



**AMERICANS FOR  
PROSPERITY**

OKLAHOMA

# **WE CAN DO BETTER**

## **2018 POLICY AGENDA**



Dear Friends,

Our 2018 legislative agenda pushes Oklahoma to realize “*we can do better.*” We believe our state’s success centers on four core areas for impact and reform:

### A BETTER BUDGET

### BETTER EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN

### BETTER HEALTH FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

### A BETTER ECONOMY

We believe we can do better without raising taxes on our citizens and the least fortunate among us. We believe increased transparency, better accountability and taking an honest, hard look at what state government does for its citizens is a good place to start. Too often policymakers at the State Capitol have the mindset that we don’t know how much money is coming in to the state budget and then they turnaround and don’t know where they are spending your tax dollars. This must stop. You wouldn’t accept that premise in your business or at your kitchen table. Our state leaders shouldn’t either. ***Oklahomans deserve better.***

We believe we can give our kids a better education by reforming the state budget process and accounting for every dollar we spend in the classroom. According to National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) data, common education spending constitutes more than 40 percent of our state budget, but it never seems enough for the education establishment. What are we spending our

money on, and why are we not getting the outcomes we know our kids can achieve? ***Our children deserve better.***

We believe we can do better by changing the way our state compiles the budget and tracking how our money is spent. Every tax dollar should be viewed as sacred. Honest Oklahomans work hard to earn that money, and every penny they send to the capitol to make our state a better place should be respected. ***Hardworking taxpayers deserve better.***

We believe that through responsible reforms we can help the health of our friends and neighbors. We must ensure that every Medicaid recipient is getting the quality care they deserve and everyone has the best options for care available. ***Our friends and neighbors deserve better.***

Finally, we know we deserve better because we’re a state founded on can-do ideals, and we still have a strong pioneer spirit. Government can’t be all things to all people, so why are we allowing our state leaders to push us to bigger government. We know what government should be and what it can’t be, and many agree we’ve gotten away from what is best for us.

**Join us and challenge our state leaders to realize that “we can do better.”**

For Freedom,

**John M. Tidwell**

*State Director, Americans for Prosperity-Oklahoma*

# A BETTER BUDGET

## **REAL, COMPREHENSIVE STATE BUDGET REFORM:**

Reforming our state's budget is not going to be any easy task. We can't just say we are going to reform government and think that will make people happy. We need real, substantive reforms that change the way our state does business. It's going to take fresh ideas, increased transparency and tough decisions. Americans for Prosperity has long championed eliminating wasteful spending at all levels of government. Our cause has only been emboldened in the past few weeks, and we aren't slowing down. We owe it to our children, our grandchildren and our neighbors. Here are a few concrete ways we can reform the state's budget:

### **Zero-based Budgeting:**

It's quite simple, really: every agency, authority, board and commission should justify every expense, every year. Right now, bureaucrats and lobbyists work hard to grow individual budgets every year by creating new programs and growing government. These practices cost the state hundreds of millions each year. We must put an end to this now, before it is too late.

### **Protecting Taxpayers:**

Efforts are underway now to repeal all or portions of SQ640, Oklahoma's original taxpayer protection mechanism. Legislators

and bureaucrats aren't happy the people have stymied their efforts to raise more than half-a-billion in taxes this year. In AFP's estimation, SQ640 is working as intended and we will work tirelessly to protect this vital tax hike safeguard.

### **State Agency Consolidation:**

AFP believes the political will exists to eliminate or consolidate several unnecessary boards or committees in the state government, particularly those the governor has previously identified. Additionally, we will work to support the governor's executive orders to address primary and higher education consolidation, efficiency and budget modernization.

### **TSET Re-organization:**

With more than \$1 billion in the Tobacco Settlement Trust endowment, AFP will advocate for a closer review of the trust and believes that shifting those dollars to cover things like mental health treatment would be a better use of those public dollars. The monies that TSET distributes should be for purposes better than encouraging Oklahomans to avoid soda pop and sponsorships at NBA basketball games.



