

# 100 IDEAS

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INNOVATION *for the* SECOND CENTURY



**Dedicated to the people of Oklahoma  
whose ideas made this book possible.**

Published compliments of our friends at  
Thomson—West

2008



*“A person’s mind stretched to a new idea never goes  
back to its original dimensions.”  
~Oliver Wendell Holmes*



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Oklahomans  
attended town hall  
meetings called  
IdeaRaisers and  
filled notebooks  
with innovative  
ideas for the state's  
second century.

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*for the SECOND CENTURY*



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*for the Second Century*



## FOREWORD

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*by President David Boren*

*“The air is full of ideas. They are knocking you  
in the head all the time.”*

*~Henry Ford*

**H**aving represented this great state in our nation’s capital and as a former governor, I know that Oklahoma’s potential is limitless. And with our state embarking on its second century, I believe our promise and potential is about to be realized to its fullest extent.

In many ways, Oklahoma is the quintessential American state—so many of the icons of America’s 20th century came from innovations that started right here on the fertile ground of our red dirt. Oklahoma has offered the world inventions that helped shaped the life of our nation—such as the shopping cart or the parking meter. We’ve offered optimism, friendliness and faith. And when terrible tragedy has struck our state, we’ve provided an example for the nation of grace.

Think of April 19, 1995. Suddenly, with a bomb’s explosion in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City, the world’s attention focused on our state. And national news anchors wondered aloud if Oklahoma was up to the task of confronting this horrific tragedy.

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Oklahomans could have allowed what at the time was the worst terrorist attack on American soil to become a devastating blow to the state's future. Instead, the shining example of faith, recovery, resilience and the spirit of volunteerism became the "Oklahoma Standard" that showed the rest of the world how to cope and even thrive after traumatic terror.

Oklahoma offered the nation an example of courage in the face of adversity, of grace in the face of tragedy—from the first responders at the scene just after the explosion, to the volunteers who spent hour upon hour at the site of the Murrah building, to the citizens of the state who drew together in the years that followed to help heal the emotional and physical wounds caused by a terrorist's bomb.

As state leaders like Governor Keating observed at the time, though buildings surrounding the epicenter of the bomb's blast were damaged, there was no looting. The bomb came in the form of a rental truck—but Oklahomans responded by the truckload with supplies for rescue workers and firefighters.

Oklahomans did not allow the tragedy to overcome us.

And since then, economic growth and opportunity have begun to blossom in the state as never before. City leaders and citizens rebuilt downtown to the point that other cities in other states now look to Oklahoma City as an example of urban renewal.

Our reputation for optimism, neighborliness and hard work is a reflection of our state's pioneer heritage and our attitude about the future. As a young state, we always have one eye to the future. Oklahoma is poised for a dynamic new century and the second chapter of the state's history.

When I was governor, many important reforms were implemented, including conflict-of-interest rules, campaign-financing disclosure, stronger open meeting laws for public bodies, more competitive bidding on state government contracts, and

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reform of the state's prison system, including expanded education programs for first-time offenders and the largest expansion of the work-release program in state history.

Now we're in a new era when Oklahoma is on the move, and when change and reform are watchwords across the state.

At the University of Oklahoma, for example, a community of ideas thrives as the university has become a pacesetter for higher education nationwide and a vital center for research in fields ranging from weather to nanotechnology.

OU is just one part of the story, of course. From biotech research in Oklahoma City to Oklahoma State University's groundbreaking sensor research, the pioneer spirit has spilled over into a technological and scientific push for progress.

I'm reminded of words I spoke in 1978, when I delivered the State of the State address as governor. I told assembled lawmakers and dignitaries at the time, "In Oklahoma, we know the future is not to be feared. It is to be embraced as a new challenge, as a hope for a better life, as an opportunity to be seized and mixed with hard work."

Oklahoma's sense of history is more immediate than that of other states. After all, many of us can remember listening to stories of the state's founding from grandparents and great-grandparents. And many of us know personally the history of hardships from the Great Depression.

Oklahoma's pioneers are people we know or have known personally and not just from history books. They taught us the importance of building for the future. They dealt not only with their immediate problems but they anticipated our needs.

The 100 Ideas Initiative is all about building for the future and anticipating the needs that will allow Oklahoma to continue to prosper in our second century.

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As a citizen, you have an opportunity to continue to take part in Oklahoma's story. In nearly every corner of our state, progress and opportunity are beginning to flourish. Now it's our challenge to make sure that new progress and opportunity continues and grows.

With the publication of this book and the 100 Ideas for our state's future to be found on these pages, it's time to get to work.

Are you ready?

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and Attention

PROMOTION  
Each City  
Entryway -  
its HERIT

MUSEUM Comple  
OSHOP - GY  
NGRIPES

The thousands of ideas, often written on notebook paper, were discussed at the IdeaRaisers then forwarded to the 100 Ideas advisory board.

**100  
IDEAS**  
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for the SECOND CENTURY



## INTRODUCTION

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*by Speaker Lance Cargill*

*“A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on. Ideas have endurance without death.”*

*~President John F. Kennedy*

**H**ow many times have you heard about a new announcement by your local or state government and wondered if you could come up with something better, something more original, something that would propel Oklahoma into the future?

As someone who chose to enter public service, I know that most people in politics are motivated by a desire to help people and advance the common good. And we often achieve that goal. During the past few years, many pro-growth policies and reforms have been passed at the state Capitol that will better prepare our state for the next 100 years.

But even with this progress, I've noticed that too often we hear some of the same rhetoric and slogans, even when it is well-intentioned. And too many Oklahomans see a process that doesn't involve or engage them. As speaker of the Oklahoma House, I've overseen efforts to try to reach out to our state's citizens through the Internet and in innovative events like a Saturday House session for families.

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I felt compelled to do more. That's why I joined with other outstanding Oklahomans in working to make the 100 Ideas Initiative successful.

Every year, the *New York Times* publishes a "year of ideas" installment of its weekly magazine. I remember seeing an edition of this annual issue and thinking that Oklahoma's Centennial year should be a "Year of Ideas" for our state.

With this book and the 100 Ideas Initiative, I think we've achieved that goal.

The 100 Ideas Initiative looked for the best ideas for Oklahoma, from Oklahomans. After all, the sole repository of good public policy is not at the state Capitol. It's in the small towns, the neighborhoods, the barbershops, the beauty shops and the coffee shops across our state.

Instead of dictating policies, the "big idea" behind the 100 Ideas Initiative was to let citizens tell us how to prepare for the future.

I grew up in Harrah and still live there today with my wife and two sons, just down the road from my boyhood home. I've lived in Nashville, Tenn., and Dallas, Texas. But I've never seen anything that matches the spirit of the people of this state.

Growing up, my Dad worked as a forklift driver at a grocery store warehouse. Coming from a blue-collar household, I learned the value of hard work. When I attended Oklahoma State University and later Vanderbilt Law School, I was afforded opportunities previous generations of my family never had. I want an Oklahoma where every child, not just a privileged few, have unlimited opportunities to reach their full potential.

I know from my travels around this state as part of the 100 Ideas Initiative that every Oklahoman has something vital and sometimes groundbreaking to share with our state.

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The many individuals who helped make the 100 Ideas Initiative a success wanted those ideas to come from you. In the many months of the initiative's work, you—the people—delivered.

This is your book.

With our state's Centennial celebration now complete, Oklahomans have been reminded of our proud heritage. As proud as I am of our past, I'm even more excited about our future. There's no doubt that our second century is full of promise, and it should be about transforming our state's mindset to look ahead to the long-term future of Oklahoma.

As we have celebrated our first 100 years as a state, we now look forward to the next chapter of our history—what better time to seek the most innovative and forward-thinking proposals? I'm mindful that while government can play an important role in moving Oklahoma forward, its people who power our state.

Government can't raise your family. Government can't build economies. Government can't change hearts. People do that.

Through a series of IdeaRaisers held across the state and an interactive Web site, [www.100ideasok.org](http://www.100ideasok.org), the 100 Ideas Initiative has developed a comprehensive blueprint for the future. In this book, you'll see a vision that projects 100 of the best ideas that came out of our efforts.

Two thoughts from great American leaders have guided this project. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "Every now and then a man's mind is stretched by a new idea and never shrinks back to its former dimensions." And Ronald Reagan said, "There is no limit to what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets credit."

Oklahomans from every walk of life took part in the 100 Ideas Initiative, stretching the boundaries of our minds as we dreamed about the future. And we can all share proudly in the credit for this project.

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As you'll see, the ideas in this book range from the workaday to the admittedly grandiose. In some ways, during our first century as a state, we Oklahomans may not always have been aspirational enough about our future. While some ideas in this book may not come to fruition, I believe that as we enter our second century we should be willing to embrace ambition and set our sights higher than ever before.

The 100 Ideas Initiative has been a truly historic enterprise, and I'm proud to have been a part of this effort.

I hope that in the pages of this book you'll find inspiration to help us continue to build Oklahoma.

One idea at a time.

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## **PART I**

### **The Innovative History of a Young State**





Sandra Powell, a teacher at Verdigris High School, submitted her idea on the interactive Web site. Her idea is to commemorate the state's centennial birthday with a photograph featuring a person born in each of Oklahoma's first 100 years.

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*for the* SECOND CENTURY



## CHAPTER 1

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### Oklahoma's First Century of Ideas *by Bob Burke*

*"The history of mankind is the history of ideas."  
~Luigi Pirandello*

 Oklahomans have always had great ideas. Innovations that literally changed history and everyday life in America came from men and women in Oklahoma who dared to dream beyond confining lines drawn by custom and tradition.

Most students of Oklahoma history are familiar with legendary and unique inventions and advancements by Oklahomans. S.N. Goldman invented the shopping cart and changed life forever. Carl Magee teamed up with engineers from Oklahoma A&M and designed the first parking meter. Wiley Post was the first person to fly solo around the world.

In addition to the oft-told stories of inventing shopping carts and parking meters and flying around the world, the dreams of many other Oklahomans have improved the quality and enjoyment of life in a dozen different venues, from literature to commerce to civil rights. Some ideas took the form of the written word, while others emanated from engineering drawings and test tubes.

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Someone once said, “Necessity is the mother of invention.” That theory has been oft-proved in Oklahoma. When howling winds and searing drought removed valuable topsoil from western Oklahoma during the Great Depression, it was Oklahoma conservationists who planned and built America’s first shelterbelt of trees to protect the land from the elements.

Damaging floodwaters necessitated the building of upstream dams to impound water before it could inundate cropland. It was in Oklahoma where the nation’s first upstream dam-flood protection plan was implemented. L.A. Macklanburg invented and patented weather stripping, after his wife grew frustrated because the prairie wind constantly blew dust around the front door into her new home.

Other unique ideas came from Oklahomans in the form of problem-solving. Phillips Petroleum scientists invented the aerosol can and plastic. Who can imagine American life without spray cans and thousands of plastic products we use daily?

The Ditch Witch trenching machine replaced the pick and shovel in digging trenches for utility lines. The machine was the idea of machine shop owner Ed Malzahn who was trying to develop a product for his customers. The idea for mud flaps on trucks, to prevent the wheels of big rigs from kicking up mud and rocks, came from Oscar March, a long-haul driver at Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City. CMI Corporation designed a new road-building material spreader and grader that revolutionized the industry.

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Nearly half the trenching machines in operation in the world are manufactured in Oklahoma, the idea of a machine shop owner who created the Ditch Witch brand. Courtesy Charles Machine Works Inc.

In Oklahoma's first century, true Oklahoma wordsmiths recorded history in voluminous fashion. Long before statehood, of course, Sequoyah created the Cherokee alphabet, choosing 85 symbols to represent all spoken sounds of the Cherokee language. This innovation helped preserve his people's language and culture when they came to Indian Territory.

Marquis James won Pulitzer Prizes for biographies of Sam Houston and Andrew Jackson. Grant Foreman wrote of the American West, including the great trails that crossed Oklahoma. Angie Debo courageously preserved the story of a difficult time of transition for the state's Native American population. John Hope Franklin became the nation's leading African American historian. Their ideas of chronicling the past made a huge impact on how historians would record the occurrences of succeeding decades.

Oklahoma fiction writers filled the wish lists of America's readers with romance, science fiction, the Old West and mystery. After growing up in poverty in northeast Oklahoma City, Ralph

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Ellison wrote *Invisible Man*. Considered one of the top five novels in American history, it was the first book written from the perspective of an African American.

Louis L'Amour wrote more than 100 fiction masterpieces about the Old West. N. Scott Momaday, Tony Hillerman, Billie Letts, C.J. Cherryh, S.E. Hinton, Carolyn Hart and Joyce Carol Thomas have produced some of America's finest literary works. Some have been translated into other languages, while others have been made into major movies. Savoie Lottinville transformed the University of Oklahoma Press into a leading world publisher. Daniel J. Boorstin not only wrote 20 books, but also served as the Librarian of Congress.

Staying with ideas of culture, innovative Oklahomans have enriched movies, television, ballet, and music. Our favorite son, Will Rogers, bridged the gap between vaudeville and the silver screen. Gene Autry, Dale Robertson, James Garner, Megan Mullally, Kristen Chenoweth, Van Heflin, Brad Pitt and Chuck Norris have contributed their unique acting styles to movie and television productions. Grey Frederickson won an Oscar for producing one of the Godfather movies. Ron Howard continues to direct and produce major motion pictures.

Te Ata Fisher, the famous Chickasaw storyteller, thrilled presidents, royalty and the common man with her dramatic interpretations of Native American folklore. Five Oklahoma Native American ballerinas, Yvonne Chouteau, Rosella Hightower, Moscelyne Larkin, Maria Tallchief and Marjorie Tallchief, are considered among the superstars of the ballet stage of the 20th century.

Woody Guthrie and Bob Wills put their unique stamps on the American music scene. Both influenced dozens of later stars with their special brand of lyrics and music. Wills literally created a new style of music and Guthrie wrote one of history's most recorded songs, "This Land is Your Land." Oklahomans fill the pages of

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Who's Who in American Music with legends such as songwriters Jimmy Webb and Mae Boren Axton and performers Patti Page, Roger Miller, Garth Brooks, Toby Keith, Reba McEntire, Carrie Underwood, Wayne Coyne of the Flaming Lips, Michael Hedges and Vince Gill.

Deep Deuce on N.E. 2nd Street in Oklahoma City produced jazz legends such as Jimmy Rushing and Charlie Christian, a young man who is credited with adding the electric guitar as a solo instrument in jazz. Both stars were guided by a novel music teacher, Zelia Breaux, at all-black Douglass High School in Oklahoma City. Her ideas influenced an entire generation of musical artists.

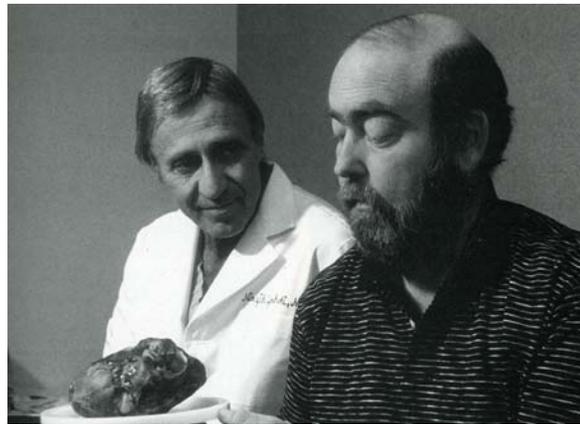
Professor Oscar Jacobson at the University of Oklahoma tutored five young Kiowa art students whose artistic endeavors as the Kiowa Five transformed Native American art. Other Native Americans excelled in American art: Apache Alan Houser became one of the nation's leading sculptors; Charles Banks Wilson won international acclaim for his paintings; Woodrow Crumbo, a Pottawatomie, and Jerome Tiger are considered among the elite of the country's Native American artists; Acee Blue Eagle, a Creek-Pawnee artist, was the first Native American artist to embark on a solo career, traveling worldwide to promote Indian art.

Augusta Metcalfe's paintings have been displayed across the nation. She won a 1911 art competition at the Oklahoma State Fair and focused her entire life's work on painting Oklahoma life and landscapes.

Oklahomans have translated their ideas and observance of life into the written word as poetry. The state has produced many Pulitzer Prize-winning poets, including John Berryman and N. Scott Momaday, selected to pen the poem that would officially be sanctioned to celebrate Oklahoma's Centennial.

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While some Oklahomans' ideas improved the quality of enjoyment of life, Oklahoma scientists and medical professionals improved life itself. Dr. Nazih Zuhdi's development of a procedure to prime the heart-lung machine without any blood opened the gateway to transfusion-free heart transplants. Dr. Donald O'Donaghue was known through the nation for his cutting-edge knee surgery techniques. Dr. Clyde Snow perfected the science of osteobiography. He is without peer in the world of identification and analysis of bones.



Dr. Nazih Zuhdi, left, showing a patient his diseased heart, which Zuhdi had replaced. Zuhdi pioneered heart surgery and transplantation methodology. Courtesy Dr. Nazih Zuhdi.

Lester and John Sabolich became internationally famous for breakthrough prosthetic designs, such as the Sabolich Socket. Dr. Kenneth Cooper literally invented the word “aerobics.” His plan for physical fitness has endured for two generations. Dr. W. French Anderson is considered the father of human gene therapy and conducted the first government-approved transfer of altered genes, an idea that could ultimately lead to elimination of many of the world's diseases and debilitating conditions.

In 2000, Dr. Jordan Tang and his team at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation identified the enzyme responsible for

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Alzheimer's disease and continues research that will someday create help for those stricken with the condition. Dr. William Canfield and his company have developed new technologies for manufacturing enzymes. World-class biotechnology research is being conducted by many companies and organizations in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma has become a world leader in bioinformatics, the emerging science of using sophisticated computer processes and software to analyze data arising from the mapping of the human genome. Scientists in Oklahoma have made great strides in research into diabetes-related conditions and the development of diagnostic and therapeutic products for viral diseases. ProteomTech, an Oklahoma City company, was the world's first company to commercially manufacture human proteins that can be turned into life-saving drugs. Research at the Dean A. McGee Eye Institute has contributed to eye care worldwide.

