

Protect Oklahoma's revenue base

BACKGROUND

Oklahomans look to our state government to fund a wide range of critical investments - schools, roads and bridges, public safety, and safety net supports - that contribute to our shared prosperity and promote our general welfare. For nearly a decade, budget shortfalls and revenue failures have slashed funding of public services. Oklahoma cut school funding more than any other state, most teachers and state workers went nearly ten years without a raise, reimbursement rates for health care and social service providers were cut repeatedly, and Oklahomans with mental illnesses and developmental delays in need of care languished on long waiting lists.



Thanks to a strong economy and decisions made by lawmakers to raise revenues in 2018, this year's budget includes increased funding for teacher raises and other key priorities. However, total state appropriations remain nearly 10 percent, or \$778 million, below the budget of a decade ago adjusted for inflation. A majority of appropriated agencies have state funding that has been cut by one-fifth to one-half since the recession of 2009-11. State tax collections remain well below both historical levels and the national average as a share of personal income.

THE SOLUTION

With further revenue growth projected for next year's budget, lawmakers must avoid repeating the mistakes of previous periods of economic growth. They should resist enacting tax cuts that have provided limited short-term benefits at the expense of worsening our budget problems as soon as the economy hit a downturn. Further tax cuts are especially ill-advised given the three-quarters supermajority requirement to raise taxes even when the state faces large shortfalls.

Instead of tax cuts, lawmakers have the opportunity to build on the gains of the past year and allow our core services to continue their recovery from years of declining investments. By protecting the revenue base, lawmakers can strengthen the state's long-term fiscal stability, ensure that more money is set aside in reserve funds for future downturns, and avoid returning to a reliance on one-time revenues to balance the annual budget.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact your state Representative and Senator and urge them to reject giving away revenue with any new tax cuts or tax breaks and resist pressure to reverse any of the hard-won revenue measures passed in recent year.

To join the grassroots coalition of Oklahomans working to connect Oklahoma values with better budget and tax priorities, visit www.togetherok.org. To receive SMS advocacy alerts on important budget and tax issues, text **OKBUDGET** to **51555**.

You can look up your Senator and Representative on our website under the “**Advocacy**” tab on our main menu. You can also call the House switchboard at **405-521-2711**, and the Senate switchboard at **405-524-0126**.



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