

PERSPECTIVE

June 14, 2024



OKFB YF&R hosts twenty high school students for annual Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference

Twenty high school seniors from across the state recently participated in Oklahoma Farm Bureau’s Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference May 28-31 in Oklahoma City.

OYLA is a four-day annual event hosted by the OKFB Young Farmers & Ranchers to prepare high school students for a future career in agriculture and to advance their leadership skills.

The 20 students who attended were Bridger Arrington, Mullhall; Brance Barnett, Dill City; Bailey Beggs, Foss; Paisley Beshear, Cameron; Kaylee Blagden, Mulhall; Sydney Coleman, Checotah; Coy Davidson, Lawton; LeAundre Delonia, Okmulgee; Amos Grimes, Meeker; Kalen Groves, Beggs; Jocelyn James, Ada; Kaylee Junghanns, Medford; Haley Kretchmar, Purcell;

Heath Laubach, Woodward; Wesley Lester, Muskogee; Lynlee McCurry, Locust Grove; Tobie Mitchell, Marlow; Addyson Schneberger, Carnegie; Allison Tillinghast, Collinsville; and Paisley White, Fairview.

Throughout the week, the group had the opportunity to tour local agricultural enterprises including Lopez Foods, Whitmore Farms, the Oklahoma City Zoo, the Oklahoma State University Student Farm and the Robert M. Kerr Food and Agricultural Products Center. Students also volunteered at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, learned about agricultural policy and how bills get placed into law, and discovered how to share agriculture with their communities with the Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom program.

“What I’ve enjoyed most is being

around kids that have the same interests as I do and enjoy being around the agriculture industry, but who are also leaders in their communities and chapters,” said Addyson Schneberger, OYLA participant.

OKFB President Rodd Moesel visited with students about Farm Bureau’s policy work for rural Oklahoma and agriculture.

Participants of the conference were selected through an application process. The students selected represent some of Oklahoma’s most promising high school agriculturalists.

The students attending the conference plan to pursue a wide variety of agricultural degrees after high school, including agribusiness, agricultural communications, animal science and plant and soil sciences.

Four new staff members join OKFB

Oklahoma Farm Bureau recently welcomed four new employees to the organization: Mickinzi Ferguson and Kate Jackson in communications and public relations, and Sidany Hilburn and Sadie Heap in economic development.

Mickinzi Ferguson

Ferguson joined OKFB as communications specialist in late May. In her role, Ferguson will help share the Farm Bureau and Oklahoma agriculture story by creating social media content, managing the website, generating photography and video assets, producing written content and providing support for other communications projects.

“Coming from a family deeply rooted in agriculture for generations and the Farm Bureau organization, I am grateful to share the stories of our farmers, ranchers, and producers in the state of Oklahoma,” Ferguson said. “I look forward to learning more about Oklahoma agriculture and meeting OKFB members around the state.”

Originally from Walkersville, MD, Ferguson was raised on her family’s farm where she raised and exhibited show pigs. She graduated from Oklahoma State University in May with dual degrees in agricultural communications and animal science.

Kate Jackson

Jackson has joined OKFB as the organization’s publications specialist. In her role, she will produce the organization’s *Perspective Newsletter* and quarterly *Oklahoma Country* magazine. She will also create a variety of communications products for OKFB including written articles, photography, video assets and design projects.

Jackson is from Mountain View, OK, where she grew up on her family’s farm. She recently graduated from OSU with a degree in agricultural communications. Jackson’s family has been heavily involved in the OKFB organization at numerous levels.

“Growing up on a farm in rural Oklahoma gave me my passion for agriculture and a passion to tell agriculture’s story,” Jackson said. “I am excited to join Oklahoma Farm Bureau, which is a dream come true for me.”

Sidany Hilburn

Hilburn joined OKFB as a community information and engagement specialist working with OKFB’s Oklahoma Grassroots Rural and Ag Business Accelerators program.