The world of space has benefited from the brainpower of Oklahomans. In fact, no other state can claim the vast influence upon space exploration. Wiley Post was not only the first person to solo around the planet, he discovered the jet stream and developed a pressurized flying suit, the forerunner of the modern space suit.



Oklahoma's Wiley Post was a self-taught scientist who discovered the jet stream and developed the forerunner to the space suit. This Mike Wimmer portrait of Post hangs in the state Capitol. Courtesy Mike Wimmer.

Oklahoma has produced more astronauts than any other state in the union. Leroy Gordon Cooper was chosen in the first group of American astronauts. Shannon Lucid was among the first women selected in the U.S. space program. Thomas Stafford paved the way for the lunar landing with his command of Apollo 10 and made history by pioneering joint space projects between the United States and the Soviet Union. Donna Shirley was the project manager for the innovative exploration of the planet Mars with a robotic rover. Colonel Jack Ridley was the test pilot and project engineer who made it possible for the sound barrier to be broken in 1947.

Oklahomans' ideas have improved education, both in Oklahoma and the nation. Henry Bennett was without peer in advancing new educational ideas in the nation's agricultural and mechanical colleges. Francis Tuttle's ideas in the field of vocational-technical education were duplicated by many states. David Boren's systematic approach to raising funds at public universities will be studied and mimicked for generations.

Ideas of leadership have flourished in the minds of Oklahomans in its first century. Patrick Hurley was Secretary of War in the administration of President Herbert Hoover. Robert S. Kerr, Carl Albert and David Boren were highly respected in the federal government. Albert was a powerful speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and Kerr was referred to as the "uncrowned king of the Senate." Bryce Harlow created the model for integrity in lobbying at the White House and in Congress. Admiral William H. Crowe Jr. was the highest-ranking military officer as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. James Woolsey ably directed the Central Intelligence Agency.

Oklahoma women have contributed their ideas of leadership on the world stage. Wilma Mankiller, when elected chief of the Cherokee Nation, was the first woman to head a major Native American tribal government. Jeane Kirkpatrick was appointed by President Ronald Reagan as the first female U.S. Ambassador to

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the United Nations. Alice Robertson was the second woman elected to Congress and the first woman to preside over the U.S. House of Representatives. Kate Barnard was the first woman in the nation elected to a statewide office.



Jeane Kirkpatrick appeared on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1984 when she was U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Courtesy Oklahoma Heritage Association.

The world of commerce has greatly benefited from the ideas of Oklahomans. Erle B. Halliburton pawned his wife's wedding ring to finance a new idea of using a measuring line to assist in the cementing of oil and gas wells. That idea birthed Halliburton, one of the world's largest companies. Charles Gould, the "father of Oklahoma geology," developed techniques for discovering many oil and gas fields in the state.

John W. Nichols, a young accountant, won approval of the first oil and gas funding proposal formally approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission. That idea changed the way that worldwide oil and gas production was financed. Nichols and his son, Larry, founded the state's largest publicly traded company, Devon Energy Corporation.

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John W. Nichols' idea of how to successfully raise money to fund oil and gas exploration was adopted by petroleum entrepreneurs everywhere. Courtesy Devon Energy Corporation.

The petroleum-rich history of the state produced idea leaders who made fortunes from pulling crude and gas from beneath the surface of the state. The names associated with Oklahoma's petroleum industry are the most famous in world petroleum history. J. Paul Getty and T. Boone Pickens became two of the world's richest men. Harry Sinclair founded the Sinclair Oil Company. The company that became Conoco was begun in the oilfields of Osage County by later Governor E.W. Marland who is largely responsible for creation of the Interstate Oil Compact Commission.

Robert S. Kerr and Dean McGee joined forces to create a giant in the petroleum industry, Kerr-McGee Corporation. Kerr-McGee was the first company to sink an oil well offshore. Frank and L.E. Phillips leased oil-rich lands from the Osage Indians and founded Phillips Petroleum Company. In recent years, Aubrey McClendon has vaulted his Chesapeake Energy Corporation into a major player in America's oil and gas industry. The Williams Companies built the nation's first coal-slurry, hydrogen-sulfide, and anhydrous

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ammonia pipelines. When pipelines were no longer being used to transport petroleum, Williams engineers pioneered the use of pipelines as conduits for fiber-optic cable. Callidus Tech developed a high-pressure flare tip for the oil and gas industry.

Bob Funk's desire to help people find jobs and his ideas of implementing his dream, have resulted in Express Personnel Services becoming one of the nation's largest staffing agencies, with offices from Oklahoma to Russia. Accord Human Resources also became a prominent player in staffing. Ray Ackerman employed advertising ideas learned as an ad salesman for *The Daily Oklahoman* at Ackerman-McQueen, one of the nation's premier advertising agencies with clients around the world.

The commercial ideas of Edward L. Gaylord expanded beyond ownership of the state's largest newspaper. The Gaylord family influence spread into the broadcasting and entertainment industry, including ownership of the Grand Ole Opry.

George Kaiser expanded his family's fortune with innovative entrepreneurial ideas and became a financially successful Oklahoman.

Other Oklahoma ideas have created legends. Cyrus Avery provided the architectural genius that birthed the construction of Route 66, a paved highway from Chicago to Los Angeles. More than 400 miles of the "Mother Road," featuring drive-in theaters, neon-lighted diners, and rustic trading posts crossed Oklahoma.

Robert S. Kerr's vision of capturing and effectively using Oklahoma water resulted in the construction of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation Project, a system that links Tulsa's Port of Catoosa to the Gulf of Mexico and world trade.

It takes more than good looks to become Miss America. It takes brains and ideas. Oklahoma has produced six Miss Americas, beginning with Norma Smallwood in 1926. Since Jane Jayroe won

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the crown in 1967, Susan Powell, Shawntel Smith, Jennifer Berry and Lauren Nelson have proudly worn the prestigious crown.

The world of sports has been influenced by the ideas of Oklahomans. The rodeo sport of bulldogging was invented by African American cowboy Bill Pickett on the 101 Ranch. Oklahoma State University basketball coach Henry P. Iba created the “swinging gate” defense. At the University of Oklahoma, Coach Charles “Bud” Wilkinson introduced the Split-T formation in football and Barry Switzer perfected the Wishbone offense.

The greatest athlete of the first half of the 20th century, Jim Thorpe, was born a year before the Land Run near Prague.

To this day in the “Capital of the World,” New York City, baseball fans still proudly wear Mickey Mantle’s number 7 Yankee jersey to the ballpark. The only brothers ever inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, Paul and Lloyd Waner, hailed from Harrah, Okla. Bart Conner, the only American male gymnast to win gold medals at every level of national and international competition, operates one of the largest and best-equipped gymnastics centers in the United States in Norman.

There is no greater area in which Oklahoma ideas played a major role as they did in civil rights. Early Oklahoma cases allowed the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down laws that prevented African Americans to vote and invalidated local ordinances that forced minorities to live in certain sections of a community. It was an Oklahoma case, spawned by ideas of Oklahoma lawyers, that stopped the practice of excluding African Americans from juries.

Roscoe Dunjee, editor of the *Black Dispatch* in Oklahoma City, was a man of great ideas when it concerned civil rights. He founded the first chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Dunjee hired future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall to represent a young Chickasha girl, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, who wanted to attend the all-white

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University of Oklahoma School of Law. The U.S. Supreme Court used the Fisher case to open higher education to minorities across the country. An Oklahoman, Juanita Kidd Stout, was the first African American woman in the nation to be elected a judge.



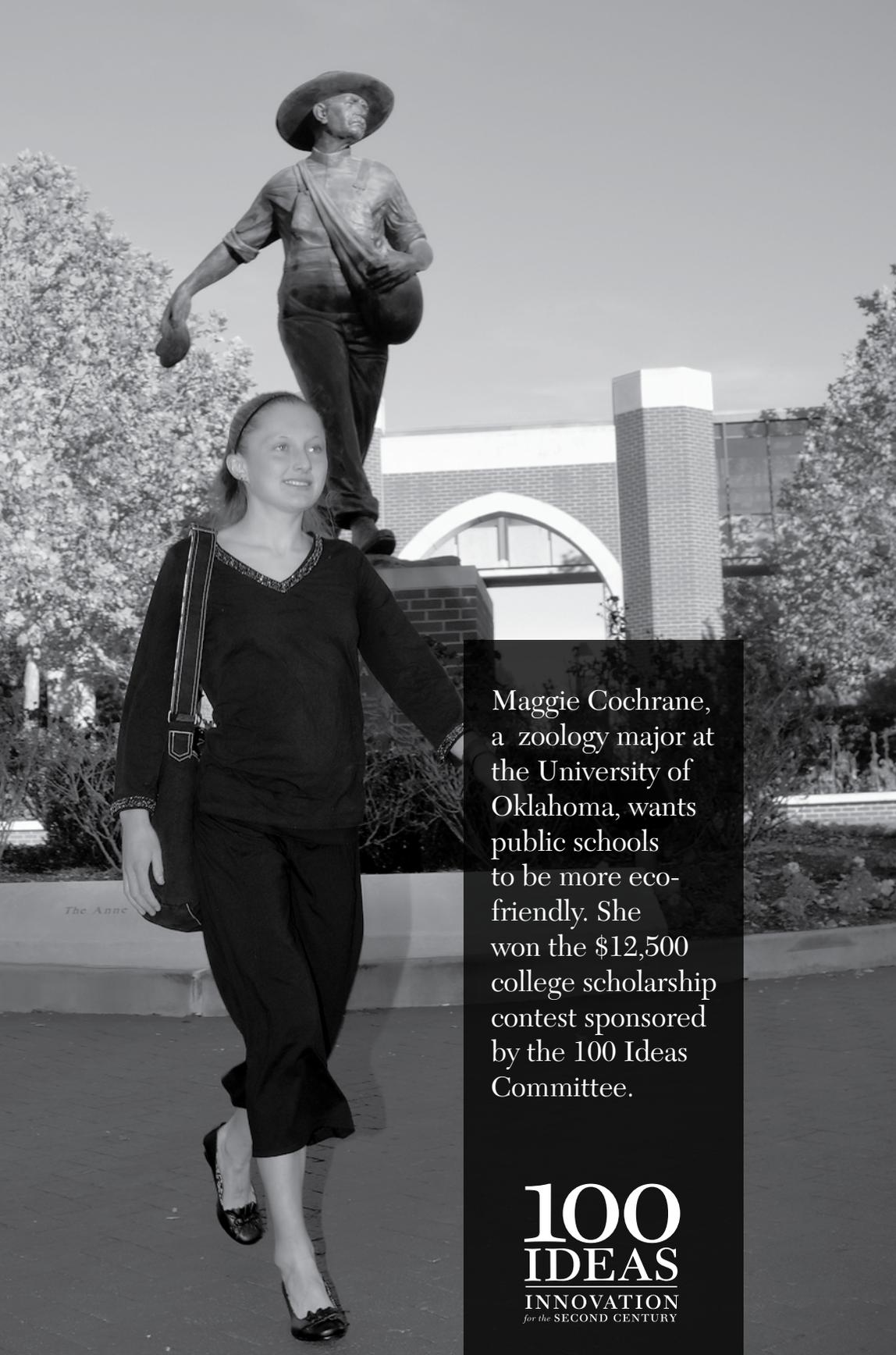
Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, center, was the plaintiff in the U.S. Supreme Court case that opened higher education to all races. Preparing for a court hearing, she discusses legal tactics with her attorneys, Amos T. Hall, left, and Thurgood Marshall, who later became the first African American appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Courtesy Oklahoma Publishing Company.

An idea even gave Oklahoma its state song. In 1953, 26-year-old legislator George Nigh, a McAlester history teacher, was so enthralled with Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway play "Oklahoma!" he introduced the bill that made the title song Oklahoma's new state song. There is no doubt "Oklahoma!" is the most recognizable state song of any in the Union.

Bob Burke has written more than 60 books about Oklahoma. He served as Secretary of Commerce in the administration of Oklahoma Governor David L. Boren and successfully managed Boren's first campaign for the United States Senate in 1978. Burke serves on the boards of many Oklahoma charitable and educational organizations. He is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma City University.

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Maggie Cochrane, a zoology major at the University of Oklahoma, wants public schools to be more eco-friendly. She won the \$12,500 college scholarship contest sponsored by the 100 Ideas Committee.

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## CHAPTER 2

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Oklahoma: A Land of New Ideas  
*by Bob L. Blackburn, Ph.D.*

*“Ideas can be life-changing. Sometimes all you need to open  
the door is just one more good idea.”*

*~Jim Rohn*

**T**he events that define Oklahoma history are well known and can be found in any textbook. First came the earliest Indians, followed by the battle for empire, the evolution of the Indian Territory, the land runs and statehood. Even more familiar are some of the famous people who walked onto and off that stage of history, such as Sequoyah, William “Alfalfa Bill” Murray, Will Rogers, Robert S. Kerr and Garth Brooks.

This common view of our history, condensed for the classroom, is important, but it is only part of the story. Behind the big picture populated by larger-than-life personalities are the countless stories of individual Oklahomans who faced challenges day in and day out and came up with innovative solutions to solve problems. Taken together, those good ideas add up to the story of our success as a state.

The challenges at times have been monumental and catastrophic, such as the Indian Removals, when entire Indian tribes were uprooted from their traditional homelands and forced

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to move to a new land and a new way of life. At other times, the challenges have been largely hidden from the public eye, such as the need for a new strain of wheat that would increase crop production in a new environment. Whether it was a parking meter to solve downtown parking congestion or a single-operator trencher to reduce the cost of construction, the Oklahoma talent for innovation and new ideas has altered the course of history. The following pages offer a few of these stories when a person is confronted by a new challenge, only to come up with a new idea for a solution.

### **Robert M. Jones: The Choctaw Innovator**

To President Thomas Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase was an investment in the future, a vast territory of natural resources, trading partners and precious land that someday would be needed for farms and towns. In the meantime, he predicted, the distant region would serve as a relocation zone for Indian tribes caught in the relentless march of American pioneers pushing through the Appalachian frontier.

In the American Southeast, this new policy forever changed the lives of the people cumulatively referred to as the Five Civilized Tribes—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole—and set in motion the history of the state of Oklahoma as the “land of the Red Man.”

The first of the so-called removal agreements was the Treaty of Doak’s Stand, signed with a few Choctaw bands in 1820 to exchange ancestral lands for a new homeland stretching across southwestern Arkansas and southeastern Oklahoma. As part of the deal, the federal government funded the Choctaw Academy in Blue Springs, Ky., where Choctaw families could send their sons to learn the ways of the white man’s world. One of the first students to enroll was a 19-year-old, mixed-blood Choctaw named Robert M. Jones.

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Robert M. Jones

The young, ambitious Choctaw graduated just as his homeland was suffering its final siege. On Sept. 28, 1830, 171 tribal leaders signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, selling more than 10 million acres of their land in Mississippi and agreeing to move West to what would become known as Oklahoma. With one foot in the traditional world of his tribal ancestors and the other foot in the world of Euro-American culture, Jones would help build a bridge to their future.

It took three harsh winters to complete the trek West, with groups ranging from 500 to 1,000 traveling on foot and on horseback through snow and ice. They suffered from exposure, disease and sheer exhaustion; a “trail of tears” that did not improve much once they got to their new homes. Jones, who had secured a job as an assistant Indian agent, was put in charge of driving a herd of 1,000 horses West. More than half died on the way. In later years, Jones would recall that killing season as “the severest winter I ever saw.”

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Like his people, Jones started rebuilding his life in the new Choctaw Nation. By 1836 he was a partner in a trading post at Doaksville, a rough-cut community of log cabins and surrounding farms located less than a quarter mile from Fort Towson, the last federal outpost before crossing the Red River into the newly formed Republic of Texas. That same year, Jones married Susan Colbert, the daughter of a wealthy Choctaw planter and an ally in his quest to build a new life on the frontier.

During the next 25 years, Jones used innovation and adaptation to prosper and serve his tribe. He expanded his mercantile business until he owned 28 stores. He imported the first cotton gin to the Indian Territory and bought two steamboats, which plied the Red and Arkansas rivers as lifelines to cotton buyers and merchants in New Orleans. He eventually expanded his farming operations to six plantations, including a sugar plantation in Louisiana. In the Choctaw Nation, where a tribal member could use all the land he wanted, one farm had 10,000 acres under the plow.

Jones and his wife, Susan, lived a Southern aristocratic life in their favorite home, Rose Hill, located about seven miles north of the Red River not far from the banks of the Kiamichi River. Each room of the two-story home featured a different exotic wood, and the library was lined with shelves filled with books. In the gallery, as in thousands of plantation homes throughout the South, they hung portraits of United State presidents. Outside, leading to the river landing, Jones planted two rows of cedar trees, some of which would still be standing 150 years later.

Although an exception in a land where most people lived as small self-subsistent farmers, the prosperity enjoyed by Robert and Susan Jones reflected the remarkable social and political recovery of the Choctaws after removal. They had their own government, established through a written constitution, with a judicial system, executive and legislative branches, and a school system that was the envy of people in surrounding states.

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By 1842, the tribe maintained 12 neighborhood schools and eight boarding schools, supplemented by church-sponsored schools run by missionaries such as Cyrus Kingsbury, Alfred Wright and Cyrus Byington. One visitor, passing through Doaksville on his way to fight for Texan independence, wrote a letter to his wife describing the beauty and prosperity of the “Choctaw country.” After the fighting was done, he said, he wanted to return. That man, Davy Crockett, never got the chance.

While building his fortune and turning the wheels of economic development, Robert M. Jones found other ways to serve his fellow Choctaws. In 1838, tribal leaders sent him to Washington, D.C., to negotiate payment of the “net proceeds” for land sold to the United States and to press their claims for property lost during the disastrous removal. After years of negotiations, the Senate refused to pay for losses, but did pledge \$3 million to pay for the land. Payments were to begin in 1861.

Despite the promise of money long due to them, the Choctaws severed their ties with the United States that spring and signed treaties of alliance with the Confederate States of America. Once again, the Choctaws turned to Jones, a fiery secessionist who was elected as the largely honorary president of the “United Nations of the Indian Territory.” While Jones negotiated with Confederate officials, the tribe raised a regiment to fight under the command of their former Indian agent, Douglass Cooper. Two years later, Jones was given a seat in the Confederate Congress in Richmond, Va., as a delegate from the Indian nations.

