

Legislative News Update

Week of November 20

GOVERNOR-ELECT UPDATE

Governor-Elect Mazzei Announces Lindel Fields as Chief of Staff

Governor-Elect Mike Mazzei named State Superintendent Lindel Fields as his incoming Chief of Staff. Fields will help lead the administration's priorities, including education reform, economic growth, tax relief and fiscal accountability.

- **Press Release:** Governor-Elect Mazzei Announces Lindel Fields as Chief of Staff
- **Oklahoma Voice:** Former Oklahoma legislator, teacher to serve as Education Department chief of staff
- **Senate Press Release:** Senate Democratic Leader Kirt comments on Mazzei's chief of staff pick, Lindel Fields

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Governor-Elect Mazzei Names Statewide Literacy Director and Education Transition Team

Mazzei announced Dr. Rebecca Pellam as Statewide Literacy Director and named members of his education transition team. The appointments support his

administration's priority of improving literacy and student achievement through reforms modeled after Mississippi's education initiatives.

- **Press Release:** Governor-Elect Mazzei Names Statewide Literacy Director & Ed Transition Team
- **Quorum Call:** Mazzei names Fields chief of staff, Pellam statewide literacy director
- **nondoc.com:** 'A clear message': Mazzei naming Lindel Fields chief of staff, Rebecca Pellam literacy director
- **Oklahoman:** Controversial appointments could signal where Mazzei is headed on education

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Mazzei Names Chief Operating Officer and Economic Development Transition Team

Gov.-elect Mike Mazzei announced that John Budd, currently CEO of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, will return as the state's chief operating officer, a position he previously held from 2019 to 2021.

Mazzei also named former Senate President Pro Tempore Mike Schulz as chair of the agriculture working group and former Sen. Gary Stanislawski as chair of the jobs and commerce working group. The groups will focus on property rights, agriculture, tax reform, economic development and job creation.

Additional economic development transition team members include Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton; Holly Gerard, Ascend Action; Alex Gray, American Global Strategies; Chad Mariska, Mariska Family Holdings; Christy Rawlings, Primes-Group; and Roger Ramseyer, Oklahoma Spectrum.

- **Press Release:** Governor-Elect Mazzei Announces Economic Development Transition Team, COO
- **Oklahoman:** Mazzei names economic transition team, includes Stitt's former COO

Oklahoma's governor-elect plans to celebrate with 3 inaugural balls

Gov.-elect Mike Mazzei on Thursday announced that he will hold three separate inaugural balls in January to celebrate the start of his first term. **Read more.**

OKLAHOMA STATE SENATE UPDATE

Senate Republicans Name Caucus Leadership Positions

Senate Republicans selected Sen. Dave Rader as Caucus Chairman, Sen. John Haste as Vice Chairman and Sen. Warren Hamilton as Majority Whip. Committee leadership and assignments will be announced at a later date.

- **Senate Press Release:** Senate Republicans Name Caucus Leadership Positions

Senate Leaders Welcome New, Returning Senators During Swearing-In Ceremony

The Oklahoma Senate held its ceremonial swearing-in for seven newly elected Republican senators and 18 returning members. Their terms officially began November 18, ahead of the 61st Legislature convening in February.

- **Senate Press Release:** Senate Welcomes New, Returning Senators During Swearing-In Ceremony
- **Quorum Call:** Senate swears in new, reelected members
- **Oklahoma Voice:** Newly elected Oklahoma senators take oath of office ahead of start of Senate term

OKLAHOMA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UPDATE

House Republicans Elect New Caucus Leadership for 61st Legislature

House Republicans selected their leadership team, retaining Kyle Hilbert as Speaker and Anthony Moore as Speaker Pro Tempore. Reps. Denise Crosswhite Hader, Neil Hays and Jonathan Wilk were elected to additional caucus leadership positions. Republicans maintain a 75-member supermajority.

- **Quorum Call:** House Republicans announce 61st Legislature leaders
- **Oklahoma Voice:** Republicans nominate familiar face to serve as Oklahoma House speaker
- **House Press Release:** Dobrinski Takes Majority Whip Position in House
- **Quorum Call:** Dobrinski named House Majority Whip

House Democratic Caucus Announces Leadership Team for 61st Legislature

House Democrats announced their leadership team for the upcoming session, with Rep. Melissa Provenzano continuing as Caucus Leader. Rep. Trish Ranson will serve as Assistant Leader, Rep. Jared Deck as Caucus Chair and Rep. Ellyn Hefner as Vice Chair, along with four additional leadership positions.

- **House Press Release:** House Democratic Caucus Leadership Team for First Regular Session of the 61st Legislature
- **Quorum Call:** House Dems announce leadership team ahead of 2027 session

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House Members Take Oaths of Office

Oklahoma House members were sworn in November 17, including members of the incoming freshman class. The 61st Legislature will consist of 75 Republicans and 26 Democrats, including 25 freshman legislators. The House will convene for

Organizational Day on January 5, followed by the start of the legislative session on February 1, 2027.

- **House Press Release:** House Members Take Oaths of Office
- **Quorum Call:** New, reelected members sworn into House including two returning members
- **Oklahoma Voice:** Oklahoma House members take oath of office ahead of next legislative session

Official State Press Releases

- **Nov. 17:** Senators Thompson, Murdock Celebrate Investment in Oklahoma's Ag Industry
- **Nov. 18:** Thompson Files Bill to Remove Harmful Food Additives from Oklahoma Schools and State Facilities
- **Nov. 19:** Hardin Responds to Court's Rejection of Poultry Settlement
- **Nov. 19:** Gann Files Plan to Put House Members Back in Charge of the House

New faces, same supermajority. A look ahead into Oklahoma's Republican legislature

Newly elected state lawmakers were sworn in this week, and while the Oklahoma legislature remains solidly Republican-dominated, the majority party heads into lawmaking season with some unresolved tensions. Read more.

