



2017 Legislative Guide



CAIR
OKLAHOMA

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 1 MESSAGE FROM CAIR-OK'S GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
- 2 WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH CITIZEN ADVOCACY? 5 REASONS TO GET ENGAGED
- 3 CAIR-OK'S 2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
- 4 THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 56TH LEGISLATURE: THE BASICS
- 5 HOW TO FIND LEGISLATION
- 6 A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CITIZEN ADVOCACY
- 8 VOTING IN THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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MESSAGE FROM CAIR-OK'S GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DIRECTOR



Assalamu Alaikum and Greetings of Peace,

The Muslim community in Oklahoma is no stranger to bigotry and hatred. Our community has been the subject of heated debates from elected officials locally and nationally. Even after the 2016 election cycle came to a close, we continue to see the same tired, hateful rhetoric that attempts to demonize Muslims.

As an organization, CAIR-OK has spent over 10 years advocating for the Oklahoma Muslim community. We have challenged unconstitutional laws, we have pushed back against antagonistic and hateful elected officials, and we have helped our community grow its knowledge of civil rights. **Now, it is time to take the next step.**

Social change only comes when protest and outrage is combined with effective civic engagement. Having face-to-face conversations with those elected to lead our state and our country is the first step in working to resolve some of the many challenges we face.

Often, conversations around engagement for minority communities center on getting minority representation in office. While we absolutely need more Muslims in office, we must also become more informed about the needs of both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities we live in. Indeed, informed participants in local government are responsible for the most significant progressive changes in the last 75 years.

I created the 2017 Legislative Advocacy Guide with you in mind. Its goal is to help you get started on the journey of becoming confident in your civic engagement. Inside you will find CAIR-OK's 2017 Legislative Agenda, the basics of the 2017 state legislature, a step-by-step guide to citizen advocacy, and much, much more.

When Linda Sarsour spoke at CAIR-OK's 10th Anniversary Banquet, she reminded us of the importance of not apologizing for who we are. We must not only be unapologetically Muslim but we must also be unapologetically engaged. Without our commitment to learning the legislative process and engaging with it on every level, very little will change.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Facci', on a light-colored background.

Anna Facci
Government Affairs Director

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH CITIZEN ADVOCACY?

5 REASONS TO GET ENGAGED

1 Some of the biggest legislative issues of the past decade have directly affected American Muslims and our families. In Oklahoma, State Question 755 passed a popular vote in 2010, attempting to ban Shariah law and international law. Eventually found to be unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court, SQ755 presented a direct threat to the religious liberty of American Muslims. Additionally, in the last five years, a range of legislation that would infringe upon the rights of Oklahoma Muslims has been introduced, from wearing religious head coverings and averting Imams from having the ability to perform marriages. Under the new Presidential administration, many Muslims across the country are feeling more targeted than ever, with a significant increase of hate crimes against the American Muslim community recorded in 2016.

2 The Oklahoma Muslim community is underestimated as a voting bloc – **there are approximately 40,000 Muslims in the state of Oklahoma.** If even a quarter of our community becomes actively engaged, we can make a significant impact in our state's election outcomes. As long as we do not engage our elected officials, elected officials and candidates alike will continue to ignore our concerns.

3 Our problem isn't just voting – not enough people are running for public office. Representation is important. **No Muslim has ever held public office in Oklahoma** – will you be the first?



4 The democratic system works best when we hold our legislators accountable. **Even if you did not vote for your state representative or senator (or city council person or school board representative), they represent you!** It is important that we hold them accountable and let them know when they do things we don't like AND things we do like.

5 As Oklahoma Muslims, we have the opportunity to vote, to participate in the electoral system, to be the best citizens we can but most importantly – **we have the opportunity to make a significant difference for both our Muslim community and our Oklahoma community.**

We want to empower you to use your voice - this legislative tool kit is your guide to becoming a more active and informed voter, advocate, and Oklahoman.

CAIR-OK'S 2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Each year, CAIR Oklahoma develops a state legislative agenda to advance key issues and promote civic engagement among Oklahoma Muslims. The agenda is informed by research, community interest, and CAIR-OK's mission and is approved by our Board of Directors. The CAIR-OK 2017 Legislative Agenda supports policies that maximize religious freedoms, Constitutional protections, and work aimed at eliminating inequality in Oklahoma.