At the end of the war, Jones was one of five Choctaws sent to negotiate a new treaty with the victorious Union government. In spite of Jones’ objections, the final terms of the Reconstruction Treaty of 1866 allowed the first railroads to cross the Indian nations and confiscated the western half of the territory for the settlement of other tribes. In addition, it stipulated that the Choctaws would work toward allotment of land to individual

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tribal members and start the process of becoming a territory and ultimately a state.

With painful memories of removal, Jones balked at the prospect of giving up tribal lands once again. In a letter, he offered a warning to his fellow Choctaws: if the Indians “lose their nationality by allotting lands ... it is the first step toward admitting emigrants into their country ... they would sell themselves out and be left without homes.” In 1870, following the advice of their senior statesman, the Choctaws voted against the allotment process, a fate they would skillfully delay until 1898.

Robert M. Jones died from malaria in 1873. He lived long enough to restore his fortune, thanks in large part to the 4,500 bales of cotton he had accumulated during the Civil War. He also lived long enough to see the first railroads built through his native land and the coal mines opened near J.J. McAlester’s store. He also saw the devastating impact of non-Indian intruders who quickly outnumbered his fellow tribesmen. Still, Jones probably died with hope in his heart. He had seen his tribe forced from their ancestral lands. He had seen the devastation of Civil War. And each time, he had seen the spirit to innovate, to adapt, to build upon the ruins of the past. Robert M. Jones, with one foot in the Indian world, one foot in the white man’s world, had been a bridge to a new land.

### **Anton Classen: The Spirit of ‘89**

On April 22, 1889, the sun rose on a vast expanse of unclaimed land deep in the heart of the Indian Territory called the Unassigned Lands. It was an unfenced region of prairie and woods, well watered, with few marks of man save the steel tracks of the Santa Fe Railroad and a few buildings around the water stops. That evening, after the first land run in American history, every part and parcel would be claimed by 50,000 hardy pioneers. One of those ‘89ers was Anton H. Classen.

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Classen's story sounds like the American experience. His parents fled religious persecution in Germany when he was one year old. After his mother died on board the ship on the way to the New World, the rest of the family landed in New Orleans and made their way to Illinois in 1862. Young Anton did well in school, eventually attending the University of Michigan Law School, where he graduated in 1887.



Anton Classen

Casting about for his lot in life, the young attorney read an article about a new frontier soon to be opened to non-Indian settlers. It was called the Unassigned Lands. The district, which today stretches from Stillwater on the north to Norman on the south and from Shawnee on the east to El Reno on the west, was

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called the unassigned lands because it had been taken from the Five Civilized Tribes after the Civil War, but had not been “assigned” to another tribe. Farmers suffering from an extended drought in the Midwest, combined with the lobbying power of railroads, convinced Congress to declare the land surplus and available for settlement under the terms of the Homestead Act.

Unfortunately, there were far too many desperate land seekers to use the tried and true methods of transferring the frontier to landowners along a gradually expanding line of settlement. It had to be done overnight. President Benjamin Harrison, true to his era’s belief in social Darwinism and a minimal role for government in daily lives, decided the best way to settle the land was through a land run. In theory, the smart and quick would get the land. The dumb and slow would not.

On April 22, 1889, the day chosen for the run, Classen joined a small army who bought tickets on the many trains that would enter the Unassigned Lands no faster than a horse could run. Others lined up around the borders of the territory, prepared to make their way on horses, in wagons, and even on foot. At high noon, the signals sounded and the rush was on. By sundown almost half of the ‘89ers had claimed 160-acre farms, while the other half, including Classen, had landed in towns along the Santa Fe tracks.

Classen started in Guthrie, which was destined to be the territorial capital and the city favored by the railroads. Within two weeks, however, he decided there was an oversupply of attorneys among the 10,000 settlers in Guthrie, so he moved south along the tracks and hung out his shingle in the little community of Edmond, where he quickly invested both his money and energy. Classen purchased a quarter section of land northeast of what is now 2nd and Broadway, became city attorney, helped start the first bank and purchased the town’s first newspaper, the *Edmond Sun*. He also helped build the town’s first cotton gin, served as the first president of the town library, planted trees in Mitch Park and earned an appointment as postmaster.

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In 1890, as the territorial legislators in Guthrie contemplated the locations for three institutions of higher education, Classen led an effort in Edmond to capture the teachers' college. He offered 40 acres of his homestead for the college, provided that the citizens of the town pass a \$2,000 bond issue to build the first building. In August of 1891, the bond issue passed and Edmond became home to what would eventually become the University of Central Oklahoma.

Unfortunately for Classen and his fellow '89ers, the mid-1890s were lean years of drought, agricultural depression and subsequent land openings that drew people and resources east to the former lands of the Sac and Fox/Pottawatomie, west to the former reservation of the Cheyenne/Arapaho, and north to the rich soil of the Cherokee Outlet. Classen, who had become active in politics, received an appointment as receiver of public money at the U.S. Land Office in Oklahoma City.

As he had done in Edmond, Classen jumped into the swirl of his community's life with innovation and new ideas. He helped reorganize the old Commercial Club, which emerged as the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, and served as president for five years. He also organized the Classen Company and started buying land on the fringes of town. In June of 1898, he purchased 25 acres for \$2,500 from E.W. Bourne, a farmer who had won title to the homestead between 10th and 16th Streets and Broadway and Walker. A year later, he purchased the adjoining 120 acres to the west for \$10,000.

In 1900, the aspiring businessman subdivided part of his holdings as Classen's Highland Park Addition, located between 13th and 16th and Broadway and Walker. He promoted the development in local newspapers. "Have you seen the Highlands? With its beautiful homes? Wide streets and handsome trees?" He even offered discounts. "Four lots in Highland Park, on 13th Street, among the Big Bugs. A bargain at \$1,500!" Still, the lots did not sell well. It was too far from downtown in an era before automobiles.

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The solution was public transportation. Joining forces with other real estate developers, such as Charles Colcord and Henry Overholser, Classen convinced the city council to grant them the city's first franchise for a streetcar system. Not surprisingly, the steel rails extended north and west to the unsold lots. For a nickel fare, homeowners could build in the suburbs, "among the big bugs," and get to work quickly and safely. A week after the streetcars started running, Classen announced his second suburban development, Classen's West Highland Addition. Just as it was beginning its reign as the "fastest growing city in the nation," Oklahoma City suddenly was a suburban city stretching in all directions along the streetcar lines.

As he had done in Edmond, Classen turned his gift for innovation into good deeds. He helped start the German Methodist Church downtown, where a stained glass still honors him, then approached the Methodist Episcopal Church Conference with an idea for a church-affiliated institution of higher education in Oklahoma City. In 1902, with the streetcar system at his disposal, he made the church leaders an offer. If they would bring their school to his hometown, he would plat a new housing addition, give them half of the lots and extend the streetcar to the school. They accepted. The effort resulted in the creation of Epworth College, later renamed Oklahoma City University, and the first Medical School, which would eventually serve as the cornerstone of the Health Sciences Center.

For the rest of his life, Anton Classen continued serving his community with innovation and creativity. He lobbied for single statehood, helped raise a bounty to attract the first packing plants, served as president of the Oklahoma Children's Home Society for five years, and served on the building committee for the Scottish Rite Temple in Guthrie. After his death in 1920, Classen would be memorialized in the naming of Classen Boulevard, Classen High School and Northwest Classen High School.

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But Classen's legacy went far beyond the naming rights left behind. Through his willingness to work with others for the common good, he helped give birth to the modern Chamber of Commerce. Through his willingness to take a chance, he built a business empire that created jobs and fueled the fires of expansion. And through his generosity, he improved the quality of life through churches, civic groups and schools. In every way, Anton Classen embodied the "Spirit of '89."

### **Cyrus Avery: The Father of Route 66**

When Oklahoma became a state, the world of transportation was ruled by the railroads. Location on the steel rails determined life or death for towns and cities, granted access to distant markets for farmers and ranchers and made possible the exploitation of natural resources from coal and timber to oil and lead.

The reign of the railroads, however, was drawing to a close. Between World War I and World War II there would rise a new king—motorized vehicles—that would grant independence from distant corporate chieftains and offer freedom of the road. All that was needed was an efficient system of highways to open the way. One of the innovators who ushered in this transportation revolution was Cyrus Avery.

Like most Oklahomans of his era, Avery was raised on a farm. Born in Pennsylvania in 1871, he was 12 years old when his family moved to the Cherokee Nation to farm a plot of land along Spavinaw Creek, located northeast of the little community called Tulsey Town. The family subsequently moved to Missouri, where young Avery taught school and attended William Jewell College.

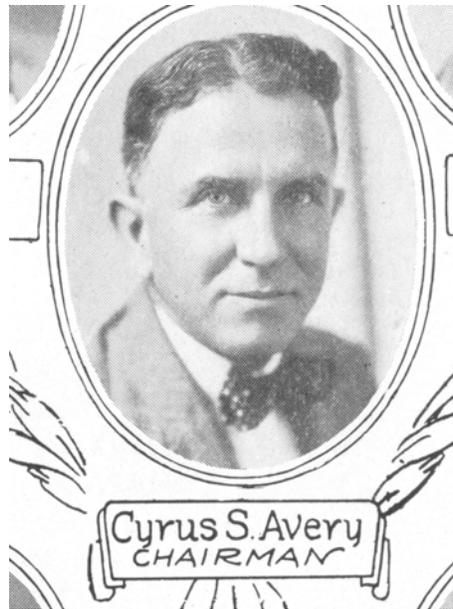
In 1898, he married and moved to Oklahoma City, which was just beginning its remarkable growth spurt that would make it the fastest growing city in the nation. Typical of his generation, Avery dabbled in a variety of businesses, such as insurance, real estate and

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loans. In 1907, after a short stint in Vinita and the discovery of the Glenpool Oil Field, he moved to Tulsa.

The young entrepreneur created a real estate development company, served as vice president of a coal company, and became secretary/treasurer of an oil company doing business in the Bartlesville and Bird Creek areas. His first love, however, remained farming, so he purchased a 1,400-acre spread northeast of Tulsa and quickly earned a reputation as an expert in low-maintenance pasture management and pure-bred livestock.

As an oilman, Avery recognized the importance of a flexible transportation system that could get crews and material into the oilfields and crude oil out. And as a farmer, he joined the ranks of those who had long believed that railroads sucked the profit from the production of cotton, grains and livestock. Frustrated with the limitations of railroads, Avery saw cars and trucks as the keys to his own and his community's financial future.



Cyrus Avery

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From 1913 to 1924, Avery climbed the ladder of the Good Roads Movement, a loosely affiliated group of people and organizations across the country who advocated the construction and maintenance of highways. Elected to a three-year term as Tulsa County Commissioner, he helped develop a low cost road maintenance system by paying farmers one dollar a mile to drag roads with a split-log rail after every rain. He also planted un-hulled sweet clover along rights-of-way to fight erosion and improve the scenery. Clover would still be seen growing along those roads 50 years later.

In 1917, as a new member of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce board of directors, Avery helped organize the Albert Pike Highway Association to develop a scenic byway from Colorado Springs, Colo., to Hot Springs, Ark. For nine years he served as president, which gave him the opportunity to meet other highway advocates from surrounding states. The result of his work became U.S. Highway 64, which naturally passed through Tulsa.

While working on the Albert Pike Highway, the ever innovative Avery was elected president of the Associated Highways of America, a powerful lobbying group backed by 42 organized highway associations across the country. The timing was perfect for Tulsa and Oklahoma. That same year, Congress passed the Federal Highway Act of 1921 that provided federal aid to the states for building an interconnected, interstate system of highways. The next year, more than \$75 million was appropriated for the program, provided to the states on a 50-50 matching basis.

While Avery was working his way into a position of power at the federal level, Oklahoma quickly fell behind other states in capturing its share of the matching funds. First, the problem was the rural dominance in the state Legislature, where county commissioners lobbied desperately to hold onto their control of the road building process. Then came the distraction of the brief but stormy administration of Governor Jack Walton, who was impeached his first year in office. By the end of 1923, the state of

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Oklahoma was providing a paltry \$250,000 a year for the Oklahoma Highway Department. The only matching funds available came from the counties, and then only the counties with cities large enough to pass bond issues.

With Walton impeached, Lieutenant Governor Martin Trapp turned his attention to the Good Roads Movement. An oilman and former bond salesman who advocated internal improvements for business development, Trapp led the charge to overhaul the Oklahoma Highway Department and generate a stream of revenue to build roads. The Legislature responded by creating a three-person commission with broad powers to set standards and disburse funds. They also instituted a 2.5 cent tax on every gallon of gasoline and a \$10 driving license fee. Sixty percent of the projected \$4.2 million would go to the state, while 40 percent would go to the counties. To implement the plan, Governor Trapp turned to Cyrus Avery.

As chairman of the newly reorganized Oklahoma Highway Department, Avery led the effort to set standards, hire professional engineers and designate more than 3,600 miles of roads eligible for the federal funds. Within six months, there were 24 federal aid projects underway on 127 miles of concrete surface and 17 bridges. By May of 1926, more than \$19 million had been invested in hard surfaced roads.

In 1925, while he was organizing the state system, Avery was appointed consulting highway specialist with the United States Bureau of Roads, the federal agency tasked with the monumental job of selecting and numbering interstate highways. After more than a decade of experience in the Good Roads Movement, the Tulsa businessman and farmer found himself in a position to make history.

At the time, the major east-west transcontinental highway from coast to coast was the Old National Trail that crossed the Mississippi River at St. Louis and traversed the Great Plains

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through Kansas. Avery used his influence to pull together allies from Illinois, Missouri, Texas and New Mexico to lobby for a different route. Under his plan, the new transcontinental highway would veer southwest from St. Louis, pass through Tulsa, and turn west in Oklahoma City. The new road, dubbed the Will Rogers Highway for promotional effect, became Route 66.

While Route 66 would eventually become his most famous legacy, Avery served the people of Tulsa and Oklahoma in a number of ways. From 1921 to 1923, he served on a committee to buy land and right-of-way for Spavinaw Lake and the pipeline that supplied Tulsa with a never ending supply of water. In 1928, he was a member of the executive committee that built the Tulsa Municipal Airport. That same year, he donated land for part of what would become Mohawk Park.

Other groups and leaders turned to Avery during the 1930s. Governor William J. Holloway appointed him to a special commission to study the state's educational system. The report was published. When the Great Depression cast its dark shadows across the state, Avery was asked to serve as director of the 13-county northeast district of the Works Progress Administration. Within a year, he had jobs for more than 18,000 desperate men and women, and by the time his term ended, he had supervised an investment of more than \$6 million in schools, armories, roads, dams and parks. He also found time to serve as president of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, an organization he had supported since 1917.

Cyrus Avery retired in 1958 at the age of 87. When asked for his recipe for happiness, he answered: "Someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to." Fittingly, his greatest achievement, Route 66, would offer a taste of that happiness to countless families looking for "something to do" and every bend of the road offering "something to look forward to."

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### **Joseph Danne: A Man of the Soil**

By the late 1930s, most farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma were struggling to survive. The first challenge had been the Great Depression, with ruinously low prices for their crops and livestock, followed by years of record drought and terrifying dust storms. Some hunkered down and fought back with the help of family, friends and government assistance. Others simply walked away, joining the army of drifters riding the rails and roaming the highways.

One farmer who fought back in his own unique way was an eccentric, self-taught plant geneticist who spent three decades patiently breeding different strains of wheat in the search for a plant that would increase harvests and improve profit margins. Thanks in large part to his efforts, farmers on the Southern Plains produced record harvests during the war and had a fighting chance to survive the environmental challenges and volatile markets of the post-war era. That man of the soil was Joseph Danne.

Danne was born in 1887 on a farm in western Nebraska. When he was six, his German-born parents bought a farm four and a half miles northwest of Kingfisher and joined thousands of other pioneers making the rocky transition from self-sufficient, subsistence-style farming to the production of cash crops intended for the marketplace.

Young Danne grew up marching to the beat of his own drum. He was a loner and lifelong bachelor who earned a reputation for thrift and hard work. Even late in life, he rarely used his tractor, preferring to plow behind two mules. He never installed electricity or plumbing in his homes, getting by with well water and outhouses. Despite the limitations of his eighth-grade education, he was a voracious reader with considerable knowledge of ancient history and astronomy. He spoke German, English and Spanish, invented practical devices, such as a scale that could weigh a single grain of wheat, and was known for inflexible honesty. When a

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neighbor bound his crop of oats and left without being paid, Danne showed up at his house before daylight the next morning with cash in hand.

At the age of 13, armed with a clear disposition for self-discipline and blessed with a boundless sense of curiosity, Danne read a magazine article that changed his life. The article described the work of Luther Burbank, the world famous plant geneticist who had developed new techniques of plant breeding. Using scientific methodology, Burbank surgically cross-bred plants to create new hybrids that shared the best qualities of the parents. In a world where crops had long been improved by simply saving the best seeds of one variety, the possibilities of creating new hybrids through surgical manipulation and selective breeding were revolutionary.

In 1908, Danne conducted his first cross-breeding experiments using cotton. From there, he expanded his efforts to cross-breeding oats, barley, wild flowers and lilies. He even tried breeding corn with sorghum and corn with Johnson grass. For the barnyard, the budding scientist cross-bred hogs and worked on a cross of a White Leghorn chicken with a Barred Rock chicken in an attempt to produce chicks with colorization that did not attract the attention of hawks. His greatest challenges, however, as well as his greatest achievements, came with the cross breeding of wheat.

On the rich soils of the Southern Plains, conditions did not favor cotton, the preferred cash crop of the era, so most farmers turned to wheat. For more than 6,000 years, wheat had been known as the “staff of life,” the “perfect food” with a unique combination of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins and minerals. It was perfect for the Southern Plains—a natural environment for native grasses and their genetic cousins, the various varieties of wheat.

Wheat had been introduced to Oklahoma by Indian farmers who grew the grain for domestic use. After the land runs, German

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and Russian farmers brought with them the hard winter wheats that had grown so well on the steppes of Turkey and Russia and later the plains of Kansas and Nebraska. By 1924, through the ancient process of selecting the biggest and strongest heads for seed stock, the most popular varieties for conditions in Oklahoma were Kansas Red and Blackhull.



