuse University and the University of Kentucky. In the Bay Area near Stanford, Banks works with a community

I’ve always repped for home, always felt an ambassadorial function there.”

But like so many Midwestern Great Lakes cities, he says, “Cleveland’s vibrant, but Cleveland is poor. We don’t have the resources in my hometown that folks [in the Bay Area] have.”

Teaching Black studies at a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion measures are being dismantled at the federal level — and American public education at large could be overhauled — hasn’t deterred Banks from his mission.

“I’m ‘ten toes down’ on what I do and the commitments I bring to it,” he says, acknowledging President Donald Trump’s ongoing attacks. “You can’t write the First Amendment away by executive order. And I believe academic freedom is necessary and crucial.”

Blackfolks, Blackpractices, Blacktraditions,

Teaching Black studies at a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion measures are being dismantled at the federal level hasn’t deterred Banks.

space in East Palo Alto for a similar version of the free course.

Banks’ gatherings in Cleveland draw folks of all ages, and he routinely brings in special guests either in person, or virtually — which is also how attendees themselves can participate if they can’t come in person.

Coming back to Northeast Ohio, which produced Nobel Prize-winning writer Toni Morrison, legendary Olympic hero Jesse Owens, and Oscar winner Halle Berry, is especially important, Banks says. The slow eradication of “third spaces” — gathering places that aren’t at work or home — for Black people to commiserate, Banks says, is motivation for his mission.

“What a lot of people don’t know is that Cleveland is a majority Black city,” Banks says. “I was real clear that I wanted to do something both for the Bay and for home.

Black truths “are every bit as foundational to this country as any and everybody else’s: he says. “And so our traditions and practices and truths and understandings deserve inquiry, deserve exploration.”

“We’ve lost so many of the community spaces that we’ve been used to,” Banks says. “We deserve spaces to think together, to affirm each other, to support each other that are big enough for all of us no matter where we come from.”

He goes on: “I don’t care if it’s an assistant principal, somebody who works at one of those barber shops or beauty shops, somebody who just got out from doing a bid, somebody who is in grad school. No matter where we come from, we deserve space where we can think together and be affirmed together.”

How that space is created in ways that are as robust as possible and safe as possible “is my primary goal.”

For many, RFK’s rhetoric is reminiscent of a dark past

FROM A13

RFK

depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions.

It’s been a busy month for Kennedy.

Along with investigating the childhood vaccine schedule and renegeing on his promise not to purge staff at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kennedy will be overseeing a White House study of “SSRI and other psychiatric drugs” — medications commonly prescribed for people struggling with depression, anxiety or ADHD.

The latter statement is bringing attention to an alarming vision he first spoke about last July when he was running for president: government-run farms where Black youth would be “reparented” away from their families.

“Every Black kid is now just standard put on Adderall, SSRIs, benzos, which are known to induce violence,” Kennedy said on the 19Keys online show last year. “And those kids are going to have a chance to go somewhere and get re-parented — to live in a community where there’ll be no cellphones, no screens. You’ll actually have to talk to people.”

Sending Black children away to work on a “farm,” simply because they are taking prescription medication for common mental health conditions, bears haunting similarities to other instances of forced family separations in America, including slavery.

The concept, which isn’t backed by science, also raises troubling questions about how Kennedy views the intersection of race, medicine, and state power.

Kennedy’s comments “reinforce harmful racist stereotypes about Black children and communities while disregarding Black family bonds and autonomy,” says Dorothy Roberts, a University of Pennsylvania sociologist, law professor, and author.

“Black children are already disproportionately removed from their parents and placed in a foster system that exposes them to trauma and



Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and President of the United States Donald Trump speaking with attendees at an Arizona for Trump rally at Desert Diamond Arena in Glendale, Arizona. PHOTO WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

overmedication,” Roberts, author of “Torn Apart: How the Child Welfare System Destroys Black Families — and How Abolition Can Build a Safer World,” tells Word In Black. “Instead of promoting policies that devalue Black families, we should be working to keep them together and end these unjust separations.”