SUPPORTING RESPONSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO FIX OKLAHOMA'S BUDGET CRISIS



The State of Oklahoma faces an unprecedented budget crisis brought on by years of irresponsible fiscal policy. We strongly support policy initiatives that work to make responsible increases to state revenues and provide prosperity for all Oklahomans.

STRENGTHENING FEDERAL AND STATE HATE CRIME LAWS



In the last several years, the number of hate crimes reported to the FBI has continued to grow, with a 67% increase in the number of hate crimes against Muslims between 2014 and 2015. In Oklahoma, state and federal hate crime charges are rarely, if ever brought against perpetrators, and when they are, they only constitute misdemeanors. We support policies that seek to strengthen both state and federal hate crime laws.

OPPOSING ANTI-RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LEGISLATION



For the last decade, CAIR-OK has zealously defended the Oklahoma Muslim community from legislation aimed at undermining their First Amendment freedoms to religion and speech. We will continue this tradition in 2017, with a renewed effort to ensure that all individuals are guaranteed their constitutionally protected rights.

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN INCARCERATED IN THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA



Oklahoma continues to lead the nation in the number of women incarcerated at a rate more than twice the national average. Abolition is a crucial element of any social justice agenda. We are committed to supporting programs and initiatives that encourage discretion in sentencing and focus on true rehabilitative practices.

PROTECTING SOCIAL SERVICES



As an organization, we often work with vulnerable and disenfranchised communities. Social service programs are an important part of making those communities healthier, safer, and happier. We support any policies aimed at reinforcing and improving important services such as affordable healthcare, mental health counseling and treatment, and food assistance for needy families.

THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 56TH LEGISLATURE: THE BASICS



IN 1990, OKLAHOMANS APPROVED STATE QUESTION 632, WHICH CREATED TERM LIMITS FOR LEGISLATORS. REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATORS CANNOT SERVE MORE THAN TWELVE (12) YEARS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATE COMBINED. 13 REPRESENTATIVES AND 6 SENATORS WILL FINISH THEIR 12 YEARS OR BE “TERM-LIMITED” IN 2018.

HOW DO I KNOW WHO MY LEGISLATOR IS?

Your legislator is determined by the address where you are registered to vote! Scan the QR code or go to <http://www.oklegislature.gov/FindMyLegislature.aspx>.



The House of Representatives is made up of members of 101 districts. Currently, there are 99 active members of the House of Representatives. Two districts will have special elections in 2017. Each Representative is elected to a two-year term. All Representatives are up for election every two years.

Currently there are 75 Republicans and 26 Democrats.

The House of Representatives is led by the Speaker of the House and Speaker Pro Tempore. In 2017, these positions are held by Speaker Charles McCall (R-Atoka) and Speaker Pro Tempore Harold Wright (R-Weatherford).



The Senate is made up of members of 48 districts. Each Senator is elected to a four-year term. Senate districts have staggered elected terms, with a portion of the senate up for election every two years. Currently there are 42 Republicans and 6 Democrats.

The Senate is led by the President Pro Tempore and the Majority Floor Leader. In 2017, these positions are held by President Pro Tempore Mike Schulz (R-Altus) and Majority Floor Leader Greg Treat (R-Oklahoma City).

The first day of legislative session begins at noon on the first Monday in February and must adjourn by no later than 5:00pm on the last Friday in May. During legislative session, legislators are at the Capitol Mondays through Thursdays, and they return to their districts on Fridays.

HOW TO FIND LEGISLATION



Let's be real: none of us are legislators, and very few of us make a habit of checking out the Oklahoma Legislature webpages. But in order to find legislation, that's exactly what you need to do.

The most important thing you need to know before trying to find legislation is that after each bill is submitted, it is assigned a number. This number is how you follow or "track" legislation.

Pieces of legislation (commonly referred to as bills) can be found at www.oklegislature.gov under the section labeled "Legislation." The webpage includes the ability to search for legislation by bill number, author, subject, committee, and more.

Finding legislation can be difficult - if there are issues that you are passionate about, find a non-profit advocacy or lobbying group who works around those issues. Non-profit advocates and lobbying groups can help you find bills on your issues, understand legislative language, and even help you request legislation.

NOTE: "INTRODUCED" IS THE INITIAL VERSION OF A BILL. "ENGROSSED" IS THE VERSION THAT PASSED THE FIRST CHAMBER. "ENROLLED" IS THE FINAL VERSION.