Joseph Danne

During the first three decades of his life, Danne witnessed the great wheat bonanza. In 1896, when the price of a bushel of wheat was only 48 cents, territorial farmers planted a mere 250,000 acres of the grain. By 1919, with the price at \$2.10 a bushel, farmers planted wheat on 4,178,000 acres. Then came mechanized farm machinery, a decade of increased rainfall, and the spread of the wheat boom to the former grasslands of the Oklahoma Panhandle, where Texas County produced more wheat than any other county in the nation in 1921, 1926, 1928 and 1929.

Throughout this “golden age” of wheat production, farmers desperately searched for seeds with five primary qualities. Most of all, they wanted greater yields per acre, followed closely by drought resistance, disease resistance, uniform height and improved baking quality. In 1924, when Joseph Danne started his quest to find a new wheat that shared these qualities, the challenge must have seemed

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daunting. One single cross of two wheat plants created more than 10 billion genotypes, and of those, more than 2 million genotypes could reproduce again.

He started by crossing the two most popular pure bred lines, Kansas Red and Blackhull. The resulting plants, classified as C1, grew well. Carefully, Danne separated the harvested heads based on perceived qualities, using his own intuition and powers of observation. He then planted each of the types in 16-foot long rows and repeated the process each year thereafter. By 1928, he noticed that one type, C1H68B, yielded more than its cousins, so he focused on it and planted bigger plots. Within 10 years, the new variety out-yielded Blackhull by six bushels per acre, had a stronger straw and matured two days earlier. He called it Reliant and released it for sale for the first time in 1939.

Another lineage began in 1925 when Danne cross-bred a Burbank Quality spring wheat with one of the first Kansas Red-Blackhull hybrids. Within two years, he noticed among the progeny a small group of wheat that created only three small heads. Normally, he would have destroyed such underperformers, but he noticed that they had been the first to ripen. He classified the strongest seeds as C7H, planted more rows and continued watching them develop year after year. By 1931, they were ripening 10 days earlier than other varieties and producing on average 34 bushels per acre. Nine years later, he put the new hybrid on the market and called it Triumph.

For the rest of his life, Danne would continue improving and promoting his wheat varieties, always searching for the qualities that would produce more grain and give farmers a better shot at surviving the challenges of fickle weather, volatile prices and inconsistent federal farm policy. By the time of his death in 1959, more than 6 million acres in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas were planted in Danne wheat. Within another 10 years, the eccentric scientist-farmer's varieties made up 58.8 percent of all wheat grown in Oklahoma.

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Danne's legacy survived his death. In his will, he left \$250,000 to a foundation for the support of orphans and others in need. To the United States Department of Agriculture and Oklahoma A&M, he left his priceless collection that included 1,624 samples of seed wheat and detailed journals and notes stored in 5-gallon lard cans found in the cellar. His research, under the watchful eyes of others, would continue.

For most people, Joseph Danne's legacy can be seen every year in the wheat fields of western and northern Oklahoma. There, like squares on a patchwork quilt, are wheat fields that grow a deep green in the winter and turn a blaze gold in the spring. There, in the soil of Oklahoma, is the story of one determined farmer who had the curiosity and discipline to undertake the work of a lifetime.

### **Jack Zink: The Will to Win**

By the 1950s, Tulsa was struggling to retain its crown as the "Oil Capital of the World." The city had earned the title during a series of sensational oil discoveries in Oklahoma from 1902 to 1928, but the accumulated impact of the Great Depression, World War II, and declining production had stalled the growth of the oil patch in the state. Coastal cities, with direct access to crude oil shipped from overseas fields in the Middle East and South America, were emerging as the new centers of oil trading and refining.

One Tulsa-born business affected by that transition was the John Zink Company, founded in 1930 to produce burners for the oil industry where the application of heat was needed to break crude oil into its component parts. By 1950, with oil production declining and refinery construction drawn to Houston, New Orleans and New Jersey, the company had turned to consumer products, such as floor furnaces, water coolers and space fans to survive. John Steele Zink and his 20 employees needed a new direction. They found it through the innovation and creativity of the founder's son, Jack Zink.

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John Smith Zink, known all his life as Jack, was born in Tulsa in 1928. His father, a big, powerful man, taught him to work with his hands and to solve technical problems through teamwork and experimentation. His mother, Swannie, was a scholar who taught him the joys of learning and the freedom of living life on his own terms. After years of fun, football, and working in the family-owned foundry and plant, Jack attended Oklahoma A&M where he graduated in 1950 with a degree in mechanical engineering.



Jack Zink

Jack joined the John Zink Company as a “sales engineer,” a position his father hoped would reinvigorate their position in the oil industry outside the state. Throughout much of the decade, Jack was on the road more than 200 days a year, working with industrial clients who needed controlled heat applied to a variety of tasks ranging from refinery “crackers” to smokeless flares.

To win that industrial battle, Jack and his team at the company designed and built the first test furnace in the burner industry. It was a 10 by 14 foot box within a box, surrounded by water to absorb the vast amounts of heat generated in the testing process. There, under carefully controlled conditions, Jack and his team calculated and measured the endless variables of fuel mixture,

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thermal input sizes, heat transfer demands, heat release and turndown, firing positions, and shape of the flame.

One application of this methodical process was the development of a smokeless flare for a Mobil Oil Company refinery in East St. Louis. To eliminate the billowing clouds of black smoke coming from the flare stack, Jack did his measurements, conducted his experiments in the test furnace, and installed a new burner that introduced steam around the perimeter of the stack. As waste gasses were discharged, they would be mixed with steam to raise the heat high enough to burn both the gas and the smoke it created.

With a crowd of Mobil officials watching, Jack pushed the button to ignite the pilot for the first time, but they saw nothing. He pushed it again, but they could neither see nor hear anything. The only option was to climb the 150-foot tower to do a visual inspection. Without harness or safety net, Jack pulled himself up one step at a time until he got close to the top. Then, he discovered what was wrong. The design worked too well for them to see any smoke or even hear the roar of the flame from the ground. It was working perfectly.

With his father taking care of manufacturing at home, Jack pursued business around the world. In 1960, to avoid the international trade barriers that protected foreign markets from American competition, he took the John Zink Company international. He established an office in Mexico to sell burners to Pemex, the national oil company, and followed with subsidiaries and manufacturing plants in London, Paris, Frankfurt and Rome.

Jack also pioneered burners, incinerators and oxidizers for pollution control in the 1960s as environmental standards forced companies to do something about the quality of water, air and soil. By 1972, the John Zink Company was the largest family owned business west of the Mississippi River, with two plants in Tulsa

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employing 600 people to satisfy the demands for its various applications of burners.

The success of the company was a reflection of the qualities shared by Jack and his father. They were innovators who emphasized teamwork. They were fierce competitors who balanced caution with courage as they moved steadily ahead. And they shared an overdeveloped sense of tenacity. As Jack frequently said, there are five rules for success: “Never, never, never, never, never give up.” These same qualities took the Zink team to the highest levels of automobile racing.

Jack could not remember a time when he did not enjoy speed. He had a Harley-Davidson 45-cubic-inch motorcycle in high school, raced the family coupe around a track he laid out behind the plant, and built a home-made midget race car from junk parts by the time he was 19. When his father asked if he could put a better car on the track if he had some financial backing, he said “yes.” In 1947, they purchased a kit and assembled a Kurtis-Kraft midget with a four-cylinder Offenhauser engine. The Zink Racing Team was born.

While the Zink midget cars were winning on the regional circuit from Kansas City to Houston, Jack purchased and drove his first “jalopy” stock car, a ‘37 Ford sedan, and followed by putting on the track a succession of other stock cars including a Chevy and an Oldsmobile. By 1952, he was called in one publication, “the best known name in the circuit right now ... he likes to win and he gives everything he has.” With chief mechanic Dennie Moore and drivers such as Jimmy Reece and Buzz Barton, the Zink Racing Team dominated tracks across the state.

In 1952, ready for the next challenge, Jack purchased and ran a car in the Indianapolis 500. With Oklahoma City native Jimmy Reece in the cockpit, they came in a surprising seventh. Three years later, in yet another car, Bob Swiekert drove the Zink Special to a first place finish. A year later, the Zink entry with Pat Flaherty

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aboard won for a second consecutive time, a rare feat in a world where machine, driver, team and luck all play a role in success.

Jack did not stop there. He continued putting cars on the Speedway at Indianapolis until 1967, including the first experimental race car equipped with a turbine engine. In 1962, the car ran several fast laps, good enough to qualify, but not fast enough to win. Jack, never content with just competing, did not run it in the race. Instead, he put his energy into developing one of the first rear-engine, Grand Prix-style cars to run at Indy. In the team's last race at the Speedway, the innovative Zink Special came in fourth.

Jack was not finished with racing, however. In 1967, he purchased the best off-road motorcycle available and competed in the Mexican-1,000, a grueling test of courage and endurance down the Baja peninsula. He followed that by designing and building a two-seat dune buggy that he ultimately drove to first place finishes at the Baja 500, the Parker 500, the Sandmaster and other races. When his chief mechanic and teammate, Dennie Moore, noticed that all the dents were on the passenger side of the car where he sat, he built a one-seat car for Jack powered by a juiced-up Porsche engine. Once again, Jack drove the car to numerous victories across the country.

For Jack, his sister Jill, and their father, John, winning in the worlds of business and racing were not enough. They wanted to make a difference in the lives of their neighbors. Through their foundations, they invested in organizations such as the Boy Scouts, the Tulsa Fairgrounds, the Salvation Army and the National Conference of Christians and Jews. One of the most visible results of their generosity and leadership was the Tulsa River Parks Project, which contributed to a sense of community with trails, public art, and a low-water dam that created a body of water city officials named Zink Lake.

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Late in life, when he was asked to name his most cherished accomplishment, Jack Zink did not suggest the racing victories he had won, the inventions he had pioneered, or the business empire he had expanded. Instead, he said he was most proud of the Zink Ranch, a nature preserve on the outskirts of Tulsa his father had started in 1931 and grown to 33,000 acres. To Jack, it was more than land and woods and more than a place for Boy Scouts and outdoor recreation. The Zink Ranch was a place where people could get close to nature, test themselves and rediscover the joys of being with friends and family. For a man who loved to win, there was no better reward.

Bob L. Blackburn, Ph.D., is executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, with headquarters at the Smithsonian-quality museum and research facility, the Oklahoma History Center. For these and other stories about Oklahoma innovators, see the book, *We Know We Belong to the Land: The Centennial History of Oklahoma*, by Paul F. Lambert and Bob L. Blackburn.

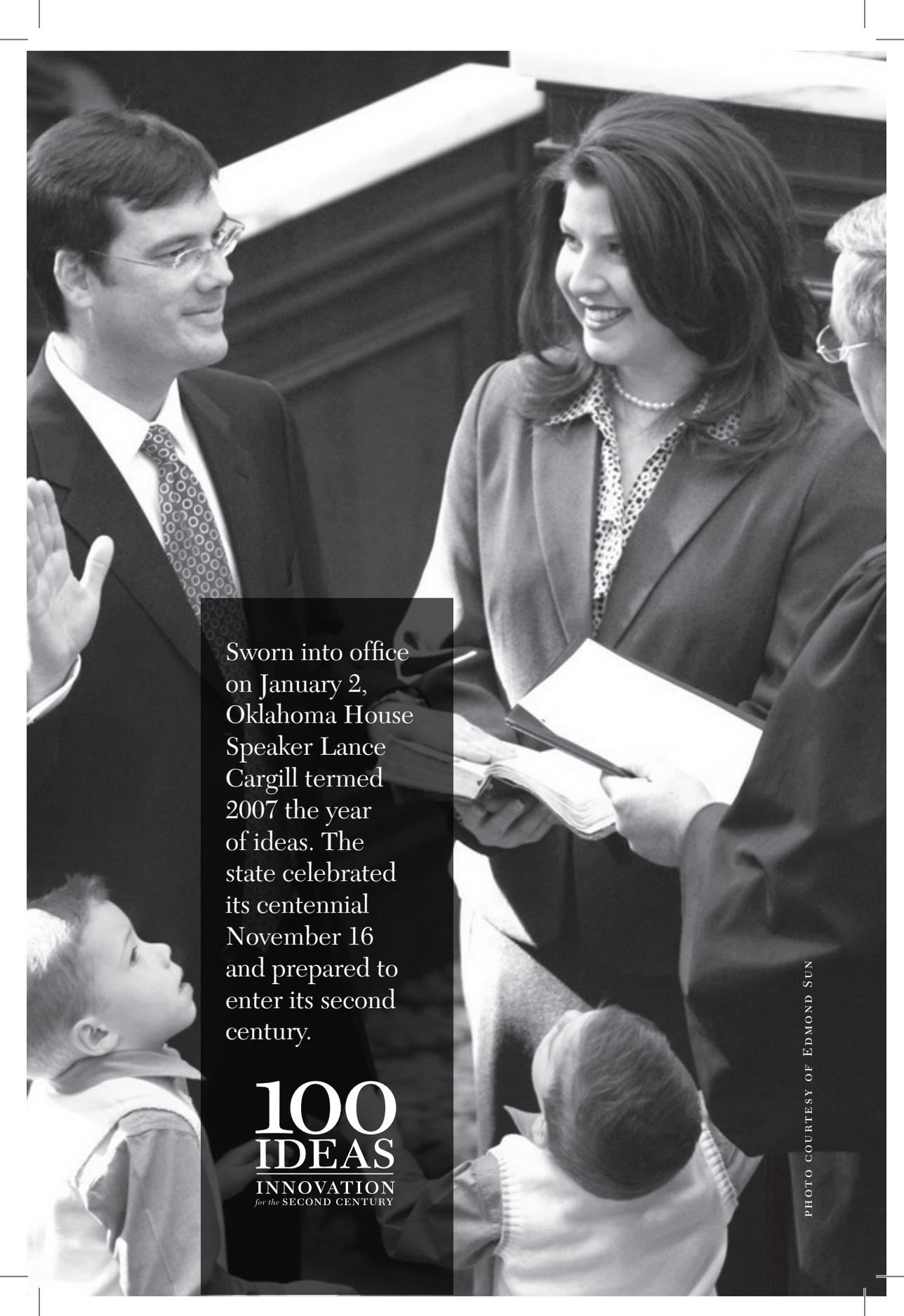
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## **PART II**

### **The 100 Ideas Initiative**





Sworn into office  
on January 2,  
Oklahoma House  
Speaker Lance  
Cargill termed  
2007 the year  
of ideas. The  
state celebrated  
its centennial  
November 16  
and prepared to  
enter its second  
century.

**100**  
**IDEAS**  
INNOVATION  
*for the SECOND CENTURY*



## CHAPTER 3

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### One Good Idea Leads to Thousands More—The 100 Ideas Initiative in 2007

*“The way to get good ideas is to get lots of ideas.”*

*~Dr. Linus Pauling*

**O**n the morning of Jan. 2, 2007, state lawmakers arrived at the Capitol to find new blank notebooks waiting on their desks. The notebooks bore the logo for a new project, the 100 Ideas Initiative.

The notebooks were a powerful reminder of the boundless future ahead of Oklahoma.

In 2007, every Oklahoman agreed that as the state set out on its second century the future looked promising. The 100 Ideas Initiative harnessed that sense of optimism—to look ahead not just to the next few years, but also to the long-term future of the state.

When the 100 Ideas Initiative formally kicked off, it did so at the state’s new History Center—a fitting location to look to the future from a building that houses the state’s past.

“As we embark on Oklahoma’s Centennial year, our pioneer spirit is alive and well. It’s time to harness that spirit to create a vision for our second century,” said House Speaker Lance Cargill at the January launch press conference. “Too often at the state

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Capitol we hear the same ideas again and again, and often from the same people. I think our citizens deserve better and expect better. Let's work together to make the next chapter of our state's history even better than the first."

As the first 100 years of Oklahoma's story ended, a new chapter began. And the state's Centennial was an integral part of the vision of 100 Ideas. In fact, the Oklahoma Centennial Commission recognized the initiative as an official Centennial Project.

Almost immediately after the beginning of the initiative, newspapers around the state began weighing in on the merits of the 100 Ideas Initiative. The reviews were encouraging.

*The Sand Springs Leader* opined "government seems a lot like the weather sometimes—everybody complains about it, but nobody does anything about it. Now, thanks to a bold initiative by new House Speaker Lance Cargill, Oklahomans have a chance to do something, or at least let their voices be heard."

"The plan is not simply to govern from 23rd and Lincoln outward, but to provide Oklahomans a different way to make their voices heard," wrote *The Oklahoman's* editorial board. "There's the invitation. Grab a pen and start writing."

Said *The Norman Transcript*, "What a refreshing challenge: Ask the voters and taxpayers what needs to be done to make Oklahoma a shining star in its centennial year."

At the heart of the initiative was essentially one good idea: Instead of relying on the same old sources for ideas, the 100 Ideas Initiative sought out the state's citizens, to engage them and to ask for their ideas.

"The 100 Ideas Initiative was not interested in Republican ideas or Democratic ideas," adds Cargill. "The initiative was interested in good ideas. The 100 Ideas Initiative invited all

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Oklahomans, regardless of geography, age, background or political party, to participate. And they responded overwhelmingly.”

To that end, an advisory panel was formed, with members representing the state’s best and brightest from various professions and backgrounds—outstanding Oklahomans to help find the best ideas as the initiative sought input from citizens across the state.

True to the bipartisan spirit of the 100 Ideas Initiative, the advisory board included an equal representation of Republicans and Democrats, and one Independent. The advisory board approved ideas included in the book.

Members of the board, all Oklahomans, include:

- Bruce Benbrook, Woodward resident, president and chairman of Stock Exchange Bank.
  - Carlos Bermudez, Newalla resident and owner of Sonshine Services, a home and commercial remodeling and repair business.
  - J. Donald Capra, M.D., Oklahoma City resident and president-emeritus, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.
  - Tom Cooper, Tulsa resident and chairman and chief executive of the Warren Professional Building Corporation.
  - Christopher Howard, vice president for Strategic and Leadership Initiatives at the University of Oklahoma, a veteran and Rhodes Scholar.
  - Tom Langdon, Edmond resident and vice president of Stephens Inc., an investment banking firm.
  - Melissa McLawhorn-Houston, a licensed attorney and chief of staff for the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security.
  - Xavier Neira, vice president of special projects, Rooney Holdings Inc.
  - Lori Kromer Peterson, vice president of public policy, Oklahoma Farm Bureau.
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- Daniel Pullin, associate vice president and executive director for the University of Oklahoma’s Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth.
- Jason Ramsey, policy analyst for Oklahoma State University/A&M Board of Regents.