A native of Quapaw, she grew up on a cow/calf operation. Hilburn most recently served as a graduate research assistant at Oklahoma State University in the agricultural economics department. She earned her master’s degree in agricultural economics from OSU and also holds a bachelor’s degree from OSU and an associate degree from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in Miami.

“When I was young, I realized I was not going to ‘make a hand,’” Hilburn said. “Nevertheless, I have always felt strongly committed to the agricultural industry. I feel so blessed that my position at Oklahoma Farm Bureau will allow me the opportunity to honor that commitment and support farmers, ranchers, and the rural communities that sustain them.”

Sadie Heap

Heap also joined OKFB as a community information and engagement specialist, starting her career with OKFB in mid-May. She will focus on OKFB’s rural development efforts in the western part of the state.

Heap grew up on a family farm and ranch near the southwestern Oklahoma town of Frederick and is a recent graduate of OSU where she earned her bachelor’s degree in ag business in addition to her associate degree from Redlands Community College in El Reno. While at OSU, Heap worked as a student tech at the university’s fire service training in the hazardous materials and rescue program.

“The most exciting part about my position is working with and learning from entrepreneurs in the state of Oklahoma,” Heap said. “The work that Oklahoma Farm Bureau does with these leaders is very important not only for the advancement of our state, but also for our country as a whole. I am extremely excited to be involved in this work and look forward to meeting new people across Oklahoma.”



OKFB Ag PAC endorses congressional, state candidates ahead of June primary

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag PAC political action committee has endorsed five congressional candidates and 30 state candidates ahead of Oklahoma's primary election on Tuesday, June 18.

The state Ag PAC board – a group of Farm Bureau members selected by their respective OKFB districts – met in late May to discuss candidates based on feedback gathered from county and districtwide PAC meetings throughout the month of May.

The Ag PAC board will meet after the June primary election and again after the primary runoff on Aug. 27 to discuss additional candidate support before the general election on Nov. 5.

The OKFB Ag PAC is OKFB's political action committee that supports candidates seeking public office in Oklahoma who understand agriculture and the importance of rural Oklahoma.

The Ag PAC is a grassroots committee formed of OKFB members from around the state. Input is gathered from county Farm Bureau representatives, and the OKFB Ag PAC board decides endorsements based on this local, grassroots input.

The PAC has endorsed the candidates below for federal, statewide and state legislative races.

Candidates endorsed by the OKFB Ag PAC ahead of the June 18 primary:

Oklahoma Senate

Blake "Cowboy" Stephens – Senate District 3

Greg McCortney – Senate District 13

Jeff Boatman – Senate District 25

Casey Murdock – Senate District 27

Julie Daniels – Senate District 29

Jessica Garvin – Senate District 43

Oklahoma House of Representatives

Eddy Dempsey – House District 1

Bob Ed Culver – House District 4

Judd Strom – House District 10

Tim Turner – House District 15

Dell Kerbs – House District 26

Kevin Wallace – House District 32

John Talley – House District 33

John Pfeiffer – House District 38

Jay Steagall – House District 43

Matt Watson – House District 45

Tammy Townley – House District 48

Carl Newton – House District 58

Daniel Pae – House District 62

Trey Caldwell – House District 63

Rande Worthen – House District 64

Toni Hasenbeck – House District 65

Eric Roberts – House District 83

Tammy West – House District 84

David Hardin – House District 86

Matt Echols – House District 90

Chris Kannady – House District 91

Preston Stinson – House District 96

Robert Manger – House District 101

Statewide

Brian Bingman – Oklahoma Corporation Commission

United States Congress

Kevin Hern – U.S. House District 1

Josh Brecheen – U.S. House District 2

Frank Lucas – U.S. House District 3

Tom Cole – U.S. House District 4

Stephanie Bice – U.S. House District 5



2024 legislative session concludes with poultry win, initiative petition reform

Thursday, May 30, marked the end of the 2024 Oklahoma legislative session as state lawmakers adjourned sine die in Oklahoma City.