WHAT IS A LOBBYIST? A LOBBYIST IS SOMEONE WHO WORKS TO ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF THEIR CAUSE OR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP. LOBBYISTS CAN WORK FOR COMPANIES BUT THEY ALSO WORK FOR NONPROFITS LIKE CAIR-OK!

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CITIZEN ADVOCACY

CONSTITUENT
(ADJECTIVE):
BEING A VOTING
MEMBER OF A
COMMUNITY OR
ORGANIZATION
AND HAVING
THE POWER TO
APPOINT OR
ELECT.

IDENTIFY YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

- ✿ Find who your district's elected officials are. Legislators make their constituents a priority when responding to issues and meeting requests.
- ✿ Find which elected officials are members of committees relevant to your issues. If your Representative or Senator is not a member of the committee where the bill you are concerned about is being heard, contact the members of the committee in addition to contacting your legislator.
- ✿ Research the voting record of elected officials on your relevant issues. Do not be afraid to hold elected officials to their voting records or recorded statements.

KNOW & DEFINE YOUR ISSUES

- ✿ What is your ask? Do you want a Representative to vote for or against a specific piece of legislation? Do you want their help addressing an issue in your district? Be sure to identify this before you sit down with them.
- ✿ Have a personal story about why the issue is important to you. Be ready to share this story with your legislator – these personal stories are what can help legislators convince their colleagues that these issues are affecting constituents. If you don't have a personal story to share, write down three reasons why you do or don't support the issue you will be meeting with them about.
- ✿ If you are coordinating a group to meet with your legislator, have a small group meeting before to streamline your message.
- ✿ Monitor the progress of the legislation by reading its latest version. Knowing where your bill is in the process is essential to having a clear ask.
- ✿ Develop short talking points explaining why this issue is important. You should be able to quickly and briefly explain to your legislator why you are interested in the piece of legislation and why you think they should vote either against or in favor of the measure.

PREPARE MATERIALS TO LEAVE WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

- ✿ Materials For Yourself: Research and create short biographies outlining your elected official's relevance to your issue and that person's priorities and roles.
- ✿ Materials For Your Elected Official: clearly outline the issues you want to discuss, and include your talking points (no more than one page if possible).
- ✿ Include information about your group, the legislation you desire action on, the issues you wish to advocate for, and your contact info.

PLAN YOUR MEETING

- ✿ Be prepared for 30 minutes, or 5 minutes. Make the most of your time.
- ✿ Do not be disappointed to meet with a staffer, or to be asked to meet outside the office in a hallway. You must accept every minute as an opportunity to build a relationship.
- ✿ An elected official's scheduler, or legislative assistant, is the most important person on that official's staff.
- ✿ If you are asked a question that you do not have an answer to, always tell them you will contact them later with the answer—never guess.
- ✿ Advocacy does not require arguing. This does not mean that you cannot express your point with emotion or passion; just be prepared for the fact that your legislator may not agree with you. In the case of a disagreement, be prepared to stay firm in your position without being aggressive.
- ✿ Make sure to leave your one page material with the office, and include your contact information.

THINGS YOUR LEGISLATOR MAY SAY AND HOW TO RESPOND TO THEM

- ✿ If your legislator says, "I am sympathetic to your position but I do not think there are enough people who support it" - organize your friends and community to visit that legislator's office, write letters, and make phone calls!
- ✿ If your legislator says, "I am sympathetic to your position but it isn't affordable/there isn't funding for it" - explain again what the problem is and then ask them, "If the plan I suggested isn't affordable, how do you propose to fix the issue at hand?"
- ✿ If your legislator tells you there is nothing that they can do, ask them who the next person to contact is.

FOLLOW UP AFTER MEETING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

- ✿ Send a thank you note to the elected official AND the legislative assistant.
- ✿ If you were asked a question that you did not have an answer to, remember to follow through with an answer.
- ✿ Follow the issue you were advocating for, and contact them later to make them aware that you were interested in that issue beyond that one meeting.
- ✿ Invite the elected official or his/her staff to visit your community on special occasions.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS: How to get your Legislator to Take You Seriously

Request an appointment time. Between committee meetings, floor hearings, and other business, legislators are very busy people. If you send an email requesting an appointment and don't hear back quickly, follow up with a phone call - schedules are often easier to navigate over the phone.

