

# Advocacy Guide



**CAIR**  
OKLAHOMA

[WWW.CAIROKLAHOMA.COM](http://WWW.CAIROKLAHOMA.COM)



## WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

*At its core, advocacy is the act of standing up for what you or others believe in. It is an action. Advocacy is a process of gaining support for a cause or proposal and can cover many areas. There are many aspects and levels to advocacy, but here are some key parts.*

### CAUSE OR ISSUE

The first step is identifying a cause or issue. What are you advocating for/against? These can be proactive or reactive. A large part of advocacy is education. If you can build relationships with partners or stakeholders early, you can potentially prevent harmful dialogue or legislation from being authored. However, sometimes advocacy happens after a policy has already been changed, and the approach may be different.

### ACTORS/OPPONENTS

Once you know your issue, it's essential to identify who is involved in this area. A lot of our work is focused on the state government, but there are also city councils, school boards, and more that are involved in policies and change-making. Knowing who you need to speak with, and who is most likely to listen, will make your advocacy efforts more successful.

### ALLIES

Chances are, you are not alone facing this issue! Find others in your community, or even outside of it, who are trying to tackle the issue. Advocacy work is easier and more effective with friends.

### PLAN

Once you have the issue, the stakeholders, and any relevant allies, plan! Advocacy efforts often fall apart without strategy. They also require frequent follow-up. On your first meeting with a legislator, you may not even talk about the issue. Build a rapport and make a schedule to reconnect. If you're working with others, see who is the best fit to meet with each person involved.



## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

### 1. DEMOCRACY DOESN'T EXIST WITHOUT YOUR VOICE

This is a time when it is vitally important for all citizens to have their voices heard and counted, because otherwise, their needs are pushed aside. If our elected leaders do not know and understand the realities of the Oklahoma Muslim community, it is all too easy for them to vote against your interests. The last few years have seen more anti-Muslim hate crimes and more legislation, at every level, that infringes on the rights of American Muslims. It's never been more important for you to use your voice!

### 2. IF YOU DON'T USE YOUR VOICE, YOU LOSE IT.

There has been a rampant effort of legislation authored which targets our civil rights: our rights to speak freely according to our conscience, to worship as we choose, to voice our community's needs by voting. Many of these measures are unconstitutional. It is up to us to protect our rights and challenge these actions. Justice isn't passive - it depends on people to act and stand up against unfairness and injustice. By taking a stand for the causes you find important, you are enacting a more just society, taking part in the process that can either enshrine or disregard the rights of Oklahoma's most vulnerable populations: the poor, the elderly, children, people of color, and other marginalized communities.

### 3. RELIGION

The Qur'an tells us, "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah and be just witnesses and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do. (Al-Ma'idah 5:8)". We are meant to take a stand in our communities, even though it might be scary or difficult. As Muslims, and as members of the Oklahoma community, we must all work together to build our state into a prosperous, just, and equitable home for all.

### 4. ALLIES/PARTNERS

We are not alone, but we are stronger together. There are around 40,000 Muslims in the state of Oklahoma. Elections in some districts in Oklahoma have been won or lost with as few as 25 votes - or even a single vote! Imagine the power of the Muslim voting bloc if we all participated fully in every election. When all voices are heard, our lawmakers can fully consider all the perspectives that affect their communities and the people they serve.

### 5. REPRESENTATION SHAPES ALL OUR FUTURES

Many of our elected officials do not represent the diversity and unique power in our state. The Muslim community, as one of the most diverse in Oklahoma, contains dozens of countries and several Native American tribes amongst its members. However, little of this is seen in our elected leaders. We need to empower each other to advocate for our community and have more representatives of diverse groups run for office.

# HOW CAN I ADVOCATE?

## IDENTIFY:

Find out who your district's elected officials are.

**YOU CAN FIND YOUR DISTRICT INFORMATION  
AND MORE AT OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE  
(OKLEGISLATURE.GOV)**



Legislators prioritize meetings with people who live in their district. It's also important to check which committees they are on, which you can do on the webpages for the Oklahoma House of Representatives ([okhouse.gov](http://okhouse.gov)) or the Oklahoma Senate ([oksenate.gov](http://oksenate.gov)). If your legislator isn't on a relevant committee for your interests, reach out to someone who is!

It's also important to check the voting record of elected officials you want to work with. Some may be the nicest person, but they do not show up to committee meetings or vote so they would not be the best legislator to carry your issue. Elected officials should be accountable for their voting records and their recorded statements, so make sure to do your homework.