Former state Rep. Thad Balkman of Norman was tapped to serve as executive director of the initiative.

“It was an exciting opportunity. I knew going in this would be a statewide initiative and that we would have the chance to connect with community leaders across Oklahoma,” says Balkman. “In particular, the opportunities to meet with young Oklahomans and see their passion and enthusiasm about our state have been tremendous.”

An interactive Web site for the initiative launched with video clips and other multimedia, along with an entire section of the site devoted to tools allowing any citizen of Oklahoma to submit and track ideas.



Now that’s an idea! The 100 Ideas advisory board met at the Oklahoma History Center and sifted through more than 3000 ideas to find the best for the state’s second century.

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Oklahomans responded, as they always do, with tremendous energy and generosity. From business leaders at Oklahoma corporations to city chambers, to state agencies and universities, a host of groups immediately embraced the effort.

The heart of the initiative was a series of IdeaRaisers held across the state. “An IdeaRaiser is a gathering of people who have something in common whether geographically or by sharing an interest in a particular field,” says Balkman. “Instead of asking for money at a fundraiser like most politicians do, we asked people to simply bring their ideas to the events. We found that the typical attendee had a lot of optimism. Too often you think of these kinds of events turning into a gripe session. These were refreshing because those who came were positive and optimistic about the future.”

Soon those involved in the initiative began traveling across the state to hold IdeaRaisers as an opportunity for Oklahoma’s citizens to participate directly in the initiative. In all, more than 60 would be held.

The 100 Ideas Initiative partnered with the Oklahoma Community Institute—a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Oklahoma City that provides leadership and assistance to enable the state’s citizens to improve their communities. OCI provides community-wide strategic planning, resource mapping for communities, a citizens academy and more. The organization was a perfect fit for the mission of the 100 Ideas Initiative.

Balkman pointed to the hard work of Dana Shadid, OCI’s executive director, and Jodi Lewis, OCI’s director of development and planning, and other OCI staff members as being crucial to the success of 100 Ideas.

“OCI has a great history of going out across the state and helping communities come up with a plan to move forward,” says Balkman. “They were just a natural fit in that they have so much experience going to communities and facilitating events similar to

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IdeaRaisers. We conducted 61 IdeaRaisers in 2007, and because of the OCI, we didn't have to learn on the job. We were able to hit the ground running from day one, and the proof is in the quality of ideas that have been generated.”

From the beginning, the initiative's organizers laid down clear markers for those coming forward with ideas. First, the ideas should be relevant to day-to-day life. Second, ideas should be about the future. Third, no idea should unnecessarily expand the role of government. At every IdeaRaiser, the majority of the hour-long meetings were spent with participants broken into small brainstorming groups of six to eight focused on solutions, not complaints.



Dr. Christopher Howard, associate vice president at the University of Oklahoma, leads a discussion at an IdeaRaiser held on the Norman campus. He also served on the 100 Ideas advisory board.

The first IdeaRaiser kicked off in Oklahoma City at the Presbyterian Health Foundation, attracting more than 100 participants. Attendees discussed how to foster the state's burgeoning biotech industry, medical research, local entrepreneurs and other health professionals in Oklahoma. At the Jan. 30 event,

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participants offered suggestions, including attracting a federal research laboratory to Oklahoma, alternative energy research efforts and increasing the retention of college graduates in the state.

“The 100 Ideas Initiative is taking a bold step toward making Oklahoma’s next century a great one,” said Hershel Lamirand, executive director of the Oklahoma Health Center Foundation, which helped sponsor the event. “Hopefully these IdeaRaisers will produce the kinds of innovative solutions that will make our state a leader in the biotech fields and many others.”

Dr. Robert Mannel, director of the University of Oklahoma’s Cancer Institute, praised the effort to “build the Oklahoma of the future and not rely on what we’ve done in the past.”

The Oklahoma City event soon propelled the efforts of the 100 Ideas Initiative to every corner of the state. Within weeks, IdeaRaisers had been held in Tulsa, Tahlequah and McAlester. Within the first eight days of the initiative’s existence, the first 100 ideas had already been submitted. By mid-March, 200 more ideas had been logged at the Web site alone. And by June, that number had surpassed the 1,000 mark. In all, ideas submitted at the events and on the Web surpassed 3,500.

A defining moment came early in the initiative at an IdeaRaiser held in March at the Eastern Oklahoma State College campus in McAlester. A student stood before the gathered attendees and thanked state leaders for providing him with the opportunity for a college education through Oklahoma’s Higher Learning Access Program, a college scholarship program for middle class families. But the student pointed out that no minimum grade point average requirements existed for OHLAP recipients while they were in college.

The student had a simple, but effective, idea: institute a GPA requirement, setting higher standards for students and ensuring taxpayers get a good return on their investments.

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“We didn’t wait for the book to be published. By the end of the 2007 legislative session, that student’s idea had already become law,” says Cargill. “That shows you the power of ideas, when you take the time to reach out to a state’s citizenry. Before the initiative could even be completed, one citizen’s idea had already worked its way through the legislative process. And it never would have happened without that IdeaRaiser.”

“It didn’t seem to matter where we held an IdeaRaiser, we always attracted leaders across party lines, business leaders and engaged, informed citizens,” says Balkman. “They were always willing to show up and bring good ideas, whether we were in the Panhandle, Altus, Grove or Idabel.”

An early IdeaRaiser held in Tahlequah featured Florida’s Speaker of the House Marco Rubio. Part of the inspiration for Oklahoma’s 100 Ideas Initiative stemmed from a similar effort in Florida.

“We’re hoping you’ll come up with ideas the political process hasn’t picked up on yet,” Rubio told the Tahlequah attendees. “As you engage people at every level, I think you’ll find there are ideas that no one is talking about or writing about, but they’re still important.”

IdeaRaisers were held on rural health care, on the needs of law enforcement, on education, on mental health, on the aerospace industry, on the future of farming, on the state’s music industry, on youth and government, on sports events in the state, even on Oklahoma’s weather. If it mattered to Oklahomans, chances are it was discussed at an IdeaRaiser in 2007.

At an aerospace-focused event, a group of participants suggested establishing Oklahoma as the world’s primary center for aerospace and logistics education. At a law enforcement and public safety IdeaRaiser, participants urged creating “family justice” courts to address issues like domestic violence and custody, while

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others urged a BRAC-like, or Base Realignment and Closure, committee to examine state prisons.

At a mental health IdeaRaiser, participants came up with a suggestion for training of school staff and health care workers in suicide prevention, while others offered ideas on fostering telemedicine in rural areas. At an education-focused event sponsored by the Oklahoma Education Association, attendees generated ideas about restructuring the school day to allow for additional time for tutoring and mentoring.

And out of the ideas generated at the events, daring proposals always emerged. Oklahomans from all walks of life and all corners of the state contributed to the sudden wealth of ideas. Across the state, people embraced 100 Ideas as a tool to shake up the tired ways of the past.

At an IdeaRaiser focused on sporting events held at the AT&T Bricktown Ballpark in Oklahoma City, one group of participants urged Oklahoma to form a committee aimed at making Oklahoma City the host city for the Olympics.

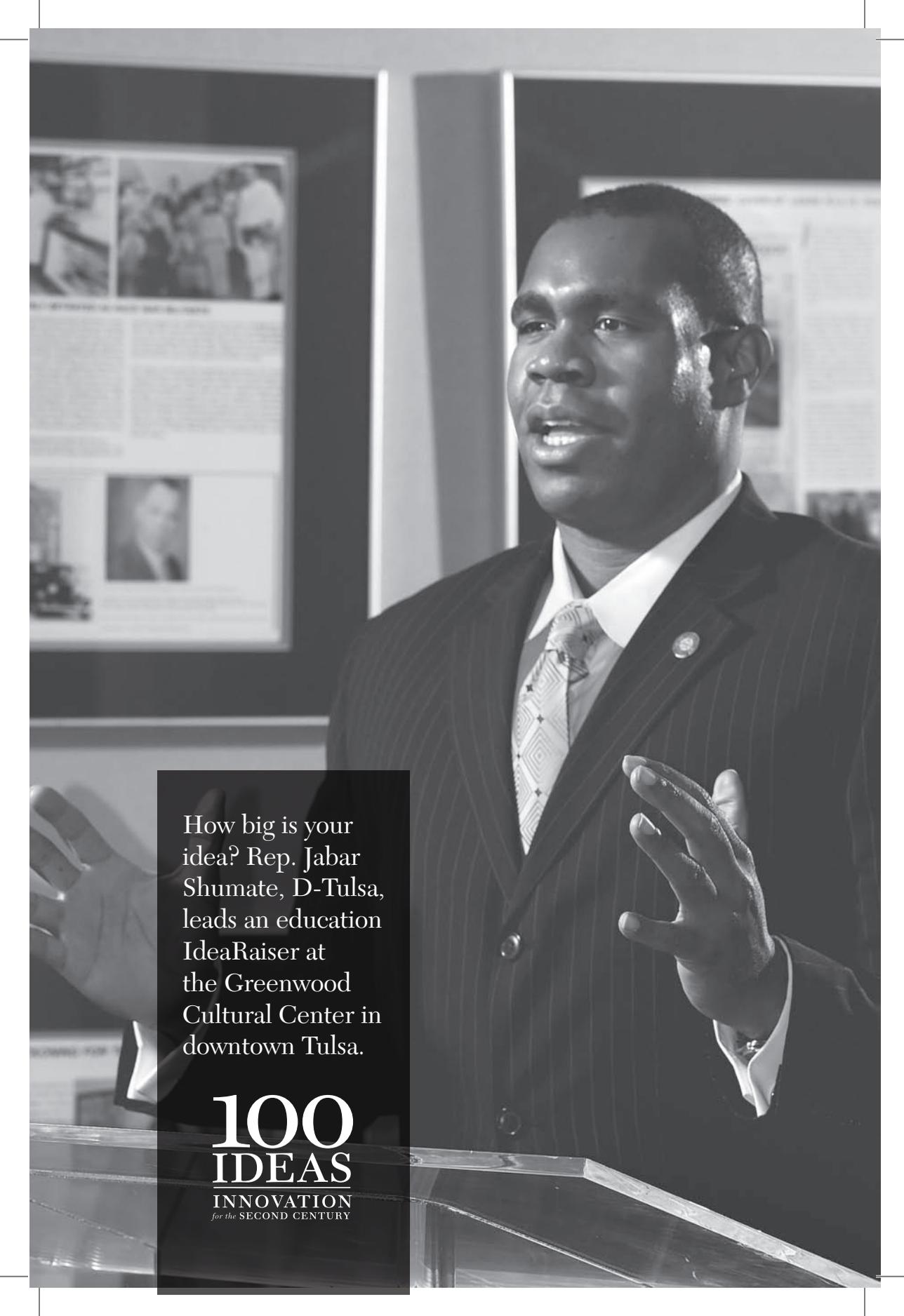
Not every idea made its way into the blueprint of the final book. But even if an idea didn't make it into the book, the sheer number of ideas shows the creativity of Oklahomans. Even if the 100 Ideas Initiative hadn't received any ideas, the very process of going out across the state and making an effort was positive for the state.

“The 100 Ideas Initiative will always be a work in progress,” says Balkman as he marks a turning point for the initiative with the publication of the book. “The other 3,400 ideas that didn't get selected for the book will be available to the public on the Web site. And we hope it will drive debate and discussion among policy makers for the next decade. We've kick-started a decades-long conversation about how to improve Oklahoma.”

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Adds Cargill: “The 100 Ideas book is a good road map for legislators, but not all the ideas require government participation. And that’s the best thing to come out of this. Throughout this process of gathering ideas, Oklahomans have become more engaged in the policy-making process. Many of these folks have never been involved in that way before. They were either too busy with work or family, or they simply didn’t know how to get involved. The 100 Ideas Initiative has been able to get them involved, and that will have a lasting impact on Oklahoma.”

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A black and white photograph of Rep. Jabar Shumate, a Black man in a pinstriped suit and tie, speaking at a podium. He is gesturing with his hands. The background shows a wall with framed newspaper clippings and photos.

How big is your  
idea? Rep. Jabar  
Shumate, D-Tulsa,  
leads an education  
IdeaRaiser at  
the Greenwood  
Cultural Center in  
downtown Tulsa.

**100**  
**IDEAS**  
INNOVATION  
*for the SECOND CENTURY*



## CHAPTER 4

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### Challenges and Solutions for Oklahoma's Future

*“Capital isn't that important in business. Experience isn't that important. You can get both of these things. What is important is ideas.”*

*~Harvey S. Firestone, founder of Firestone  
Tire & Rubber Company, 1868-1938*

**H**arvey Firestone's observation applies as easily to our state's social compact as it does to the world of business. Especially now, in the leading years of the Information Age, good ideas drive success.

Ideas—whether good or bad—have shaped human history. One need only look at the track records of Western democracies compared to the failures of global communism. The best ideas flower in an environment of freedom, free enterprise and representative government. These helped fuel a human revolution of progress, while ideas about tyranny and oppression caused decades of misery and death in other nations.

Ideas matter. And they matter as much in Oklahoma as anywhere else.

Oklahoma is a young state—one of America's youngest—a place of new beginnings, straight-talking common sense and pioneer spirit. Oklahomans thrive on the energy of our short history, but must also face up to the tasks before the state.

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There's good news about the opportunity and optimism that make Oklahoma grand. At the same time, the state faces six major challenges in the near future.

Oklahoma must attract and keep talent, boost new economic growth and job opportunities, prepare our state's infrastructure for coming decades, foster a modern and efficient state government, work for a high-caliber health care system and a healthy citizenry in order to compete in the global marketplace, and increase and enhance quality of life.

In the next six chapters, you'll read about ideas that address these major challenges.

### **Challenge 1: Attracting Talent and Innovation to Our State**

Much has been done in recent years to address the challenge of "brain drain," to stop our best and brightest from leaving our state. But Oklahoma can do more to prepare students for success, to retain our best and brightest and propel the state into the next century of its history. Chapter 5 features ideas to boost education and encourage investments in science and technology.

### **Challenge 2: Boosting New Economic Growth and Job Opportunities**

Once Oklahoma has addressed the challenge of keeping talented people and attracting more, the state needs to establish the right conditions for economic growth. In just the last few years, Oklahoma's public policy has started to remove barriers to growth. It's time to take the next step with new ideas.

### **Challenge 3: Preparing for Oklahoma's Energy, Communications and Transportation Future**

Oklahoma must confront problems with infrastructure, as well as opportunities—whether in transportation, communications, energy or in other areas. In many parts of the state, travelers must cross bridges that date back to the Model T era of automobiles.

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This inadequate transportation infrastructure has started to improve gradually during the past few years, with a renewed commitment to invest billions of dollars into roads and bridges across the state. Even faced with such challenges, Oklahoma is poised for tremendous opportunities as well. In the area of energy policy, for example, Oklahoma is not only blessed with tremendous oil and gas resources, our state also stands to benefit from advances in areas like biofuels and wind energy.

#### **Challenge 4: Creating a Modern and Efficient 21st Century State Government**

Through the years, Oklahoma's state government has developed a massive government bureaucracy. Compared to other states of similar size, Oklahoma's state government is swimming in an alphabet soup of "ABCs" (agencies, boards and commissions). It's time to modernize state government and make it more attuned to the needs of the new century, rather than being held back by inefficient modes of governing from the past.

#### **Challenge 5: A Healthy Oklahoma**

As the state moves into the next century, Oklahomans have an opportunity to forge a pathway for a healthier citizenry. Obesity, for example, affects more than 60 percent of Oklahomans. The increase of diabetes is staggering. But across the state, people are coming together to identify health concerns and promote physical activity and healthier lifestyles. At the dozens of IdeaRaisers held across Oklahoma, citizens time and again stepped forward with ideas about fitness, nutrition in our schools, rural health, and access to quality care.

#### **Challenge 6: Increasing and Enhancing Oklahoma's Quality of Life**

Oklahoma is blessed with a varied geography, beautiful natural landscapes and abundant outdoor options. That's just one area that affects quality of life. IdeaRaisers sparked optimistic

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discussions about policies and ideas to make Oklahoma an increasingly attractive place to live, raise children and retire. Topics addressed range from policies on natural resources to tourism and public safety.

Oklahomans across the state have stepped forward with workable and innovative solutions to each of these challenges. In the coming years, it will be up to all Oklahomans to respond and to act.

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## **PART III**

### **100 Ideas for the Second Century**







## CHAPTER 5

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### Challenge 1: Attracting Talent and Innovation to Our State

*“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”*

*~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**M**eet John and Kathleen of Fort Worth, Texas—formerly residents of Norman.

John and Kathleen are 1999 graduates from Norman High School, and they were born and raised in Oklahoma. But they don’t live in our state now, and the chances of seeing them return soon are slim.

John knew from his early teen years that he wanted to be an engineer. He took advanced placement math and science courses throughout his high school years, aced his SAT, and gained admission to prestigious Rice University in Houston, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering.

Kathleen also earned a high grade point average while at Norman High, took advanced placement classes, performed similarly well on her college entrance exams and attended the University of Oklahoma. Kathleen majored in art history, with an eye toward a career in arts administration. After graduating from OU, she served as assistant director of Development at the Norman Arts Council.

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After graduating from Rice, John took a position as a systems engineer with Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Corporation in Fort Worth, Texas. Meanwhile, Kathleen's work in Norman paid off with a position as program manager for the Fort Worth Community Arts Center.

Kathleen and John had been high school sweethearts, and rekindled their relationship after college. Now—nearly a decade after both graduated with honors from a high school in Oklahoma—these two young professionals have a new life in Texas.

They return to Norman to visit family and friends around Thanksgiving and Christmas every year. And on these occasional holiday visits, John and Kathleen grow homesick for Oklahoma. They have fond memories of growing up in their hometown. But with full lives and flourishing careers in Fort Worth, their prospects for lifelong success are better if they remain exiles from their home state.