While Kennedy’s remarks didn’t get widespread coverage, it is yet another piece of evidence about his views on race.

During his confirmation hearing, Sen. Angela Alsobrooks, a Maryland Democrat and a Black woman, challenged Kennedy about his quoted belief that Black people should be on a different immunization schedule than whites “because their immune system is better than ours.”

Kennedy, a longtime vaccine skeptic, told her there are a “series of studies” showing that “to particular antigens, Blacks have a much stronger reaction.”

The hearing also touched on a film Kennedy produced several years ago that raised a similar issue, suggesting that vaccines could be disproportionately harming people of color. And Kennedy once posited that “African AIDS is an entirely different disease from Western

AIDS.”

A Sordid History

His views on sending Black children to farms, however, resurrect the long, sordid history of the government separating people of color from their families.

Plantation owners, for example, often sold enslaved Black people from the same families to different plantations. For decades, Native American children were hauled away from their homes and sent to government-sponsored boarding schools.

And present-day data shows the child welfare system is far more likely to terminate parental control of Black, Latino, or Native American children and place them in a foster home.

“The system’s disproportionate impact on Black and Indigenous families and people living in poverty, and the sheer number of children removed unjustly, make this a national crisis warranting immediate attention and action,” says a 2022 report from the American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch.

In her book, Roberts writes that

governments “brandish a terrifying weapon” by threatening family separation rather than addressing food insecurity and unstable housing, as well as inadequate medical and mental health care.

Surveillance of Entire Families

These tactics even include surveillance of entire families, even if only one family member runs afoul of the law or is merely accused of wrongdoing.

Such was the case with a supervision order that allowed New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services to surveil a family in cases when one parent had been accused of a crime. The orders had allowed ACS to repeatedly search parents’ homes unannounced, and in some cases, children were strip-searched.

“For too long, Children’s Services has violated families’ rights in the name of protecting children when its illegal surveillance and home intrusions are actually quite harmful to the children the city is supposed to serve,” said Christine Gottlieb, director of the NYU Law Family Defense Clinic. Last week, a new appellate ruling in response to a class action suit stated ACS must end this practice.

“We do not allow routine violations of the constitutional rights of families who live in more privileged neighborhoods, and we should not have a different system of justice for the low-income families of color who are policed by ACS,” Gottlieb said in a statement.

Ironically, Kennedy’s suggestions would be a departure from a bill Donald Trump signed in his previous term as president.

The 2018 law is intended to provide services to help prevent children from being placed in foster care. The law allows for federal reimbursement for mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training.

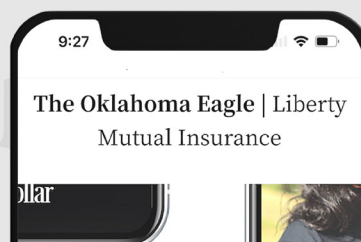
This post has been updated with video of RFK, Jr.’s comments on the 19Keys show.

Jennifer Porter Gore is a writer living in the Washington, D.C., area.

The Oklahoma Eagle

Our Mission

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



The Road to Recovery: Altadena Families Struggle to Rebuild After Devastating Wildfires



PHOTO: ADOBE IMAGES

Altadena Wildfires

Megan Sayles
Word In Black

SHAI MCCALL AND HER FAMILY LOST THEIR HOME IN THE DEVASTATING EATON WILDFIRE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. HERE'S HOW THEY'RE REBUILDING

On Jan. 7, the day the Eaton fire began to blaze in Southern California, 42-year-old Shai McCall did not think much of it at first. She's lived in her family's Altadena home all of her life, and it's not unusual to see fires burning in the San Gabriel Mountains.

"We've had several wildfires, but they've never come down," said McCall. "You pack a bag for one day and put some clothes in it. Then you come home. Nothing major."

She wishes she took it more seriously this time.