## DEFINE:

Know what your "ask" will be before you meet with your legislator. Are you looking for a vote on an issue? A bill? Or just to start a dialogue? Make sure you know why you want to meet and what you are asking. Many elected officials have packed schedules, and the meeting may be extremely brief.

Have a personal story. Legislators have access to experts on the topic, but it's easy to get lost in the work and forget the people behind the issues. If you don't have a personal story, list reasons why you are for or against an issue. If you are bringing multiple people, make sure you organize beforehand who is saying what!

If you are meeting about a bill, make sure to read the latest version on the Oklahoma Legislature's Bill Search website, found at [oklegislature.gov](http://oklegislature.gov) under "Legislation" and have talking points ready. Try to keep it short, sweet, and well-informed.

## PREPARE:

Bring for you: If you're bringing research, or planning on citing statistics, feel free to bring a copy with you for reference. Bring bill research, legislator's voting history or any commentary they may have made on your issue.

Materials to leave: Make a one-pager on your issue. Include talking points, facts, and information about the legislation or topic that concerns you. Keep in mind that legislators and their staffers are much more likely to read information that is concisely contained on a single page rather than large packets of information! Have your contact information available and send a follow up after your meeting is concluded.

## **PLAN:**

An elected official's assistant is the most important person on that official's staff. They are responsible for developing the schedule. Between committee meetings, floor hearings, and other business, legislators are very busy.

If you don't hear back after emailing to request a meeting, follow up with a phone call. Be prepared for the meeting to be either 30 minutes, 5 minutes, or even a passing chat in the hall. Make the most out of that time by prioritizing finding a connection over accomplishing all your subject matter. No one is going to remember every statistic you give them, but they will remember if you had common interests, or you made them laugh. Elected officials are still people at the end of the day, and you can always find some common ground no matter what party.

Every moment is an opportunity to form a positive relationship that may have a lasting impact.

## **CONDUCT:**

If you are asked a question that you do not have an answer to, tell them you will contact them later to follow up. Don't guess, and don't fabricate; it's always better to be honest and plan to provide correct information later.

If your legislator says, "I am sympathetic to your position, but I do not think there are enough people who support it," you can organize your friends to visit that 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 for other solutions about how to fix that issue.

Advocacy is not arguing. You can certainly express your points with emotion or passion but be prepared your legislator may disagree with you.

You can still be firm in your position without being aggressive. If your legislator says there is nothing they can do, ask them respectfully who the next person to contact would be. Take notes on what was said and what you need to follow up on. You may also want to record the names of staffers you meet and other information that helps you make the most of your meeting.

## **FOLLOW UP:**

No matter how the meeting goes, send a thank you card! You can include any assistants and staffers involved as well.

Follow up on any notes you made or research to complete. Also keep an eye on the issue you were advocating for and contact your elected official later to make them aware that you are still involved.

Continue building the relationship with that legislator. Invite the elected official and their staff to visit your community! Building bridges of mutual understanding is the key to forming strong relationships with your elected officials.

## HOW (AND WHY) TO TRACK A BILL:

*The process by which bills are passed is complex and confusing! Luckily, organizations like CAIR-OK are here to help you find, understand, track, and organize around the bills that you care about. If there are issues you are passionate about, find a non-profit advocacy or lobbying group working around those issues - they will help you understand where you are needed and how to get involved.*

When each bill is submitted, it is assigned a number, which is how you follow or “track” legislation as it passed through committees and is changed, or amended, and subsequently voted on. Each bill has one or more authors who drafted and proposed it. You can find these bills on the Oklahoma Legislature’s Bill Search Website, found at [oklegislature.gov](http://oklegislature.gov) under “Legislation.”

On this webpage, you can also search for legislation by bill number, author, subject, committee, and more. As it goes through the lengthy process, a bill has several different versions: “introduced” is the initial version of a bill, “engrossed” is the version that passed the first chamber, and “enrolled” is the final version approved by both chambers. You can find more about this process at [www.okhouse.gov](http://www.okhouse.gov) or by contacting the CAIR-OK Government Affairs Department.

As bills move through the process, they change frequently. They will be subject to many edits and amendments as they are debated. It’s always important to know the latest version of a bill before you meet with an elected official, so that you know the most up-to-date information.

### IDENTIFY:

Do some research, find the text of the bill, and identify what core issues are being addressed or attacked in the language. It’s also important to find out what committee the bill will be heard on, and if it advances to the floor.