DO meet with your legislator in person if you can. DON'T expect them to have more than 15 minutes to meet with you. Being respectful of their time and following up with them again if they request more info helps build a lasting relationship.

Prepare beforehand - be sure you are educated about the issue, you have your story, and you are confident about which direction you would like to persuade your legislator.

Keep a record of contact with your legislator - Make a note each time you call or email to try to make an appointment. If a legislator is being evasive or won't meet with you after repeated attempts, contact us!

Follow up with your legislator after your meeting. Even if they did not vote the way you wanted them to, thank them for taking the time to meet with you.

VOTING IN THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

OSEB: ok.gov/elections; (405)521-2391 | **CAIR-OK:** cairoklahoma.com; (405) 286-6009

VOTER REGISTRATION

You must have a Voter Identification card to be able to vote in any election. You must get a form, fill it out, and then mail to the OSEB:

Oklahoma State Election Board
PO Box 52880
Oklahoma City, OK 73152-8800

- ✿ Forms are available for download at the OSEB website (ok.gov/elections) under the Voter Info/Register to Vote tabs. Printed forms are available at county election boards, tag agencies, post offices, libraries, and some other public locations.
- ✿ Forms require your name, birthdate, address, and identification number (Driver's License or Social Security).
- ✿ Voter registration forms also require you to designate whether you wish to affiliate with a political party and if so, which party. Party registration determines whether or not you can vote in presidential preferential primaries.
- ✿ Forms are pre-addressed; no envelope is required. You must affix a first-class postage stamp to the form, available for purchase at post offices. If you complete the form at the county election board, you do not need to mail the form. If you complete the form at another local government agency, the agency will stamp and mail the form to OSEB at no charge.
- ✿ OSEB forwards the form to your county election board, which mails you a Voter Identification card. **Your county election board must receive your form at least 24 days before the next election.** If they don't, your Voter Identification card will be mailed after the next election.

TO FIND YOUR POLLING PLACE, CONFIRM YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION, OR VIEW A SAMPLE BALLOT BEFORE AN ELECTION PLEASE VISIT THE [OK.GOV/ELECTIONS](https://ok.gov/elections) WEBSITE UNDER VOTER INFO AND ONLINE VOTER TOOL.

For more information about the Democratic Party visit www.okdemocrats.org or call (405)427-3366.

For more information about the Republican Party visit www.okgop.com or call (405)528-3501.

For more information about the Libertarian Party visit www.oklp.org/ or email chair@oklp.org.

HOW TO VOTE

You can vote at the County Election Board office in the county where you are registered to vote from 8 AM to 6 PM on Friday and Monday before all elections. For state and federal elections only, you also can vote from 8 AM until 1 PM on Saturday before the election.

Local polling stations are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on election days. Your local polling station is identified on your Voter Identification card. You may also find its location by using the Online Voter Tool at OSEB's website. Other ways include contacting the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, and CAIR-Oklahoma.

Oklahoma requires that you provide proof of your identity by presenting your Voter Identification card or a photo ID with your full legal name that does not expire before the election. You may show any document issued by the United States, the State of Oklahoma, or a federally recognized tribal government if it includes your name, a photograph of you, and an expiration date that is later than the election in which you are voting.

For example, the following documents meet these requirements:

- ✿ Oklahoma Driver License
- ✿ Oklahoma Identification Card
- ✿ United States Passport
- ✿ United States Military Identification

The law provides only two exceptions to these requirements:

- ✿ An Oklahoma Identification Card issued to a person who is 65 years old or older is valid as proof of identity for voting even though it does not have an expiration date.
- ✿ The Voter Identification Card issued by the County Election Board is valid as proof of identity even though it does not include a photograph or an expiration date.

The law also requires that your name on your proof of identity must match your name in the Precinct Registry.

If you do not have, or choose not to show proof of your identity, you may cast a provisional ballot and verify your identity by signing a sworn affidavit. These ballots are examined after Election Day by the Election Board to verify the information before they are counted.

After proving your identity, you will receive a ballot. Each ballot will have the candidates for that election listed. It provides instructions on how to vote for the candidate(s) of your choice. There is also a sample ballot available for viewing on the OSEB website before Election Day.

ELECTIONS

Once you are a registered voter, you are qualified to vote in all local, state, and federal elections. A full list of all election dates can be found on the Election Board website.