# BETTER EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN

## **REFORMING OKLAHOMA EDUCATION:**

AFP will continue to build on past successes until every family and every child in Oklahoma has access to the education that best suits their learning needs. These reforms include common education spending and district budget efficiencies, as well as the expansion of school choice, especially for the neediest students (for example: students with special needs, families in the foster care system and those adopted through DHS).

### **Ensuring Campus Speech Remains Free:**

Our Oklahoma higher education institutions should be places where free expression is not only tolerated, but encouraged. Uncomfortable ideas and challenging the status quo have changed the world, and those changes are made possible through a robust civil discourse of all perspectives. Prohibiting speakers because of their viewpoints under the guise of 'protection' flies in the face of the First Amendment and inhibits the intellectual and social development of college and university students. We believe that free speech should remain free, wherever it occurs—especially in Oklahoma.

### **Education Efficiency and Freedom:**

We support the efforts of the executive and legislative branches to increase transparency and accountability in public education budgets. We also support efforts to examine

and require school districts to consolidate their administrative functions, especially in smaller districts where administrative functions would have cost saving benefits. Every dollar that is wasted on education bureaucracy is one less dollar that gets to the classroom, to pay a teacher and better educate an Oklahoma student.

### **Expansion of Education Savings Accounts:**

These accounts give parents direct access to a portion of their child's state funded education. Those accounts most commonly used today target children with developmental disabilities or those in the foster care system whose neighborhood school is not meeting their educational needs. We will advocate for an expansion of these options to best serve the student and their families.

## **TEACHER PAY:**

For all of the political promises made over teacher salaries, many are surprised to learn that we can pay for a substantive teacher pay raise without raising taxes. Using existing funds, voters can approve spending funds from the Oklahoma Commission of the Land Office for classroom teacher salaries. Additionally, funds from TSET could also be used for that purpose along with changing the weight of school district budgets which are sent to the classroom.

# BETTER HEALTH FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

## **HEALTH CARE COST AVOIDANCE:**

We must find ways to make health care more affordable, both for the patient and for those bearing the expense for care, like the state's Medicaid system.

### **Managed Care:**

Sometimes known as capitated care, this effort could net the state hundreds of millions in saving over the next decade or more. This plan would focus on the cost of care and not just providing care to those who meet eligibility requirements.

### **Medicaid Audits:**

The Act to Restore Hope, Opportunity and Prosperity for Everyone, or HOPE Act, would allow for the state to audit Medicaid recipients and test the veracity of their needs and those services available to them. The HOPE Act is similar to an effort in Illinois which saw millions in savings and allowed resources to reach those who are truly in need and not those who game the system to their own benefit.

## **Expand the Role of Nurse Practitioners Statewide:**

Increasing the number of nurse practitioners in the state will allow more patients to receive greater care in a more efficient way. The expansion of health care providers and those trained to provide such care will also help relieve the burden in rural communities and low-income areas where care is not readily available.

## **Stopping Any Attempts to Expand Obama's Failed Medicaid Experiment:**

Obamacare's Medicaid expansion continues to be an albatross around the neck of many state budgets. Oklahoma has been fortunate to consistently reject attempts to expand Medicaid, but more recently we are seeing a national move to expand Medicaid through ballot measures. Our efforts would center on a statute which would require the legislature's approval for any Medicaid expansion—regardless of a ballot measure.



# A BETTER ECONOMY

## EXPANDING THE FREE MARKET:

### Occupational Licensing Reform:

Occupational licensing reform gets government out of the way and eliminates barriers to opportunity, creating upward mobility for some of Oklahoma's most vulnerable. You shouldn't need the permission of the state to get a job, but in many cases, you have to pay exorbitant fees and hours of unnecessary testing to get a license to work. We are working to streamline and even eliminate those barriers as a way of creating more tax payers instead of more people seeking the government's help to make ends meet.

### Free Market Optical Solutions:

Every Oklahoman should have access to quality, low cost vision care options. We support the opportunity to reform our state's antiquated laws and take a free market approach to optical care, giving Oklahomans the same opportunities as dozens of other states.

### Direct-to-Consumer Vehicle Sales:

Oklahoma's outdated consumer vehicle market needs review. Options to purchase vehicles directly from the manufacturer are good for the consumer, help drive down the cost of goods and make Oklahoma competitive against states like Texas.



# NOTES

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