You can try and reach out to the author or members of the committee to schedule a meeting and voice your concerns. Committee chairs and vice-chairs are key people as well. You can find the committees here:

#### **Senate Committees & Members:**

Standing Committees | Oklahoma Senate ([oksenate.gov/committees-list](http://oksenate.gov/committees-list))

#### **House Committees & Members:**

Oklahoma House of Representatives ([okhouse.gov/committees](http://okhouse.gov/committees))

### DEFINE:

Now that you know where to take your concerns, make sure you dig deep and get the fine points outlined. If possible, find personal testimonies to highlight the problems and plan how to implement them. Once you have those, figure out what you want to ask in the meeting. Are you looking for a vote? Or do you want them to speak out? Maybe it is just an initial meeting to build up to a later ask.



## **PREPARE:**

Prepare an info-sheet with details and summarize some personal testimonies. If you want a cheat sheet for yourself, bring a copy of materials - but try not to read off it! Be prepared for them to maybe be dismissive, inattentive or quick. Do some background research on the person you are meeting with to better find common interests to help build a connection.

## **PLAN & CONDUCT:**

Once the meeting is set, show up with enough time to get through security (if at the Capitol). Find the office and greet the assistant. Feel free to give them information on the topic as well. During the meeting, take notes and stay relaxed. Highlight personal connections to the issue and offer to connect them with people affected.

## **FOLLOW UP:**

Maybe you did not even get to talk about what you wanted, and the meeting was rushed. That's ok! You have started an interaction that can be continued. Schedule a follow-up, and bring a friend. Most first meetings are unlikely to create a rapid change or big promises. Start the dialogue and build from it. Send the thank you's and let your elected official know you will be reaching out again (and maybe to more people) and keeping an eye on this issue.

Also, check around with other groups. For many of our issue areas, there are other groups and other advocates interested. Strength in numbers, whether to go to meetings, or just talk through the process.



# THE LEGISLATURE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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*Advocacy plays a part in all levels of government, but it's important to know how our state and local government works too.*

## OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE

The Oklahoma Legislature is made up of two bodies, or chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Representatives and Senators run and are elected in areas called districts, which are drawn up every 10 years on completion of the federal Census. Your legislator is determined by the address where you are registered to vote. These elected people in the legislature are responsible for drafting, debating, and passing the laws of our state, which are then either approved or vetoed by our Governor. Our current governor is Kevin Stitt. The legislature is also responsible for approving members of the Governor's cabinet, providing oversight to state agencies, and balancing the state budget. With all that responsibility, you can see why it is vitally important that our legislators know and understand our communities as they do their work.

### THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The House of Representatives is made up of members of 101 districts. There are 81 Republicans and 20 Democrats. Representatives are elected to two-year terms, and all Representatives are up for election every two years. The House of Representatives is led by the Speaker of the House and Speaker Pro Tempore. In 2023, these positions are held by Speaker Charles McCall HD 22 (R-Atoka) and Speaker Pro Tempore Kyle Hilbert HD 29 (R- Creek/Tulsa County).

### THE SENATE:

The Senate is composed of members from 48 districts. There are currently 48 members of the Senate with 40 Republicans and 8 Democrats. Each Senator is elected to four-year terms, with elections staggered so that half the Senate is up for election every two years. The Senate is led by the President Pro Tempore and the Majority Floor Leader. In 2023, these positions are held by President Pro Tempore Greg Treat SD 47 (R-Oklahoma City) and Majority Floor Leader Greg McCortney SD 13 (R-Ada).

### LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

The 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 from Monday through Thursday, and they return to their home districts on Fridays. The legislative session is when pieces of law, or bills, are introduced, debated and amended in committee, researched, and voted on – it's when a lot of the work of lawmaking happens. But after session adjourns in May, legislators still have lots of work to do, meeting with residents of their districts, or constituents, and researching the bills they may propose at the next session. Sometimes, the Governor calls Special Sessions or additional meetings of the state legislature if they are not able to come to agreements on vital issues such as the state budget.

### LOCAL:

CAIR Oklahoma serves the state-wide Muslim community, and we know that not everyone or everything is at the State Capitol. In addition to Oklahoma's State



Legislature, there are many other bodies of elected officials who affect our lives:

- School Boards
- City Councils
- County Commissioners
- Police Chiefs
- Zoning Boards
- Mayors
- Judges

Local politics involve laws and policies that significantly impact your everyday life, and the budgeting decisions that fund them are made at the state and local level: roads and streets, schools, libraries, social services, sales taxes are all determined by decisions made by municipal and state government.