The Eaton fire obliterated more than 9,000 structures and damaged nearly 1,100 others. One of those structures was McCall's family home where she lived with her aging parents, younger sister and nieces. All that's left are the remains of a front porch, entryway and chimney.

The neighbor to the right of her has a chimney and a mailbox. The neighbor to the left has nothing.

"Every day, it's 'don't cry,'" said McCall. "That's the goal, just don't cry."

McCall discovered her home was lost after being sent a video from another neighbor who attempted to put the fire out with a hose. Unfortunately, no water came out.

"In the four-minute video, you hear at the end, 'I'm so sorry we couldn't save your home,'" said McCall. "To this day, I haven't had the courage to show my parents the video, which shows the home that they raised their kids in burning down from beginning to end."

McCall can't remember who first informed her parents that their home was decimated by the fires, but she does recall their reactions. They were staying at her brother's house in West Covina.

"You could just hear the awkward silence until my mother screamed. My dad took her outside to talk with her," said McCall. "I just sat there for a second. It felt like a bad dream that you can't wake up from."

When Shai McCall and her family evacuated

“

Appreciate life every day. Don't take for granted that you wake up in your own home because in the blink of an eye it can all be gone.

Shai McCall, Altadena, California resident who lost her family's home during the Eaton wildfire.

on Jan. 7, her 64-year-old father left with two outfits and her 74-year-old mother left with three. Her mother also made sure to grab the deed to the house, birth certificates and social security cards. Fortunately, her younger sister and nieces were not at the home at the time of the wildfires.

Everything else was lost. McCall had started school the day before the fires started. The thousands of dollars she spent on textbooks and a new laptop was wasted.

"You have to smile and fight tears every day," said McCall. "I tell people I have a father who happened to have insurance on the home and he's handling the business aspects, but I also have a mother who has 44 years worth of memories and is questioning whether she has another 44 years left. Every day she wakes up in tears and cries on the bathroom floor for hours."

McCall recounted the fateful night while standing in line for resources. Some days she spends upwards of six hours waiting for clothing, toiletries and gift cards to buy groceries. She's started a GoFundMe to help them in their pursuit of starting over.

"It doesn't matter the amount, just try to help as many people as you can," said McCall. "Appreciate life every day. Don't take for granted that you wake up in your own home because in the blink of an eye it can all be gone."

Husband and wife Ibarionex and Cynthia Perello's Altadena home also perished as a result of the wildfires.

"Our home wasn't just a structure. It was a place of peace, love, forgiveness, celebration and a testament to years of hard work, dedication and resilience," said Cynthia Perello. "The heartbreak of seeing it reduced to ashes is a crisis no one should ever have to endure."

Like McCall and so many others, Cynthia Perello said it was pretty standard to see fires burning nearby. But, when she and her husband noticed the high winds blowing embers and smoke in their direction, they knew they needed to evacuate.

In the face of a power outage, the Perellos used their phone flashlights to gather essential items, like medications, a hard drive and the ashes of a deceased family member. They fled their home in pajamas with their dog, Gracie, in tow.

Ibarionex Perello, an award-winning photographer and podcast host, lost all of the gear he uses to earn a living.

"We have lost everything, including his

podcasting and photography equipment," said Cynthia Perello. "We are starting from scratch. There is a long road ahead of us to recovery."

The Perellos have also started a GoFundMe to help re-establish their lives.

"Your support will assist us to address the many aspects of recovery and support our family needs regarding this crisis," said Cynthia Perello. "Any support you can provide to help Ibarionex and I rebuild our lives would be greatly appreciated."

Aside from individual fundraisers, the California Black Freedom Fund, led by Marc Philpart, has launched the Black LA Relief and Recovery Fund to support African-American communities in Pasadena and Altadena on their path of restoring normalcy. The fund is being run in collaboration with the California Community Foundation.

Philpart explained that it's critical to support Black families at this time, as communities of color tend to experience longer recovery times after disasters. Some studies have even suggested that Black disaster survivors receive less Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) relief than their white counterparts.