John and Kathleen's narrative is a true story about two young, bright, and successful people who could be living in Oklahoma. But because of a lack of the right kinds of opportunities, they're gone—with very little chance of coming back.

It's a familiar scenario played out in cities, suburbs and small towns across our state.

Just about everyone who worries about the economic future of Oklahoma has used the two words "brain drain" at some point. As often as Oklahomans use the term, it's easy to forget that John and Kathleen are real people. And their departure from Oklahoma has real consequences.

Oklahoma has made significant progress in recent years, but the state is still not doing enough to prepare students for success once they graduate. Worse, Oklahoma isn't doing enough to retain

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our best and brightest, the high achievers who can propel the state into the next century of its history.

Doing so requires a concerted approach involving an education system with high standards and accountability, rigorous economic development, updated infrastructure, a removal of barriers to growth and measures to boost our state's quality of life.

Many of these topics will be covered in additional detail in later chapters. But in examining the first challenge of the 100 Ideas Initiative—*Attracting Talent and Innovation to Our State*—this chapter includes ideas submitted to the initiative that aim to boost education, science and technology in Oklahoma. The next chapter examines another piece of the puzzle: establishing the right conditions for economic growth.

*New York Times* columnist David Brooks has written about the need for what he calls a “human capital agenda” for America.

“The United States became the richest country because in the 19th and 20th centuries it had the most schooling and the best circumstances to help people develop their own capacities,” Brooks wrote on May 15, 2007. “But this advantage is eroding. High school graduation rates have peaked and are sliding. And during the next 25 years, the Educational Testing Service reports, better educated people will leave the work force and they’ll be replaced by people with less education and worse skills.”

That also describes Oklahoma's challenge. Building wealth in every sense of the term—attracting and retaining talent and innovation in our state—requires the right system of education. If Oklahoma doesn't have it, the state will lose its competitive advantage not only to other states, but also to other nations in the global marketplace.

However, more money alone isn't a panacea, and neither is boosting the number of in-state college graduates if that means lowered academic standards. Oklahoma must be cautious about

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lowering academic standards simply to artificially raise test scores or the raw number of graduates.

According to data provided by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, far too many first- and second-year freshmen have taken one or more remedial courses in math, English and other core curriculum subjects—by some estimates about 60 percent of these students end up taking such classes. It turns out that even though remediation students are on college campuses, they are not really college-level students. In other words, Oklahoma cannot bluff its way into a more educated work force.

Brooks has observed that America as a whole now spends more per capita on education than any other nation on earth, with mediocre results.

Oklahomans have been generous with investments in education in recent years, with record budget increases for both common and higher education, and several years of pay raises for teachers. Oklahoma spends more on education as a percentage of its state budget than any other state in the union.

Nevertheless, investments must be coupled with reforms to be effective.

There's no question that Oklahomans should continue to invest in education—and they should also expect better results. Oklahoma needs a bold new approach that rewards success in our K-12 schools and demands excellence from higher education. As hard as teachers work, the status quo in Oklahoma is inadequate to prepare students to compete globally.

Meanwhile, enhancing high school graduates' preparation and creating more qualified bachelor's degree graduates is vital to solve the biggest driver of the brain drain: job opportunities. To confront that challenge, Oklahoma must do a better job of enhancing opportunities in fields like science and technology.

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Oklahoma has several emerging bright spots in this area.

At the University of Oklahoma, for example, the Oklahoma Technology Center has formed the University Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth, designed to spin off high-tech companies and keep them here. Oklahoma ranks fourth in the nation in the number of businesses started per 100,000 residents, according to the Kaufmann Index of Entrepreneurial Activity. The Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth aims to harness that entrepreneurial energy by moving technology developed at OU into the marketplace.

The Oklahoma Nanotech Initiative is another example—a project coordinated by the State Chamber of Oklahoma and funded by the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology. Oklahoma has a unique opportunity to position itself in a leading role in nanotechnology, a relatively new industry.

At the high school level, Bank of Oklahoma vice chairman Burns Hargis recently led an effort to host a regional U.S. FIRST robotics competition in Oklahoma City—a critical step in the state’s efforts to join the quest for a knowledge-based economy. The competition blends the exhilaration of an athletic competition with engineering and science skills.

U.S. FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) was first established by inventor Dean Kamen in 1989. Through the competition, dozens of student teams from Kansas, Missouri, Texas and other surrounding states are paired with professional mentors and have six weeks to design and build remote-controlled robots from a common set of basic parts.

Research has shown that FIRST participants are 35 percent more likely to attend college and twice as likely to major in science and engineering. Encouraging students to get interested in math, science and engineering as early as possible will be essential to our efforts to foster burgeoning industries in the areas of aerospace and biotechnology.

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Both bioscience and aerospace have the potential to reverse Oklahoma's brain drain.

Aerospace has significant promise, with one in 10 Oklahomans receiving their income from aerospace, according to the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission. The industry accounts for some 10 percent of the state's economy.

With growing enrollment in aerospace engineering programs in Oklahoma's institutions of higher education, our state is poised to be on the leading edge of this industry. A 2006 report by the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce showed that the aerospace and bioscience industries combined inject \$12 billion a year into the region. Nearly 45,000 are employed in bioscience fields in central Oklahoma, with spin-off jobs raising that number to 90,000.

High-tech industries like nanotechnology, bioscience and aerospace represent Oklahoma's path to the future. If Oklahoma can attract and retain just a small share of this industry, the payoff and growth in opportunity could be enormous.

Competing in these industries requires investments from both the private and public sectors. In recent years, the state Legislature has injected tens of millions for medical research in Oklahoma. These investments include dollars for a diabetes center in our state, provided through the auspices of the University of Oklahoma. The state has also invested in a comprehensive cancer center, expected to open in 2009, millions for the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology and funding for a new research tower for the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.

OMRF stands as a testament to the impact biosciences can make on our state. For more than six decades, OMRF has grown from a small two-person operation into a world-class biomedical center. Fifty scientists now work at OMRF, researching diseases ranging from Alzheimer's to arthritis to AIDS—with new lifesaving drugs introduced to the market.

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There's no question that industries like aerospace and bioscience hold great promise for our state. Every Oklahoman stands to benefit—in the form of new opportunity, more jobs and greater advances that make life better. And in the future, young people like John and Kathleen could decide to stay in Oklahoma and take part in our success story.

**Idea #1: Offer an “Entrepreneurship 101” Class for College Students**

In the 21st century, Oklahomans will need more entrepreneurial skills to compete in the global marketplace. Entrepreneurship should not be limited to areas like technology, but should be considered in all fields. All state universities and colleges should offer an “Entrepreneurship 101” class with identical curriculum across the state. Any student would benefit from such a class—whether a horticulture major or an English major. As part of the curriculum for entrepreneurship class, every student would be required to present a traditional business plan or an application for a Small Business Innovation Research Program (SBIR) grant. A possible addition to this would be the creation of a Web site as a repository for proposals.

**Idea #2: Establish the Oklahoma Research Institute (ORI)**

Establish the Oklahoma Research Institute, a nonprofit, applied research and development organization. This would be similar to the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) of San Antonio, which is housed on 1,200 acres with nearly 2 million square feet of laboratories, test facilities, workshops and offices. The Oklahoma Research Institute would become a place where our best and brightest college graduates in engineering and applied sciences fields can pursue high-tech research and development. Possible areas of focus include alternative energy sources, aerospace, bioscience and nanotechnology.

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**Idea#3: Create an Oklahoma Alumni Network and Job Bank**

Though more college graduates remain in Oklahoma to pursue careers than in years past, far too many still leave. Many might return if they had easy access to information about career opportunities in their field. Oklahoma should establish a voluntary alumni network and an online job bank for all college graduates, including those who have moved away for career opportunities, to keep them informed about Oklahoma job openings that match their skill sets.

**Idea #4: Require More Instructional Days for Oklahoma Students**

Let's put Oklahoma on the map with the most student instructional days in the nation, at least 190. Currently, Oklahoma lags behind surrounding states in instructional days with 175 days compared to 186 days for Kansas, 180 days for New Mexico and Texas, and 178 days for Arkansas. The issue of instructional days is not merely a regional competitive issue, but a global one. The state should examine paying for these increased days through administrative savings.

**Idea #5: Boost Arts Education in Schools**

To foster a capable work force, our state must include increased arts education in schools as an important goal. Only a thriving quality of life in Oklahoma will attract and retain the best and the brightest. The arts encourage intellectual development in a child's youngest years. Public-private funding for arts instructors and certification of arts specialists are two important areas that should be examined.

**Idea #6: Offer Scholarships for Teachers**

Oklahoma should offer a program similar to "OHLAP" (Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program) for teachers. Many corporations provide tuition assistance for employees. Oklahoma should do the same for its teachers. In exchange for the scholarship,

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teachers would sign a contractual commitment to work as a teacher in the state for a certain number of years. This would ensure a more qualified work force in our schools—as well as the retention of teachers and their families in the state.

**Idea #7: Establish Performance Pay for Teachers**

For most of the state’s history, teachers have been paid through a “single-salary” system with across-the-board raises. But such “one-size-fits-all” pay raise systems do not reward success. By contrast, performance pay plans can encourage collaboration, teamwork and higher performance among teachers. It just makes sense: Pay teachers like the professionals they are. Performance pay has never been given serious consideration in Oklahoma. Now is the time for bold reform and a performance pay plan for Oklahoma’s teachers.

**Idea #8: Eliminate Tenure in Common Education**

Oklahoma should allow school systems the flexibility they need to build a team of educators that best serves the individual needs of a district and students.



Former state legislator Bob Medearis, of Tahlequah, was one of the first Oklahomans to submit an idea online. He called for the repeal of the teacher tenure system. Medearis is pictured in front of Northeastern State University.

**Idea #9: Address Teacher Shortages**

Oklahoma must address shortages in critical areas in common education by using industry-funded faculty positions, encouraging alternative certifications and requiring community colleges to offer alternative certifications. Programs such as the nationally renowned Teach for America program merit serious consideration. Teach for America is a national corps of outstanding recent college graduates and professionals of all academic majors, career interests and professional backgrounds who commit two years to teach in urban and rural public schools.

**Idea #10: Boost Mentoring for Students and Young Professionals**

Oklahoma should engage in a comprehensive effort to encourage retired professionals to act as mentors for students in high school and college, and for young professionals.

**Idea #11: Enhance Work Force Development**

Oklahoma should enhance work force development efforts through education reforms that increase standards and accountability for science instruction in the classroom. Programs such as Oklahoma Science PDI (providing intensive training in science content and inquiry processes for K-8 science teachers) already exist, and the state should do more by working with the private sector.

**Idea #12: Seek Administrative Savings in School Systems**

Oklahoma should streamline duplicative and wasteful administrative functions in common education. Communities could easily “co-op” administrative positions and professional services such as accounting, legal and information technology. This would put less strain on taxpayers’ pocketbooks and put more dollars in the classroom.

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**Idea #13: Require “Truth in Advertising”—Increased Accountability in Education**

For too long, Oklahoma has had standards for education that are too low, which creates test score results for students that are artificially high. The U.S. Chamber gave Oklahoma a grade of “F” in 2007 for truth in advertising about public education—one of only two states to receive this failing grade. Oklahoma fails to collect and provide sufficient data on the quality of our schools and the mechanisms by which they operate. One suggestion is to require the state Department of Education to collect and provide, by mail, better data to parents regarding test scores, graduation rates, spending per student and other pertinent data. The state Department of Education should also provide better and more accessible data on individual school districts to parents. This data should be broken down into easy-to-read formats and mailed to every parent in the state so parents know precisely what they’re getting for their money.

**Idea #14: Host “Try My Hat for a Day” Events**

Chambers of Commerce and employers across the state could make a concerted effort to host “Try My Hat for a Day” events in communities for students in grades 6-12. This would provide students the chance to see a day-in-the-life of different professional occupations: lawyers, doctors, bankers, journalists and more. Students should be required to provide feedback about their visit.

**Idea #15: Offer Education “Inservice” for Parents**

Teachers often receive “inservice” professional development workshops. Parents should receive similar opportunities so that they better understand what is expected of their children at each grade level. A quality “inservice” for parents would offer in-depth information on how to interpret test scores and how to recognize benchmarks at age-appropriate levels. Ideally this concept would help parents hold schools accountable, while also providing the local community with better understanding about what the school report cards and test scores indicate.

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**Idea #16: Require School Uniforms Statewide**

Many Oklahoma schools have uniform requirements, but there is no consistent standard. All children in Oklahoma grades K-8 should be required to wear simple uniforms. This statewide standard could allow flexibility for individual school districts to establish what those uniforms would be. This measure would save families time and money by avoiding the latest superficial “in” clothing styles. A consistent statewide uniform policy would also eliminate headaches and wasted hours in schools for teachers and school administrators who must spend time trying to determine appropriateness of student outfits. Uniforms can level the playing field, enhance student self-esteem, reduce behavioral problems and more.

**Idea #17: Focus on Performance and Results**

School districts should have more flexibility to innovate and get results. Rather than focusing on top down mandates, Oklahoma should give schools flexibility to invest where local officials see the need in critical areas, but policy should also hold them accountable for results.

**Idea #18: Increase Charter School Incentives**

Currently, Oklahoma law restricts where charter schools can form and under what circumstances. As it stands now, only certain school districts may have charter schools. Oklahoma should revise state policy to remove caps on charter schools, allow statewide authorization of these innovative schools, and allow mayors to sponsor them. Oklahoma should offer funds that go beyond startup or renovation costs to include items such as compliance costs, legal needs, staffing and more. The state should also provide tax incentives so that private organizations that offer support to charter schools—such as Innovative Schools Development Corporation (based in Delaware)—will bring expertise to Oklahoma.

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**Idea #19 and Idea #20: Provide Reading and Math Specialists for School Districts**

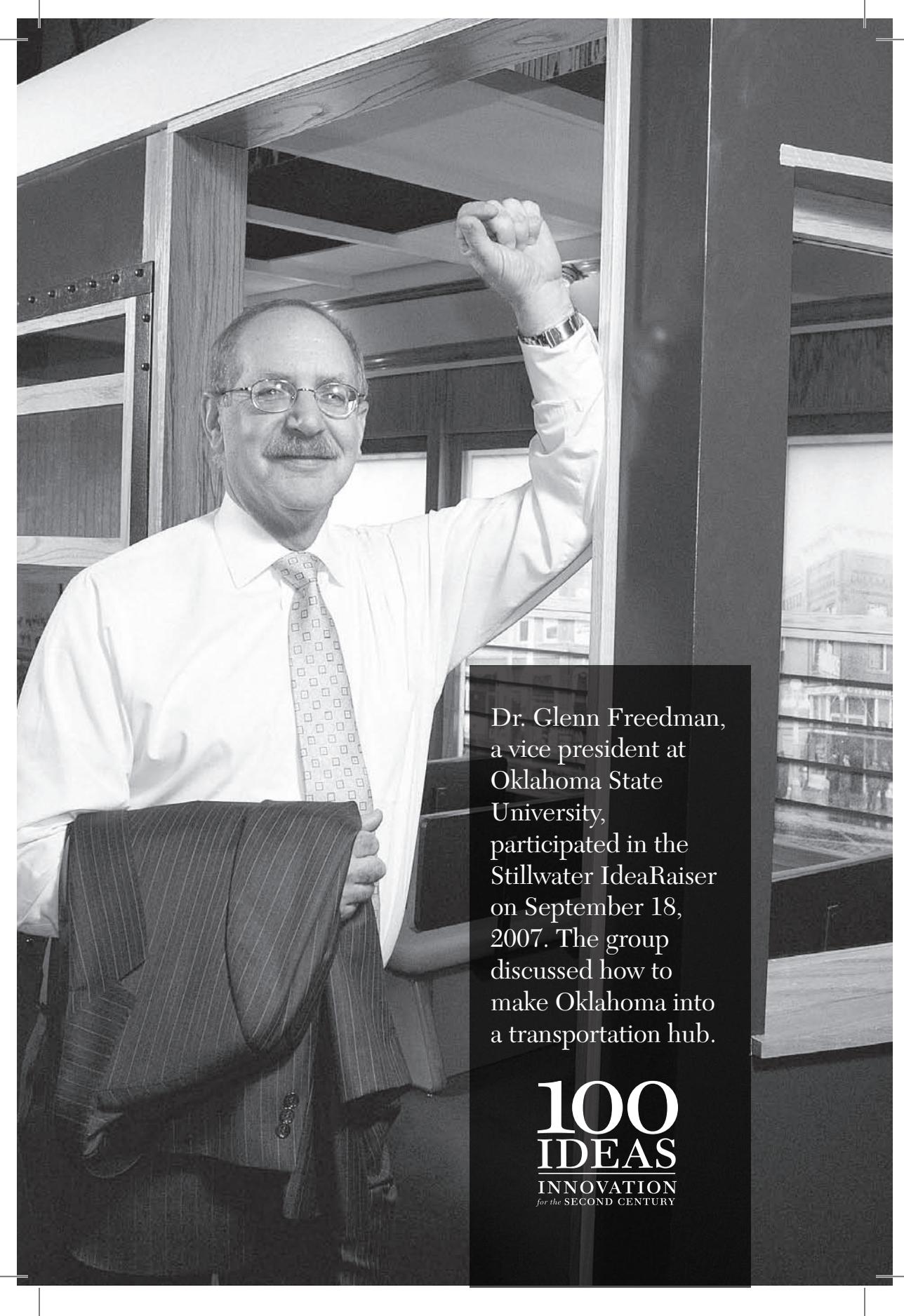
Oklahoma should strive to provide a reading specialist and a math specialist in each school district in the state. Reading and math specialists have advanced degrees, and can support, supplement and extend classroom teaching. Such specialists would be former classroom teachers and help districts develop more effective teaching practices to enhance high standards. The sole responsibility of such specialists would be to teach grades K-12 for reading, and K-8 for math.

**Idea #21: Make OSU the “MIT” of Aerospace Engineering**

Oklahoma has a great tradition of aerospace innovation, harkening back to Wiley Post, the first pilot to fly solo around the world. We are home to three United States Air Force bases and numerous private aerospace companies. Currently there are many training and education efforts in Oklahoma, but there is not a strategy to integrate these efforts to meet the demands of our growing state, national and international aerospace industry. The development of a “center of excellence” in Oklahoma for work force and leadership training, education and research and development could meet the demands of the growing industry. It should be a goal to establish Oklahoma State University as the primary source of aerospace and logistics education and research in the United States and the world. Similarly, the University of Oklahoma can become a world leader in weather and diabetes research, with examples such as the burgeoning opportunity at the OU Diabetes Center.