DID YOU KNOW? STATE AND LOCAL ELECTIONS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELECTIONS. THE LAWS AND POLICIES THAT SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE ARE MADE HERE IN YOUR STATE AND YOUR CITIES. YOUR SCHOOL BOARD, CITY COUNCIL, AND STATE LEGISLATURE HAVE POWER OVER THE THINGS THAT MATTER MOST: THE FUNDING FOR THE SCHOOLS CHILDREN ATTEND, THE CONDITION OF OUR ROADS, HOW MUCH SALES TAX YOU PAY, AND EVEN HOW EFFECTIVELY (OR INEFFECTIVELY!) FEDERAL POLICIES ARE IMPLEMENTED!

STATE/LOCAL ELECTIONS

Many people refer to odd numbered years as “off” years for elections but this is not true – there’s no such thing as an “off” year! This year (and every year!), there are municipal and special elections all across the state of Oklahoma.

March 7 Special Elections - State Representative District 28 only

Last day to register to vote: Feb. 10

Deadline to request absentee ballot: 5 p.m. March 1

Early voting: Thurs., March 2, 8 AM - 6 PM; Fri., March 3, 8 AM - 6 PM
Sat., March 4, 9 AM - 2 PM

General election: Tues., March 7, 7AM - 7PM

April 4 Annual School Runoff/Special Elections

Last day to register to vote: March 10

Deadline to request absentee ballot: 5 p.m. March 29

Early voting: Thurs., March 30, 8 AM - 6 PM; Fri., March 31, 8 AM - 6 PM
General election: Tues., April 4, 7AM - 7PM

WILL MY BALLOT BE COUNTED IF I DON'T VOTE EVERY RACE ON IT? WHAT IF I LEAVE SOME RACES BLANK?

Whether you vote in all races that appear on your ballot, in only some of the races, or in only one race, any vote you cast is always counted. If you prefer not to vote for a candidate or a question, you are entitled to make that choice. It will not affect the counting of your votes in any other races on your ballot.

I'M ALREADY REGISTERED BUT I NEED TO CHANGE MY NAME, ADDRESS OR POLITICAL PARTY.

In order to change your name, address, or political party you must fill out another voter registration form.

I HATE VOTING IN PERSON – IS THERE A WAY TO VOTE BY MAIL IN OKLAHOMA?

Absentee voting – or voting by mail – is an easy and convenient way to exercise your right to vote. Any registered voter in Oklahoma may vote by absentee ballot. It is not necessary to give a reason for voting absentee. You may apply for absentee ballots for one election, for several elections or for all elections in which you are eligible to vote during the calendar year in which the application is submitted. You can even fill out the form online by visiting the State Election Board's website: <https://services.okelections.us/AbsenteeApplication/>. You may mail, fax, or deliver your absentee ballot to the election board. When you acquire your ballot(s) they must be returned (by mail) to the county election board before 7 p.m. on Election Day.

IF I VOTE BY MAIL ABSENTEE BALLOT, DO I HAVE TO ENCLOSE A COPY OF MY PROOF OF IDENTITY WITH MY BALLOT?

No. Most voters who vote by absentee ballot either have their signatures on their affidavits notarized or have them witnessed by two people. The law considers the notarization or witnessing sufficient to establish the identity of an absentee voter.

WHERE DO I FIND A NOTARY?

All you need to do is stop by the CAIR Oklahoma office during business hours – our Government Affairs Director, Anna Facci, is a notary and is happy to help!

RESOURCES

OKLAHOMA POLICY INSTITUTE

www.okpolicy.org

OKLAHOMA POLICY INSTITUTE'S 2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIMER

okpolicy.org/prepared-2017-session-new-legislative-primer/

TOGETHER OKLAHOMA

www.togetherok.org

SCHOLARS STRATEGY NETWORK

www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/regional-network/oklahoma

LET'S FIX THIS

www.letsfixthisok.org

LENS BILL TRACKING SERVICE

www.oklegislature.gov/EBillTrack/Logon2.aspx

FIND MY LEGISLATOR

www.oklegislature.gov/FindMyLegislature.aspx

OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE HOME PAGE

www.oklegislature.gov

STATE HOMEPAGE

www.ok.gov

OAEC OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE MOBILE APP

www.oaec.coop/legislative_center/?page=legislativepromo



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