"There's inequity throughout the relief and recovery process both in terms of who gets FEMA dollars and who ends up better off after a crisis like this," said Philpart. "We wanted to shine a spotlight on those inequities and resource Black community organizations to address those gaps."

So far, the Black LA Relief and Recovery Fund has raised over \$3.5 million, which will be distributed to service delivery organizations in Black communities, like churches, senior centers and case management entities.

Philpart recalled that in the 1980s Altadena was 45 percent African American. Just before the wildfires, the share of Black residents was about 20 percent.

"There's very little economic opportunity for Black folks in California these days. Many people are moving away and are unable to make a living the same way their grandparents may have," said Philpart. "We know that it will only be worse as a result of this crisis and we want to stave that off as much as we can. We want Black people to feel like they have a right to return, and we want them to be welcomed to return in a way that allows them to rebuild in bigger and better ways."

The post The road to recovery: Altadena families struggle to rebuild after devastating wildfires appeared first on AFRO American Newspapers.

Megan Sayles is a business reporter for The Baltimore Afro-American paper. Before this, Sayles interned with Baltimore Magazine, where she wrote feature stories about the city's residents, nonprofits and initiatives. Her love of music inspired her to be a writer.



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com

The Oklahoma Eagle



(LEFT) **Marshall Taubert**, Danzy Design Studio founder and fashion designer, will collaborate with Abercrombie & Fitch Co. to sell the designer's collection, Danzy Estates, to the major retailer's customers.



Former Tulsan Announces Collaboration With Major Clothing Retailer

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

Taubert Has Partnered With Abercrombie & Fitch

A leading retailer has selected former Tulsan Marshall Taubert and Danzy Design Studio as a guest designer. He will showcase his fashion collection in the major outlet's stores and online.

Fashion designer Taubert announced that Abercrombie & Fitch Co., an American-based lifestyle retailer, is in partnership with him and his fashion house to share his creative designs with its global customers.

The fashion designer will be participating in an A&F initiative. A&F is offering Vol. 28: Amplifying Black Excellence, a platform for designers of African and African American descent. On its website, the leading global specialty retailer of apparel and accessories for men, women, and kids, said, "Vol. 28 (introduces) a recurring collection designed to amplify Black voices and culture beyond Black History Month – because the 28 days of February are not enough." (For more information, see A&F Vol. 28: Amplifying Black Excellence)

Danzy Design Studio was selected from among other candidates competing to display their clothing designs in larger markets with A&F. Danzy Estates is the brand's name from Taubert.

"Danzy Estates is a thriving, creative community known for its preppy, sporty yet classy aesthetic – a perfect fit for Abercrombie

& Fitch," said Taubert.

He said his parents, Clifton and Barbara Taubert of Tulsa, inspired his clothing collection. He also believes the city's spirit of Black Wall Street greatly influenced him.

He believes the spirit of Black Wall Street has helped him in his "entrepreneurial journey."

He adds that one of his first jobs was working at an A&F store as a teenager.

"I never dreamed in (my) wildest dreams, while folding polos, t-shirts, and denim, that (my) future would be unfolding right in front of (me)," said Taubert. "Only this time, I would not be a sales associate but a bonafide partner."

Taubert worked with RAISEfashion to initiate the introduction to A&F. RAISEfashion, a non-profit organization, is dedicated to offering pro-bono advisory services for emerging BIPOC designers and students interested in pursuing a career in the fashion industry. (See <https://raisefashionnow.org/> for more information.)

For more information, visit <https://danzyus.com/>.



Chef Jason "JV" Vaughan is the TV set chef and caterer for Food Network's "The Pioneer Woman," starring Ree Drummond. PHOTOS PROVIDED

Vaughan Receives Honors From National Fraternity Chapter

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

Chef Jason "JV" Vaughan, a recognized local chef de cuisine, has added another accomplishment to his list of achievements.