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Dr. Glenn Freedman, a vice president at Oklahoma State University, participated in the Stillwater IdeaRaiser on September 18, 2007. The group discussed how to make Oklahoma into a transportation hub.

**100**  
**IDEAS**  
INNOVATION  
*for the SECOND CENTURY*



## CHAPTER 6

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### Challenge 2: Boosting New Economic Growth and Job Opportunities

*“If I have a thousand ideas and only one turns out  
to be good, I am satisfied.”*

*~Alfred Nobel*

**A**t high noon on April 22, 1889, some 50,000 people lined up to get a free piece of land on more than 2 million acres in the heart of Indian Territory.

By the end of the day, Oklahoma City and Guthrie had already risen on the Great Plains—cities born in a single day. At noon on April 22, Guthrie’s population was zero. By sundown, the population was at least 10,000. By the second week after the Land Run of 1889, schools had been established, and Oklahoma City had five banks and six newspapers.

As Harper’s Weekly magazine reported at the time: “At twilight the campfires of ten thousand people gleamed on the grassy slopes of the Cimarron Valley, where, the night before, the coyote, the gray wolf, and the deer had roamed undisturbed. Never before in the history of the West has so large a number of people been concentrated in one place in so short a time ... the settlement of Guthrie was magical beyond belief.”

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More than a century ago, the lure of free land brought people and capital to our state. Oklahoma experienced an unprecedented economic boom in the wake of the Land Run. Our challenge today is to foster that sense of excitement, opportunity and energy for Oklahoma's second century.

Once Oklahoma has addressed the challenge of keeping talented people and attracting more, the state must establish the right conditions for economic growth. In just the last few years, Oklahoma's public policy has advanced significantly to remove barriers to growth.

Now it's time to take the next step with new ideas.

Oklahoma has some advantages in the area of economic development. Considering the cost of land, labor and reliable energy sources, doing business can be less expensive when compared to more expensive states on the coasts.

In recent years, our standings have edged somewhat higher as our state has made major strides in reducing the personal income tax, beginning to phase out the harmful death tax, prioritizing dollars for transportation infrastructure upgrades and more.

But such investments and reforms are only the beginning.

If Oklahoma is to remain competitive, it must provide the right incentives and move forward with the right set of reforms. Surrounding states are moving aggressively to attract new industries, research and high-tech businesses. And it's no longer a matter of competing with other states around the nation. Once Oklahoma's main economic competitors were limited to other states like Texas and Georgia. Now in the global economy, Oklahoma must compete with Taiwan and the Republic of Georgia as well.

Oklahomans want higher paying jobs and more opportunities for our state. Oklahoma has diversified the state's economy to

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move away from reliance in areas such as oil and gas or agriculture—though these industries remain vital components in the state’s progress.

Regulatory barriers, tax barriers, a rising burden of litigation, an outmoded workers compensation system and health insurance expenses are all part of this challenge. Though our state has some advantages in the areas of cost of living and access to natural resources, our state’s high cost of business in other areas forces businesses to make hard choices about scaling back or even relocating elsewhere. The good news is that Oklahomans can remove barriers through the right set of policies. The State Chamber has already put together a plan, “Oklahoma’s Prosperity Agenda,” which lays out goals that should be embraced by all Oklahomans.

In one IdeaRaiser after another, citizens offered important ideas to boost our state’s economy. Thousands of ideas were submitted, and each bears the attention of policy makers. Here are the best of those ideas.

**Idea #22: Create a Savings Fund for Homeownership**

As an incentive to encourage people to remain in the state and to help them become proud first-time Oklahoma home buyers, Oklahoma should consider establishing a savings fund for a down payment on a home similar to a 529 college savings fund. This new fund would allow people to save tax free to purchase their first home. First-time home buyers would be able to save toward a larger down payment and a smaller mortgage. Increased home ownership would be a powerful economic boost for the state, particularly in rural areas.

**Idea #23: Offer Tax incentives for Retirees**

After working a lifetime, it’s only fair that retirees get a tax break. Retirees are on fixed incomes and shouldn’t have to continue paying exorbitant taxes when they stop working.

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Oklahoma should consider elimination of the income tax on retirees and other tax incentives to make our state an attractive retirement spot. Senior citizens can be an economic boon to Oklahoma, but only if they stay here after retirement or choose to move to Oklahoma.

**Idea #24: Offer Tax Breaks for College Graduates**

Oklahoma's competitiveness in the 21st century knowledge-based economy will largely depend on the intellectual capital we build in our state. Oklahoma policy makers should consider retention incentives for recent college graduates—such as tax credits, income tax breaks and loan forgiveness. As one example, an income tax break in the first years after college graduation would be a powerful incentive to retain skilled professionals in our state.

**Idea #25: Eliminate the State Grocery Sales Tax**

Oklahoma should eliminate the regressive grocery sales tax. Oklahoma is one of the few states in the nation that taxes groceries. Food is a basic necessity, and working families should not be taxed on food purchases at the grocery store.

**Idea #26: Require No-fault Car Insurance**

Oklahoma should require drivers to carry insurance for their own protection, which places reasonable limits on a driver's ability to sue other drivers for damages. Under no fault laws, a driver's own insurance company pays for the cost of injuries, while other drivers involved in an accident are covered by their insurance policies. Under such a system, drivers have a strong incentive to carry coverage, abusive lawsuits are reduced and insurance costs are lower. Drivers may still sue for truly severe injuries, and in many "no fault" states, collision damages can still be determined according to a driver's responsibility. Oklahoma policy makers should examine the best form of a no-fault reform for the state.

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**Idea #27: Eliminate the Abstract Cost for Real Estate**

Oklahoma's requirement for abstracts on the purchase of real estate is antiquated and has created a protected monopoly of abstract companies. Oklahoma should modernize the land title process, eliminate the abstract cost involved in the purchase of real estate and move to a title insurance system (a system most states already use).

**Idea #28: Establish an Oklahoma Creative Industries Guild**

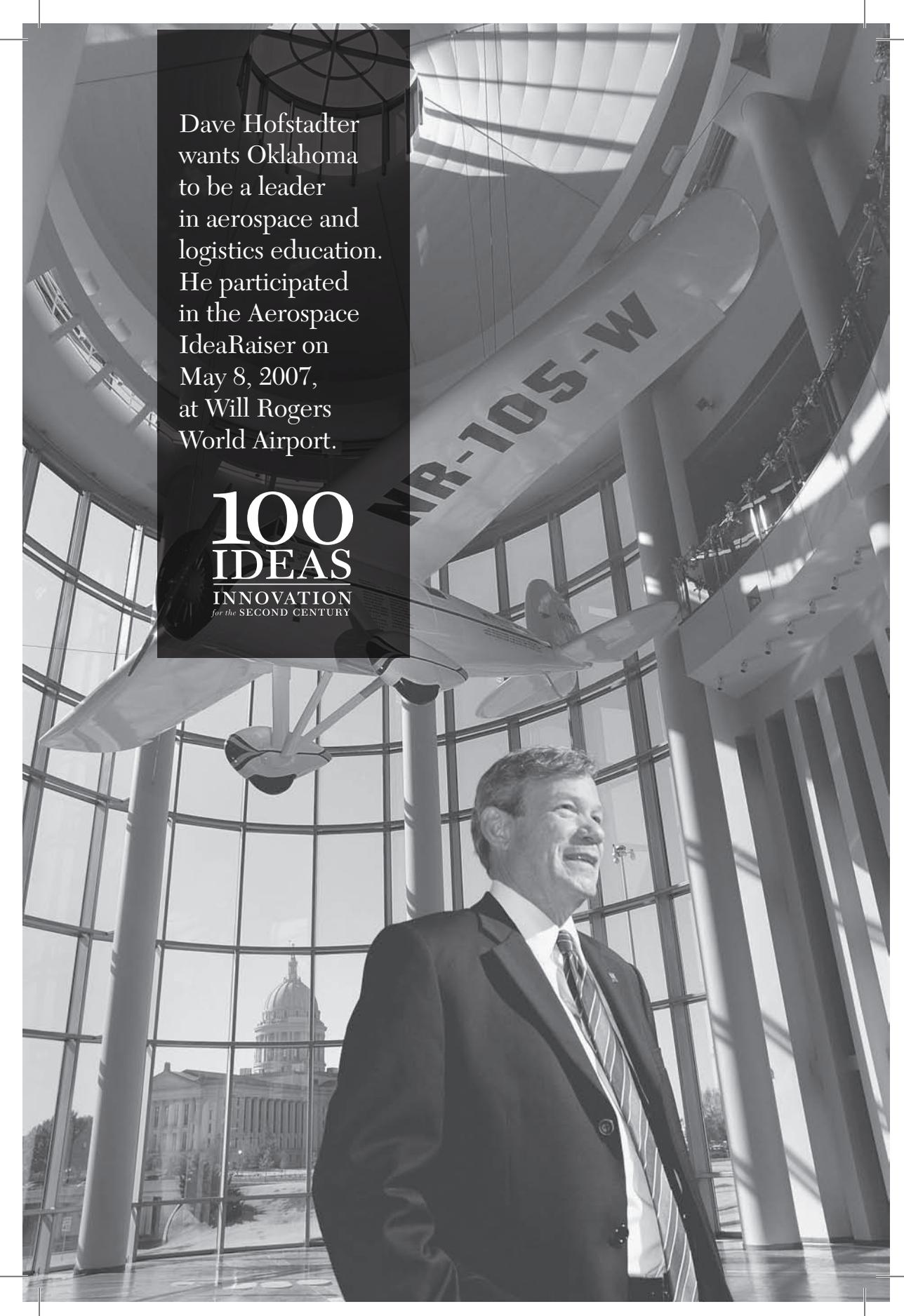
Various artistic organizations should join together to foster a voluntary, fee-driven creative industry guild for graphic and visual artists, singers and musicians, filmmakers, writers and other creative professionals to initiate education, professional networking and group health insurance opportunities. Such an organization would provide a network of support for both aspiring and established artists, encouraging them to remain in our state. The guild could provide assistance with marketing and publicity efforts for individual artists, offer mentoring opportunities and providing an additional avenue to cultivate Oklahoma's cultural climate.

**Idea #29: Pass New Workers' Compensation Reform**

Our current workers' compensation system is one of the most expensive in the nation, with poor benefits to workers, and is a major stumbling block to economic development efforts. Oklahoma should follow the lead of other states that have passed comprehensive workers' compensation reform to attract new job opportunities.

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Dave Hofstadter  
wants Oklahoma  
to be a leader  
in aerospace and  
logistics education.  
He participated  
in the Aerospace  
IdeaRaiser on  
May 8, 2007,  
at Will Rogers  
World Airport.

# 100 IDEAS

INNOVATION  
for the SECOND CENTURY



## CHAPTER 7

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### Challenge 3: Preparing for Oklahoma's Energy, Transportation and Communications Future

*“Ideas shape the course of history.”*

*~John Maynard Keynes*

**I**n some nations, one national agency oversees the areas of communications, energy and transportation as one overarching concern.

These three key areas are vital to economic success. Oklahoma is no different, and how the state responds to the challenges posed to our energy, communications and transportation infrastructure in coming years will determine how competitive and innovative the state becomes, and what quality of life future generations will enjoy.

Let's start with transportation.

Just about any Oklahoma citizen understands the state's infrastructure challenges—viscerally—simply by driving along one of the state's highways or by crossing an outdated bridge.

It's no exaggeration to call driving on many Oklahoma roads a bone-jarring experience.

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The numbers tell an alarming story: More than 100 bridges in Oklahoma are older than the legendary Model T Ford from the early 1920s. Thousands of Oklahoma's 6,728 are considered structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, nearly 24 percent in all. And the numbers aren't confined to rural Oklahoma: More than 150 deficient or obsolete bridges are in Tulsa County or Oklahoma County. More than 25 percent of the state's 12,266 miles of interstate, U.S. highways, and state highways are rated inadequate or critical.

About 65 million vehicles a day cross state roads and bridges, and that traffic is expected to increase by more than 16 percent a year, including 70 percent more heavy truck traffic during the next 20 years.

2007's tragic bridge collapse in Minnesota drove home the dangers of this crumbling infrastructure combined with increased use. Not long ago, to starkly demonstrate the aging infrastructure Oklahomans must confront, a former lawmaker drove a mint-condition Model T Ford across a pre-World War II bridge in Tulsa County.

It's clear that transportation is a safety issue, but it's also an economic development issue. Businesses looking to relocate or add a plant in Oklahoma want satisfactory roads.

Oklahoma did not arrive at this juncture overnight. Decades of neglect literally paved the way for our roads and bridges crisis. Oklahoma faces a multibillion dollar backlog on road and bridge construction projects, and about half the dollars from motor vehicle taxes are diverted to the state's General Revenue Fund for other uses.

To exacerbate the situation, previous Legislatures funded new road construction through bond debt. Repayment of that debt was provided from maintenance funds for roads.

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Lately, things have changed for the better. Beginning in 2005, the Legislature has steadily increased the state's road budget. The new funding increases will invest billions of dollars to fix our state's crumbling transportation infrastructure during the next decade.

Before 2005, funding for the state's transportation system had essentially flat-lined for two decades—just \$200 million a year, an actual decline of 45 percent with inflation factored in.

“For nearly 20 years, the Legislature ignored state roads and we have the crumbling infrastructure to prove it,” said state Rep. Chris Benge, chair of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee recently. “We can't undo that neglect overnight, but we are making huge strides and providing the funding support needed to make Oklahoma roads better and safer.”

Oklahoma must confront head-on these challenges with our infrastructure—not only in transportation, but also in communications, energy and other areas.

Oklahoma's rural communications infrastructure, for example, lags behind the technological transformation our nation has undergone in the past two decades. While cell phones, wireless communications, the Internet and other advances have completely altered the way America and the rest of the world do business, rural communities in Oklahoma still struggle to completely join this information revolution and enjoy its advantages.

Our state has lagged behind the rest of the country in broadband Internet access, particularly for rural areas. This is not a cosmetic issue for our state. The Internet is a pervasive fact of life in the 21st century. Access to high-speed connections is at least one factor in decisions by businesses when deciding on locations, and it affects Oklahoma's brain drain as well as our state's ability to attract retirees. A high-speed and reliable telecommunications infrastructure is crucial for our state's economic success.

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Even faced with such challenges, our state is poised for tremendous opportunities as well. In the area of energy policy, for example, Oklahoma not only is blessed with tremendous oil and gas resources, but our state also stands to benefit from advances in areas such as biofuels and wind energy.

Oil and gas production must remain an essential element in Oklahoma's energy policies. Oklahoma is the fourth-largest producer of gas in the nation. According to the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association, energy companies in 2007 created about 5,800 jobs across the state, representing a 15 percent increase from the year before.

Oklahoma should do everything it can to continue to encourage the oil and gas industry and avoid creating obstacles. Oklahoma's oil and gas producers make vital contributions to our state's economy—not to mention the unceasing progress of our nation.

As blessed as our state is with oil and gas resources, Oklahoma must also stake out a leading position in the area of conservation efforts, particularly concerning our energy infrastructure.

Oklahoma has a tremendous opportunity to lead the nation in areas like wind energy (Oklahoma has been called the "Saudi Arabia of wind" because of our abundance of wind-generating potential). According to the state Department of Commerce, Oklahoma has enough potential wind resources to supply 10 percent of the nation's electricity needs.

Recent estimates show just how far-reaching these new areas of energy could be for our state. According to experts, the Panhandle alone has the potential to house more than 8,400 megawatts (MW) of wind-generated capacity. The rest of western Oklahoma could house nearly 7,000 MW of wind capacity. Just more than 530 MW of wind capacity has been installed in Oklahoma, according to a July 16, 2007, story in *The Journal Record*. Landowners would receive tens of millions of dollars in

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royalty payments from the development of this virtually untapped resource. And the region would benefit from clean and abundant energy.

Recently, OGE Energy Corp., the parent company of OG&E, announced plans to boost wind power production from 170 MW to about 770 MW and build a transmission line from Oklahoma City to western Oklahoma, a first step in positioning that part of the state to become a national wind leader. OGE officials say the new investment in wind energy development could move Oklahoma from being sixth in the nation to as high as third in wind power production behind Texas and California.

The reasons Oklahomans support initiatives such as generating more wind power are as varied and diverse as the groups themselves. But by embracing new technologies, Oklahoma can boost energy independence and move its economy forward into the new century—while remaining good stewards of the natural beauty our Creator has blessed us with.

Oklahoma can become a leader in the world of green technology. This is an emerging and profitable industry. Considering the sheer number of submissions to the 100 Ideas Initiative involving conservation, energy independence, alternative energy and more, clearly Oklahomans are eager to embrace innovations in this area.

To catch up with other parts of the country, and the world, Oklahoma needs a combination of incentives and mandates. These new policies will improve our quality of life, while enabling us to make more efficient use of energy and manage our resources better.

To achieve the goals of conserving Oklahoma for the future, enhancing economic growth and moving into the next century of technological progress, our state must have an attainable plan—one that considers our role as stewards of Oklahoma's resources without imposing burdensome regulations or economically harmful solutions.

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The ideas proposed by Oklahomans during 2007 strike a balanced approach to the future—championing both a healthy economy and a healthy environment. Implemented the right way, these policies can bring new, high-paying jobs to Oklahoma and make our state a great place to live during our next 100 years.

Some of these ideas have been grouped under a set of policy goals called **Conserving Oklahoma**. Also included here are ideas regarding communications and transportation needs for the state.

**Idea #30: Require LEED Certification for New State Buildings**

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED focuses on sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. Concepts like LEED certification can save taxpayers money in the long run. Instead of constructing public buildings using outdated methods, our state government should be seeking out new standards to make buildings more energy-efficient. Oklahoma should require that any new publicly funded construction must be LEED certified.