Increased benefit allowance costs to be considered by budget writers

Legislative budget writers are considering whether they will propose providing supplemental funding for the current fiscal year and additional funding next fiscal year to state agencies to cover the increase in health insurance premiums. **Read more.**

Daniels, Thompson file first bills for 2027 session

Sen. Julie Daniels filed the first bill for the 2027 legislative session Monday, and she was followed Tuesday by Sen. Kristen Thompson, who filed the second. **Read more.**

Gann again proposes new House Rules targeting distribution of power, transparency

Rep. Tom Gann has again filed a resolution that would establish House Rules that distribute leadership power, rather than vesting it just the House speaker and their lieutenants. **Read more.**

Republican lawmaker moves to ban Flock cameras in Oklahoma

A rural Republican lawmaker has introduced the first proposed law before the Oklahoma House meets in 2027 — a comprehensive ban on Flock cameras and other automated license plate reader technologies. **Read more.**

IEC discusses Tax Commission's role, approves recommendations

The Incentive Evaluation Commission discussed the role Thursday that the Oklahoma Tax Commission plays in the collection of information used in the evaluation of state tax incentives. **Read more.**

OJA board approves FY2028 budget request

The governing board of the Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) approved the agency's proposed fiscal year 2028 budget requests on Thursday for the Legislature to consider during the coming regular legislative session. **Read more.**

Franklin names Baker chief of staff

Quorum Call: Franklin names Baker chief of staff

Superintendent of Public Instruction-elect Robert Franklin announced Wednesday he has selected former state Rep. Rhonda Baker to serve as chief of staff in his administration. **Read more.**

KOSU: Former Representative Rhonda Baker to serve as chief of staff for Oklahoma education department

During her time in the legislature, Baker chaired the House Common Education Committee and served on the House Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee on education. **Read more.**

Oklahoma added millions in children's literacy funding. Schools are still waiting for it.

While ratcheting up pressure on third-grade reading scores, Oklahoma lawmakers more than doubled state funding for early literacy support, but

public school leaders complain they're still waiting to receive the money. **Read more.**

New recess law has Oklahoma teachers wondering, 'What is the point?'

A new Oklahoma law doubling minimum recess time, initially celebrated by cheering children at the state Capitol, has caused frustration among educators. **Read more.**

'Touchy subject': Panhandle wind lease auctions draw concern, opportunity as data centers loom

The Panhandle peculiarities of Cimarron County are a way of life for its 2,300 residents. Amid cattle, curiosities, dark skies and dinosaur bones, the area offers Oklahoma's highest-altitude take on rural American life. **Read more.**

State Farm to pay $45M after Oklahoma insurance investigation

State Farm Fire and Casualty Co. will pay a $45 million settlement after a state insurance department investigation found it failed to properly pay roof damage claims by Oklahoma customers. **Read more.**

Oklahoma named in class action lawsuit on SNAP benefit changes

A lawsuit filed Wednesday seeks to block more states from restricting what kind of items food stamp recipients can buy. **Read more.**

Federal judge stands by ruling in Oklahoma poultry pollution lawsuit

The twenty-year legal saga between Oklahoma and several Arkansas-based poultry companies will continue after a federal judge again refused to vacate his order to make way for a settlement agreement. **Read more.**

Electric grid operator withdraws $72 million transmission line planned for central Oklahoma

The Mathewson-Redbud project would have installed about 40 miles of a high-voltage transmission line between a substation in Piedmont and a power plant in Luther, both owned by Oklahoma Gas & Electric. **Read more.**

Opioid Abatement Board's first round of grants reached 115,890 Oklahomans

The state's first round of $12.1 million in opioid settlement grants reached 115,890 Oklahomans, consultants told mental health experts at the Opioid Abatement Board meeting Monday. **Read more.**

2026-27 Important Dates

January 2027

- **Governor-Elect Mike Mazzei Inaugural Balls**
- **Wednesday, January 6** – Choctaw Events Center in Durant
- **Saturday, January 9** – Expo Square Exchange Center in Tulsa
- **Monday, January 11** – National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in OKC

- **Monday, January 11, 2027 (12:00 p.m.):** Swearing-in for Governor-Elect Mazzei and all statewide elected officials

- **Thursday, January 21, 2027 (6:00 p.m.)**: Senate Republican Annual Dinner (Reception) - Mayo Hotel, Tulsa, OK

- **Saturday, January 27, 2027 (6:00 p.m.):** Oklahoma Speakers Ball - Oklahoma City Convention Center, OKC, OK

2026-27 Legislative Dates & Deadlines

December 2026

- **Friday, December 4**: Deadline for Requesting Drafting of Bills and Joint Resolutions for the Second Session of the 60th Legislature (House and Senate)

January 2027

- **Tuesday, January 5, 2027 (12:00 p.m.):** Organizational Day for the 61st Legislature
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- **Thursday, January 14, 2027 (4:00 p.m.):** Deadline for Filing of Bills and Joint Resolutions for the 1st Session of the 61st Legislature

February 2027

- **Monday, February 1**: First Day of the First Session of the 61th Legislature

March 2027

- **Thursday, March 25**: Deadline for Third Reading and Final Passage of Bills and Joint Resolutions in the House of Origin (House and Senate)

May 2027

- **Thursday, May 6**: Deadline for Third Reading and Final Passage of Bills and Joint Resolutions in the House Opposite the House of Origin (House and Senate)
- **Friday, May 28**: Sine Die Adjournment of the First Session of the 61th Legislature