Zoning boards and school boards determine the shape of your neighborhoods and affect the quality of your children's education.

Elected judges and District Attorneys defend and interpret the laws that govern our state. Elected clerks and commissioners set priorities and manage properties funded by your tax dollars.

Professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and others are governed by elected boards that determine membership requirements and set standards for practice in the state. Even the implementation of federal policies can be determined by state and local governments. At every level, your voice is vital to the processes that keep our communities running. Make sure you are heard!

These boards and individuals can also be contacted and advocated for or against the same way as state legislators. Furthermore, many of the positions are elected with little to no opposition, and some of them are open to anyone who wants to get more involved in the future of their community!

## VOTING:

*Voting is a part of advocacy work. You cannot advocate and ask for changes if you choose not to engage in a core aspect of the democratic process and our civil rights. Voter turnout in Oklahoma is abysmal, in large part due to a lack of voter education. So here is some information to help us all get out to the polls safe and prepared!*

### 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 at the Oklahoma State Election Board website ([oklahoma.gov/elections](http://oklahoma.gov/elections)) by clicking on Voter Registration. Printed forms can also be found at county election boards, tag agencies, post offices, libraries, and some other locations. CAIR OK can also provide voter registration forms for your mosque, Islamic Center, or MSA. The voter registration form requires your name, birthdate, address, and identification number (Driver's License or Social Security). You must be a citizen of the United States, a resident of Oklahoma, and an adult over the age of 18 in order to register to vote. The forms are pre-addressed and do not require an envelope, only a stamp. If you complete the form at a county election board or at the CAIR-OK office, 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 the OSEB for you.

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 for you to vote in that election; otherwise, your Voter ID card will be mailed after the next election.

Voter registration forms also require you to designate whether you wish to affiliate with a political party. Party registration determines whether you can vote in presidential primary elections.

**For information on the Democratic Party, visit: [www.okdemocrats.org](http://www.okdemocrats.org)**

**For information on the Republican Party, visit: [www.okgop.com](http://www.okgop.com)**

**For information on the Libertarian Party, visit: [www.oklp.org](http://www.oklp.org)**

## WHERE AND WHEN:

Your local polling station is open from 7AM to 7PM on election days. You can find your local polling station on your Voter ID card and using the Online Voter Tool at OSEB's website. You can also contact any of Oklahoma's political parties or CAIR Oklahoma for assistance. You can vote at the County Election Board office in the county where you are registered to vote from 8AM to 6PM on the Friday and Monday before all elections. For state and federal elections only, you can also vote from 8AM to 1PM on the Saturday before the election.

To find your polling place (where you vote), confirm your voter registration, or view a sample ballot before an election, visit the [www.ok.gov/elections](http://www.ok.gov/elections) website and click on "voter info" or "online voter tool."



## HOW:

Oklahoma requires that you provide proof of your identity by presenting your Voter ID card or a photo ID with your full legal name that does not expire before the election, and which matches the name as registered in the Precinct Registry. 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.

At your polling place, 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 an affidavit. These ballots are examined after Election Day by the Election Board to verify their information before they are counted.

In Oklahoma, the forms of ID acceptable for voting are:

1. Oklahoma Driver License
2. Oklahoma State-Issued Identification Card
3. United States Passport
4. United States Military Identification

The law provides only two exceptions to these requirements:

1. An Oklahoma ID Card issued to a person who is 65 years or older is valid as proof of identity for voting even though it does not have an expiration date.
2. 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.

After proving your identity, you will receive your ballot. Each ballot has the candidates for that election listed and/or the issues that are up for a vote. It will provide instructions on how to vote for the candidate(s) or option(s) of your choice. There will also be a sample ballot available for viewing on the OSEB election website prior to Election Day. Viewing your sample ballot will help you be prepared to vote quickly and with confidence.

## WHAT IS VOTER INTIMIDATION?

Voter intimidation is any effort or practice by an individual or group to coerce or suppress the voting behavior of a particular class or demographic of voters. Most commonly, voter intimidation efforts have attempted to suppress the voices of low-income and minority voters.

**Examples:** Aggressive questioning about citizenship, nationality, religion, or criminal background - demanding the removal of religious clothing such as hijab or kufi - false statements about voting requirements, such as an ability to speak English - any activity intended to prevent or discourage someone from exercising their right to vote.