Vaughan was honored by his fraternity, Sigma Nu, which dedicated his name to the Epsilon Beta chapter house kitchen at Drury University in Springfield, Mo. He was the first Black initiate in 1992, during the fraternity's then-73-year history as a university chapter.

The kitchen's official name will be the "JV's Mess Hall - Chef Jason Kendrick Vaughan."

He said the honor is "overwhelming."

He said his interest in food preparation began after his athletic career ended with a knee injury.

"I became a full-time student. My first jobs were working in local restaurants," said Vaughan

While a student at Drury, he decided to attend a local trade and culinary school. He enrolled for two years, and this was the beginning of his pursuit of a new interest.

Even with his many catering responsibilities after 30 years, he is still the informal chapter advisor to the fraternity members today.

Vaughan is an accomplished executive chef. His experiences include launching and managing restaurants, clubs, and bars; participating in 21 new restaurant openings; and appearing in 20 television productions. His clientele consists of athletes, celebrities, artists, musicians, and models.

He is also the set chef and caterer for the Food Network's "The Pioneer Woman," which features Ree Drummond.

For catering information, contact Chef Jason "JV" Vaughan at his email address, chefjvok@yahoo.com, or Instagram, [chefjvok](https://www.instagram.com/chefjvok).

Events

Feb. 21 - 23

St. Monica Catholic Church and the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma are hosting "The Church in Black and White: Creating the Beloved Catholic Community." The program includes the following: Feb. 21, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. - Meet and Greet at St. Monica Catholic Church, 633 E. Marshall Pl.; Feb. 22, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. - Workshop at Rudisill Regional Library, 1502 N. Harford Ave.; and Feb. 23, 10 a.m. - Unity Mass at St. Monica. A continental breakfast and lunch will be offered during the workshop. For more information and registration, visit conference registration or contact Fr. Celestine Obidegwu at okekey1970@yahoo.com.

Feb. 22

2025 Black Futures Hackathon: Coding the Future, Honoring Past program will be hosted by Atlas School, 15 N. Cheyenne Ave., 9 a.m. - 8 p.m. The all-day event will invite middle and high school students to learn the fundamentals of web development during Black History Month. For more information, contact [Urban Coders Guild](https://www.urbandcodersguild.com).

Feb. 24

2025 Contracting Accelerator Four-Week Training Course will provide individuals and their businesses with information covering the topic of contracting. The facilitator will be Kathy E. Porter with Porter Brown Associates. The virtual program is sponsored by at the Greenwood Women's Business Center, 102 N. Greenwood Ave., 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. To register, send an email to info@greenwoodwbc.org. For more information, call (539) 867-4127 or see www.greenwood-wbc.org.

Feb. 25

Chase Money Skills is hosting a "Money Moves: Budget, Save and Build Credit Workshop (Hybrid)" workshop at Chase Bank, 6140 S. Lewis Ave., 12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. The free program will provide hands-on tools on how to budget smarter, save better, and build strong credit. Small Business Consultant Carla Thomas will be the presenter. RSVP by Feb. 25. The event will also be available on Zoom (Webinar ID: 381 521 0337, Password: 2025918). For more information, visit events.chase.com/300056751.

Feb. 27

Chase Money Skills is hosting a "Small Business: Power of Capital" workshop at Chase Bank, 6140 S. Lewis Ave., 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. The free program will provide practical insights on funding, financial planning, and leveraging capital to fuel your business growth. Small Business Consultant Carla Thomas will be the presenter. RSVP by Feb. 27. For more information, visit events.chase.com/300056386.



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE
People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeyagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com

Events

Feb. 28

"Harlem Nights" film and event will be held at Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave. A costume party will begin at 6 p.m., and the film will begin at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.circlecinema.org.

Mar. 22

The Dance Affair and Fashion Show will be held at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave. The fashion show will begin at 7:30 a.m., and the dance will be from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. DJ Silky Soul will provide the music. The semi-formal events are BYOL and BYOF. MVP Dance Productions is hosting the program. For more information, contact Howard Barnes at (918) 951-5466 or Sheila Herbert at (918) 946-6697.