Several bills remain on the governor's desk as they await a final signature or veto, but one bill that has received a signature comes as a big win for Oklahoma Farm Bureau members.

SB 1424 by Sen. Brent Howard and Rep. John Pfeiffer crossed the finish line just before session ended. The bill protects poultry growers who are following a state-approved nutrient management plan from unnecessary litigation. Gov. Kevin Stitt signed SB 1424 into law on Friday, May 31.

The measure was a hard-fought victory for poultry growers and agriculturalists alike, and OKFB is proud to have had a seat at the table in conversations throughout the legislative session as the bill worked its way through the legislature.

Another notable piece of legislation that passed in late May was HB 1105 by House Speaker Charles McCall and Sen. Julie Daniels. HB 1105 increases the window of time to file objections to an initiative petition from 10 to 90 days.

Initiative petition reform in the state of Oklahoma has long been a priority issue for Farm Bureau members, making HB 1105 a welcome refinement to a complex process.

Although official business has come to a close at the state Capitol, the governor has a few days left to sign or veto the handful of bills left on his desk. OKFB will provide a full breakdown and wrap-up of all tracked legislation in the coming weeks.



Disclaimer: Paid for by the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag PAC (2501 N. Stiles Ave. Oklahoma City, OK 73105) and not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

**PUBLISHED BY
OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU**

Postmaster:

Send address corrections to:

Perspective
P.O. Box 53332,
Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3332

STAFF DIRECTORY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thad Doye
(405) 523-2438

**VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Dustin Mielke
(405) 530-2640

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF MEDIA RELATIONS
AND ADVOCACY COMMUNICATIONS**

Rachel Havens
(405) 523-2346

PUBLICATIONS SPECIALIST

Kate Jackson
(405) 523-22527

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Mickinzi Ferguson
(405) 523-2343

Oklahoma Farm Bureau
2501 N. Stiles
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3126

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 131
Okla. City, OK.

Two OKFB members reappointed to State Board of Agriculture by Gov. Stitt

The Oklahoma State Senate approved and confirmed the reappointment of Brent Bolen and Clay Burtrum as members of the State Board of Agriculture Wednesday, May 29.

Bolen and Burtrum have served on the State Board of Agriculture since 2020 following an appointment by Gov. Kevin Stitt and confirmation by the Oklahoma Senate.

They will each serve a new four-year term on the board.

"I'm very glad to know Brent Bolen and Clay Burtrum are set to serve another term on the State Board of Agriculture," said Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur. "These gentlemen have represented the state exceptionally well and have brought a valuable perspective to the board. I look forward to continuing our work to strengthen Oklahoma agriculture."

Bolen, who resides in Idabel and

a McCurtain County Farm Bureau member, represents southeast Oklahoma. He and his family are chicken, cattle and hay producers in McCurtain County. Bolen is a strong advocate for Oklahoma producers and has served on the Oklahoma Agriculture Advisory Committee, Vice President of the McCurtain County Farm Bureau, and president of the Idabel School Board.

"It has definitely been an honor and a privilege to serve the agricultural industry in this capacity for the past four years thanks to Gov. Kevin Stitt and Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur," Bolen said. "Serving as a board member has certainly opened my eyes to the inner workings of the agency and I'm constantly impressed by the staff's dedication and commitment to agriculture. I'll do my absolute best to continue to represent agriculture from my unique vantage point."

Burtrum, a Payne County Farm Bureau member, represents northeast Oklahoma and operates a cow/calf and beef stocker operation in Payne and Pawnee counties. He also co-owns a managerial accounting firm serving the needs of farmers, ranchers, and rural businesses. Burtrum has served as chairman of the Oklahoma Beef Council and has been a district director of the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association.

"I'm very passionate about all things agriculture and do my best to advocate for the industry," Burtrum said. "It's an honor and a privilege to continue to serve the northeast area of Oklahoma on the State Board of Agriculture."

The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry is governed by the State Board of Agriculture. The Board consists of five members appointed by the Governor with approval of the Oklahoma Senate.