If you experience voter intimidation, contact:

- **CAIR Oklahoma**  
Phone: (405) 415-6851  
Email: info@ok.cair.com
- **The American Civil Liberties Union Voting Hotline**  
Phone: 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683)
- **Oklahoma State Election Board**  
Phone: 405-521-2391

## 2023 Oklahoma Elections - Voter Information Calendar

Election Date	Voter Registration Deadline	Absentee Ballot Request Deadline	Election Type	Election Day Hours	Early Voting Dates and Hours
<b>January 10</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	December 16, 2022	December 26, 2022	Special Elections Propositions Only	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	January 5 – 6 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>February 14</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	January 20	January 30	Board of Education Primary Elections	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	February 9 – 10 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>March 7</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday)	February 10	February 20	Special Elections Propositions Only	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	March 2 – 3 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>April 4</b> (1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday)	March 10	March 20	Board of Education and Statutory Municipal General Elections	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	March 30 – 31 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>May 9</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	April 14	April 24	Special Elections Propositions Only	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	May 4 – 5 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>June 13</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	May 19	May 29	Special Elections	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	June 8 – 9 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>July 11</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	June 16	June 26	Special Elections Propositions Only	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	July 6 – 7 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>August 8</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	July 14	July 24	Special Elections Propositions Only	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	August 3-4 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>September 12</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	August 18	August 28	Special Elections Candidates and Propositions	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	September 7 – 8 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>October 10</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	September 15	September 25	Special Elections Propositions Only	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	October 5 – 6 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>November 14</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	October 20	October 30	Special Elections Candidates and Propositions	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	November 9 – 10 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.
<b>December 12</b> (2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday)	November 17	November 27	Special Elections Propositions Only	7 A.M. to 7 P.M.	December 7 – 8 8 A.M. – 6 P.M.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

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**CAIR OKLAHOMA POLICY PLATFORM** are focus areas for the upcoming legislative session. These are based off of feedback of staff, board members and the community. [www.cairoklahoma.com/blog/2023-policy-platform](http://www.cairoklahoma.com/blog/2023-policy-platform)

**CAIR OKLAHOMA BILL TRACKER** A near comprehensive list of bills we are actively tracking. These most closely align with issue areas in our policy platform, but they are subject to change as language is amended.  
[www.cairoklahoma.com/2023billtracker](http://www.cairoklahoma.com/2023billtracker)

**THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF OKLAHOMA** is a nonprofit, non-partisan, privately funded organization devoted exclusively to the defense and promotion of the individual rights secured by the U.S. and Oklahoma constitutions.  
<https://www.acluok.org/en>

**MOM'S DEMAND ACTION FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA** Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America is a grassroots movement of Americans fighting for public safety measures that can protect people from gun violence.  
[www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionOK/](https://www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionOK/)

**OKLAHOMA POLICY INSTITUTE** An independent nonpartisan non-profit that provides factual information and advocates for fair and responsible public policies.  
[www.okpolicy.org](http://www.okpolicy.org)

**TOGETHER OKLAHOMA** A grassroots education and advocacy group connecting Oklahoma values to state budget priorities. [www.togetherok.org](http://www.togetherok.org)

**SCHOLARS STRATEGY NETWORK** Encourages collaboration between scholars at universities and state-level policy groups to benefit the public good.  
[www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/regional-network/oklahoma](http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/regional-network/oklahoma)

**BALLOTPEdia** A hub for state political coverage of elections, policies, and more  
[www.ballotpedia.org/Oklahoma](http://www.ballotpedia.org/Oklahoma)

**LET'S FIX THIS** A nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to educating our fellow Oklahomans on the laws, policies, and other political issues that affect them the most and creating opportunities for the public to interact with their elected officials in meaningful ways. [www.letsfixthisok.org](http://www.letsfixthisok.org)

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS** A nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. [my.lwv.org/oklahoma](http://my.lwv.org/oklahoma)

**OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE HOME PAGE** The House of Representatives and Senate, how bills become law, bill tracking, committees, calendars, and more  
[oklegislature.gov](http://oklegislature.gov)  
Find My Legislator: Oklahoma Legislature ([oklegislature.gov](http://oklegislature.gov))

**OKLAHOMA STATE ELECTION BOARD** Voter registration, election dates and deadlines, sample ballots, find your polling place, absentee ballot applications, etc  
[www.ok.gov/election](http://www.ok.gov/election)