Mar. 28

"Sister Act - The Musical" will be performed by the Theatre Department at Booker T. Washington High School, 1514 E. Zion St. The scheduled performances are March 28, 7 p.m.; March 28, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and March 30, 4 p.m. Majeste Pearson is the music director. For more information, see [Sister Act - The Musical](http://SisterAct-TheMusical).

Mar. 29

The Links, Incorporated is sponsoring Black Family Wellness Expo at Tulsa Community College, Northeast campus, 3727 E. Apache St., 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. The program is a part of the organization's National Impact Day of Service. For more information, contact tulsalinksbfwe@gmail.com or (918) 852-7456.

Apr. 3

Booker T. Washington High School Distinguished Hall of Fame Foundation Ceremony and Scholarship Dinner will be held at 6 p.m. at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave. Honorees include Inez Black, Kevin Lockett, Nicole Lynn, Sabrina Goodwin-Monday, Bill Nelson, J. Kavin Ross, M. Reginald "Ice" Terry, and Pastor LeRon G. West. The guest speaker will be Milliard House II, superintendent of Prince George's County Public Schools. For more information, contact tulsabtw.hof@gmail.com.

Apr. 16

Travis Guillory - Senior Concert at the Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 N. Greenwood Ave., 6:30 p.m.

Apr. 17

Greenwood Cultural Center is presenting its Legacy Award Dinner. Nate Burleson of "CBS Mornings," "The NFL Today," and host of "Hollywood Squares" will be the Legacy Award honoree. For more information, call (918) 596-1020 or visit www.greenwoodculturalcenter.org.

Apr. 30

2025 Women's Leadership Summit will be held at the River Spirit Casino Resort, 8330 Riverside Pkwy. According to the organizers, the full-day program will be dedicated to empowering, elevating, and celebrating women leaders. The program theme will be "Courageous Leaders Driving Impact." The full-day summit For more information, contact <https://leadershiptulsa.org/womensleadershipsummit/>.

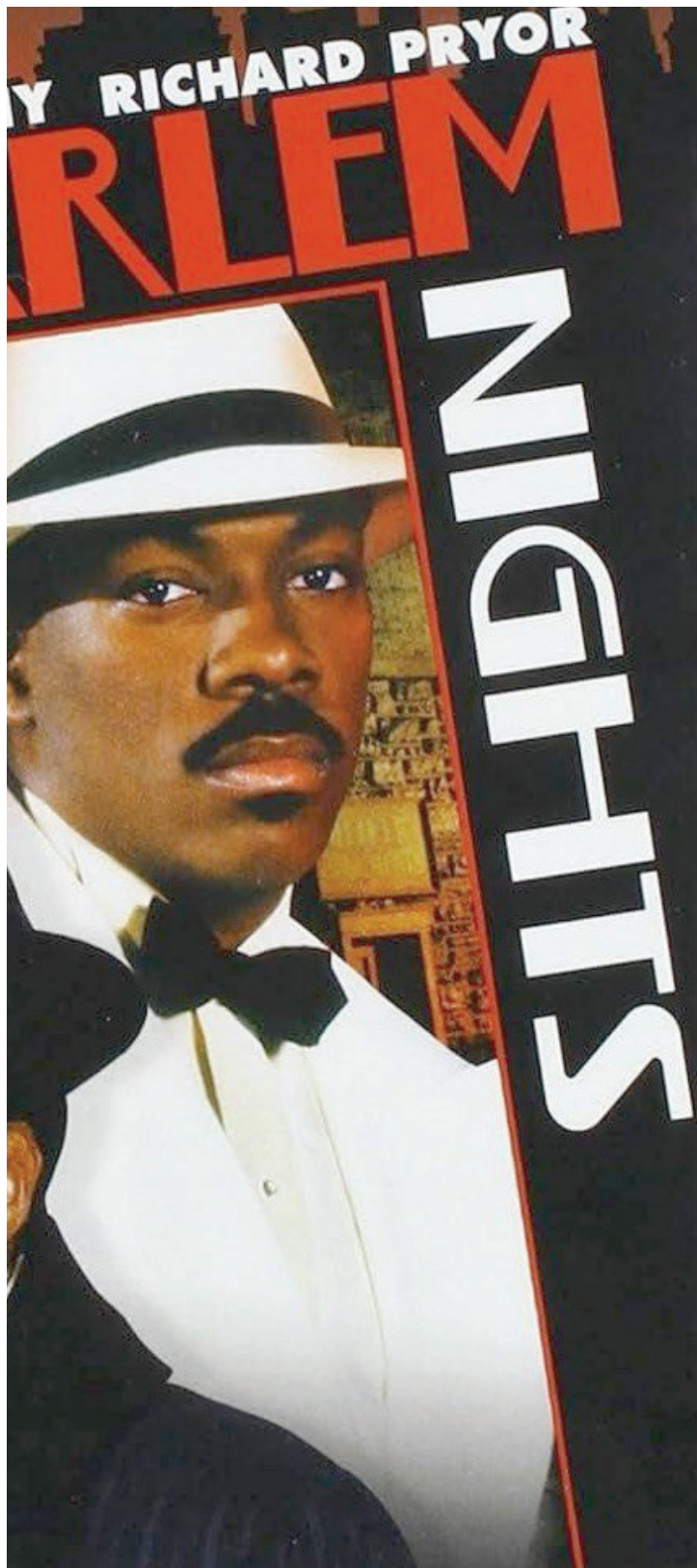


PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Tamecca Rogers (r), a member of the Black Film Council, is dressed for the upcoming "Harlem Nights" film and event at Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave., on Feb. 28

Circle Cinema Black Film Council To Present 'Harlem Nights' Film And Costume Event, Feb. 28

DR. JERRY GOODWIN
The Oklahoma Eagle

Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis Ave., will host a "Harlem Nights" film and costume event program on Feb. 28. A period-dressing party will be held at 6 p.m., and a screening will begin at 7:30 p.m. The program is sponsored by the Black Film Council.

Guests are encouraged to dress in 1920s period costumes for a party and screening of the 1989 comedy-drama "Harlem Nights," featuring a star-studded cast with Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor, Redd Foxx, and Della Reese.

The costume party will be held in the theater's lobby and feature trivia team contests based on the film's dialog, characters,

and background.

Hank Byrd and Dr. Tamecca Rogers, both known for their filmmaking and film education backgrounds in Tulsa, will serve as emcees for the evening.

"Harlem Nights" is a classic film starring Murphy, Pryor, Foxx, and Reese. Set in New York City in the 1930s, it tells the story of an illegal gambling house owner and his associates who must deal with strong competition, gangsters, and corrupt cops to stay in business.

The Circle Cinema's Black Film Council is dedicated to empowering Black filmmakers, artists, and storytellers by fostering creativity, collaboration, and equitable representation in the film and media industries. The organization strives to amplify Black voices,

preserve the rich legacy of Black cinema, and advocate for access, inclusion, and diversity in all aspects of storytelling and film. Through education, mentorship, and community engagement, the group inspires the next generation of creators and ensures that Black stories are told authentically, unapologetically, and with lasting impact.

Light refreshments will be available, and a cash bar will feature 1920s-themed drinks. Local DJ Omaley B will provide entertainment during the evening.

Admission to the movie and participation in the trivia contest will be charged. The trivia contest will be limited to six teams of five participants each.

To purchase tickets or for more information, visit www.circlecinema.org.



THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

People. Narratives. News.

Get 52 weeks for only \$1 per week

Visit theokeagle.com/subscribe-advertise

The Oklahoma Eagle

www.theokeagle.com

WICKED IS FLYING BACK TO TULSA



See it LIVE.
Remember it FOREVER.

WICKED

May 28 – Jun 15

TULSA PERFORMING
ARTS CENTER

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

CelebrityAttractions.com