**Idea #31 and Idea #32: Establish the Conserving Oklahoma Advisory Group and Energy Strategy Road Map**

A Conserving Oklahoma Advisory Group should be formed—made up of our state’s top business, community, science, technology and conservationist leaders to assist policy makers. The Conserving Oklahoma Advisory Group can be composed of individuals who are passionate about this emerging area and influential and knowledgeable enough about energy needs in this state to be respected in their recommendations.

One of the main goals of the Conserving Oklahoma group should be to develop an “Energy Strategy Road Map” for the state. Oklahoma should draw upon our state’s breadth of private-sector

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resources and explore technological solutions. The Energy Strategy Road Map should be a multi-year plan for achieving objectives such as:

- Increasing our state's production and use of renewable energy sources (such as wind, solar, and biomass and geothermal energy).
- Creating a culture of energy efficiency by embracing new technologies.
- Becoming a world model in sustainable initiatives.

**Idea #33 and Idea #34: Create an Energy Institute and Boost Future Energy Research**

In addition to the planning phase initiated by the Conserving Oklahoma Advisory Group, Oklahoma should continue to support efforts to research technologies and means to achieve energy effectiveness and efficiency. Oklahoma's leaders should explore the foundation of a world-class Energy Institute. Investing in research in this critical area is crucial to our efforts to bring the next generation of technologies to our state. Oklahoma should encourage public-private partnerships for the research of alternative energy sources. Oklahoma can also draw upon the current higher education research infrastructure, as well as our CareerTech facilities, to develop and drive new technologies.

**Idea #35: Produce More Renewable Energy Now**

As Oklahoma looks ahead to the future through planning and research, our state should harness an amazing wealth of natural resources by increasing our production of energy from renewable resources now. Production of wind energy, geothermal energy and biofuels (such as switch grass) should continue. Oklahoma should also explore the use of livestock operations as a source for methane gas, which can be used to generate electric power. Production of renewable and alternative energy should be further enhanced through tax incentives and/or assistance with startup costs.

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**Idea #36: Offer Incentives and Increase Infrastructure for Wind Energy**

Though our state song hails Oklahoma as the place “where the wind comes sweepin’ down the plain,” the state arguably trails behind other states with comparable or less wind power potential. While Oklahoma currently has numerous incentives for the development and proliferation of wind power, these are primarily limited to tax credits for utilities using zero-emission facilities and producers of small wind turbines. Oklahoma should work to improve wind transmission capabilities and improve tax incentives for wind. Measures can include lowering the production tax credit to include smaller turbines and consideration of a property tax exemption for renewable energy equipment (Kansas and Texas both exempt wind equipment from property taxes).

**Idea #37: Nuclear Energy**

Unlike many of its neighboring states, Oklahoma currently has no nuclear electricity generation. Texas, Kansas and Arkansas all have nuclear power configured in their energy portfolios. Vermont currently obtains nearly 75 percent of its energy from nuclear power, and New Jersey, South Carolina, Connecticut and Illinois obtain half or more of their energy from nuclear sources.

Nuclear energy is arguably one of the least environmentally intrusive forms of reliable energy. Increasingly, experts and environmentalists are embracing nuclear technology as one of the best long-term energy solutions:

- Plants typically operate at zero carbon emission levels.
  - Nuclear power also does little to adversely impact water resources.
  - Nuclear power plants can provide electricity to large markets.
  - New and innovative technologies have improved nuclear safety.
  - Nuclear power is a comparatively inexpensive form of electrical generation.
  - Maintenance costs are cheaper than many other types of plants.
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**Idea #38: Create Incentives for Alternative Energy Use**

By far the biggest impact on our state's energy future can be made by reducing our use of fossil fuels and increasing our use of renewable energy. This shift in energy use will not occur overnight and will provide an opportunity for the continued profitability of our state's oil and gas industry as one of the foundations of the Oklahoma economy. Nevertheless, as the state learned during the oil bust of the 1980s, diversification of the economy and of our energy sources is a good objective. Green technologies are an emerging industry in the nation and the world, but currently not in Oklahoma. Right now, our state must import workers with skills in this area, as there is not enough business for them to commit to Oklahoma. It is essential that Oklahoma increase its use of alternative energy to build up a critical mass of knowledge in this area.

Oklahoma should create incentives to support renewable energy. Due to the high upfront costs of these initiatives there must be an incentive to purchase products that save energy. These incentives can be phased out after a certain period of time. There are many areas that could be targeted for tax credits, rebates or grants:

- Heating
  - Air conditioning
  - Lighting
  - Solar products
  - Windows
  - Insulation
  - Water
  - Cars (tax credits, free or reduced tolls, etc.)
  - Property tax incentives for the creation of site based / distributed energy
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**Idea #39: Pass Tax Credits for Renewable Energy**

Along the same lines, Oklahoma should establish a personal state income tax credit for residents and businesses, including agricultural enterprises, that purchase and install certified solar thermal, solar water and space heat, photovoltaics (PV), wind and hydro systems. The state should allow these credits to be carried forward for a maximum of 10 taxable years until fully expended. Solar and wind-powered devices used as a primary or auxiliary power system for the purpose of heating or otherwise supplying the energy needs of taxable property should also qualify for property tax exemptions for a certain period from the date of installation.

**Idea #40: Increase Use of Alternative Energy Sources by Publicly Funded Entities**

Oklahoma should leverage the buying power of state and local governments to accelerate the marketplace for sustainability technology and renewable energy. Leadership by policy makers is essential to transform the current state of Oklahoma's energy use and policy. The state should set the standard for energy conservation and efficiency. Oklahoma should establish a "renewable portfolio standard" for state government and direct that 25 percent of energy production must come from renewable sources by a set date. There are more than 24 states that have renewable portfolio standards including Florida, Colorado, Missouri, Arizona, North Carolina and New Mexico. Oklahoma should require government contracts to have preferential review of sustainability and to be able to consider long-term benefits over immediate higher costs.

**Idea #41: Greener Schools, Grandeur State**

Oklahoma should investigate the idea of combining the issues of education and the environment: By making our schools more eco-friendly, Oklahoma will help to preserve the environment, educate students and families about conservation and the value of going green, and shave a significant amount off of each school's

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energy bill. The money saved could be used to initiate more extensive and more money-saving green construction projects, to fund stronger education programs, and to increase teacher salaries (in turn attracting higher quality faculty to Oklahoma's school system).

**Idea #42: Institute Statewide Interoperable Communications for First Responders**

Oklahoma should institute a strategic plan to implement statewide interoperable communications. In too many cases, law enforcement agencies and first responders use communications systems that operate on different frequencies or use different technologies, making them incompatible. In other words, it's hard for these different groups to talk to each other in emergency situations. This makes it more difficult to coordinate response in a crisis. By contrast, the value of interoperable communications has been demonstrated time and again with events like the spate of wildfires in California in late 2007.

**Idea #43: Improve Airport Infrastructure**

Oklahoma City has taken major steps in recent years with the upgrade of Will Rogers World Airport. Within the next 10 years, the state as a whole should strive to make Oklahoma City and Tulsa increasingly attractive hubs for airlines.

**Idea #44: Improve Oklahoma's Rural Communications Infrastructure**

Too many rural areas of Oklahoma lack complete access to high-speed Internet, digital television and cellular capabilities. State policy makers should explore incentives for private enterprise to expand and make these technologies more widely available across the state.

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**Idea #45: Ensure Fuel Taxes Go to Road Improvements**

Motor vehicle taxes (such as registration fees) in Oklahoma should be used for road improvements, not diverted to other sources in state government.

**Idea #46: Merge Oklahoma Turnpike Authority with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation**

Oklahoma should explore the potential savings and advantages of merging the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority operates and manages the turnpike system in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Department of Transportation operates the state and federal highway system. A merger of both entities could see a potential reduction in administrative costs to the state, along with better coordination of road transportation policy. More money and less bureaucracy would improve transportation infrastructure.

**Idea #47: Examine a Proposed "I-33" from Denver to Oklahoma City**

It is imperative that metro areas are linked adequately by both air and land. While Oklahoma City has direct interstate highway connections to Dallas-Fort Worth, Wichita, Kansas City and Little Rock, there is no direct interstate highway connection to the key urban area of Denver. Establishing closer transportation links with the "Mile High City" can only be to Oklahoma's benefit. The northwest portion of the state, particularly, could see enormous economic development gains as a result. Because north-south interstate highways are numerically ordered in odd numbers, orderly from east to west, one suggestion is to name this proposed highway "Interstate 33," half the number of Oklahoma's famous "Route 66."

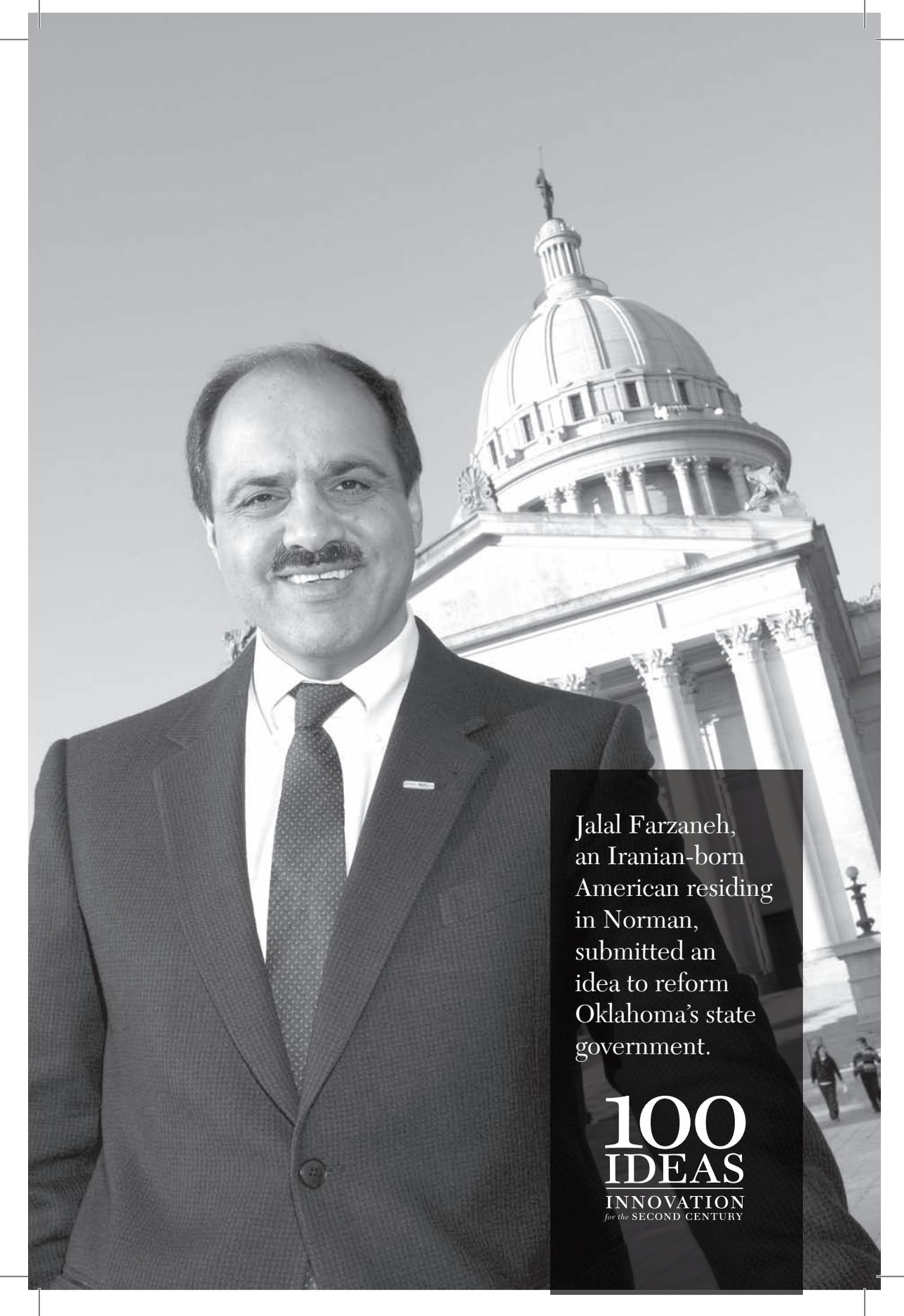
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**Idea #48: Explore a High-Speed Bullet Train to Connect Tulsa, Oklahoma City and Dallas**

Oklahoma should conduct feasibility studies and develop a strategy to connect Oklahoma City and Tulsa along with both metro area suburbs and the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex using high-speed rail. A high-speed rail system designed to travel at speeds above 150 miles per hour using the Turner Turnpike right of way would make quick and efficient commutes between these areas a reality. The economic growth and job opportunities from this improved infrastructure would be tremendous. Because neither Oklahoma City nor Tulsa are major air hubs, a high-speed rail system would reduce travel barriers associated with flight connectivity. Texas has already established the Texas High Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation to link areas between Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio and Houston. By investing in a substantial high-speed rail system now, Oklahoma would also avoid the bottleneck and gridlock of overloaded highway infrastructure suffered by other states in recent decades.

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Jalal Farzaneh,  
an Iranian-born  
American residing  
in Norman,  
submitted an  
idea to reform  
Oklahoma's state  
government.

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## CHAPTER 8

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### Challenge 4: Creating a Modern and Efficient 21st Century State Government

*“New ideas pass through three periods: 1) It can’t be done.  
2) It probably can be done, but it’s not worth doing.  
3) I knew it was a good idea all along!”*

*~Novelist Arthur C. Clarke*



eed a cure for sleepless nights?

You might consider picking up a copy of Oklahoma’s “ABC” book. It’s nearly 200 pages describing every one of our state’s agencies, boards and commissions (thus the title).

Scan through the “ABC” book, and you’ll quickly get the sense that our state government is a thick alphabet soup of dense names and various agencies that seem to overlap, along with some that truly confound.

The number of so-called ABCs in Oklahoma has grown steadily, and Oklahoma now has some 515—a high number compared to six comparable states.

The closest any state comes to Oklahoma’s number is Kentucky, with 397. The remaining four comparable states—Arkansas, Iowa, Oregon and Kansas—each have less than 200

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ABCs. Our neighbor to the north, Kansas, manages its government with just 130 ABCs, 75 percent less than Oklahoma's government.

There's no question that there are many vital services performed by state government. But it's also clear that through the years, Oklahoma's state government has simply grown too large.

In 1957, our state had 115 agencies, boards and commissions. Within the next decade, a hundred more entities had been added. By 1987, the number grew to 382 and nearly 90 more were added in the following 10 years.

Through years, there have been several studies and reports recommending a reorganization of state government and a reduction in the number of ABCs—seven statewide studies since 1928—but very little has been done, and government has continued to grow.

A 1995 report, "A Government as Good as Our People," issued by the Governor's Commission on Government Performance states, "Many critical state operations are controlled by boards and commissions without direct responsibility to the governor, making it difficult to manage related functions and impossible to determine accountability for results ... Ultimately, the issue is one of accountability."

Are Oklahoma taxpayers getting their money's worth out of their government? And is the state investing where it should in crucial areas while the state supports more than 500 agencies, boards and commissions?

The size of Oklahoma's state government can lead to confusion and duplication of effort. From a simple management standpoint, it's difficult to achieve public policy goals when you have "too many cooks in the kitchen."

At the beginning of the state's second century, as Oklahomans celebrate the first 100 years of state history, what better time to

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explore new ways to better serve the people instead of using the same horse-and-buggy-era model from our state's founding?

Oklahoma can do better.

Since 2005, Oklahoma has seen bipartisan, fiscally conservative achievements in the areas of tax reform and government spending. A renewed drive for government accountability, efficiency and modernization is the logical next step.

Why now? There are several good reasons.

First, taxpayers can see real cost savings out of such an effort. Those dollars can be returned to the taxpayers or reinvested in areas like education, public safety, transportation and health care. Second, it just makes sense to cut down on duplication. How can Oklahoma have the best public policy with so many players pulling in different directions? Finally, some ABCs were simply created to benefit special interests, a situation that clearly does not benefit the public interest.

Citizens who submitted ideas to the initiative have offered ways to modernize state government. Certainly, there will be defenders of the status quo who may impede such reforms. And after 100 years of watching Oklahoma's government grow to more than 500 ABCs, some citizens may be inclined to simply throw up their hands and not even try.

In the business world, CEOs constantly change and streamline companies so they're serving customers better. Markets punish companies that don't. Governments don't have the discipline of the marketplace, but Oklahoma's customers are the taxpayers. State government should always strive to be better stewards of their money.

The spirit of the 100 Ideas Initiative has been to ask Oklahomans, "What if?"

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This simple question is nowhere more relevant than when it comes to our state's outdated model of government. What if Oklahoma can have a more effective state government that serves the people better?

Too often, Oklahomans hear either weary cynicism about state government or defenders of the status quo insist that nothing should or can change. But the time for action has come. People from across the state, from across the political spectrum, want change.

All Oklahomans share concern about state government, as well as hope for the future.

All Oklahomans want to see a state government that serves "we the people" in the best way.

The ideas in this chapter come from many viewpoints, and they reflect citizens' desire for change. Together, Oklahomans can create a modern and efficient state government for the 21st century.

#### **Idea #49: Stop Taxpayer-funded Lobbying**

Stop state agencies from using taxpayer dollars to pay for lobbyists, who, in turn, lobby for even more taxpayer dollars.

#### **Idea #50: Convene a New State Constitutional Convention**

Here's something you probably don't know: In Section 2 of Article XXIV, our state constitution requires a vote of the people every 20 years to determine if a majority want a new constitutional convention. But Oklahoma politicians have ignored this requirement for nearly 40 years. With the state's first 100 years behind us, it's time to put our outmoded state constitution to rest as well. President Theodore Roosevelt called it "not fit for publication," and this lengthy and confusing document is a tremendous barrier to good government. Oklahoma's constitution is among the longest such charters ever written, and it is filled with language that is far too specific and unwieldy. It creates an overly

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weak executive branch. Rewriting Oklahoma's constitution to reflect the needs of a changing and modern state should be a top priority during the next few years.

**Idea #51: Reform Oklahoma's Executive Branch**

Oklahoma must change the structure of the executive branch of state government. First, Oklahoma must amend the constitution to establish a cabinet system of government in which the governor appoints the heads of the major departments and these officials directly report to and are responsible to the governor; the governor, in turn, is responsible to the people. The state constitution should be amended to require that the executive branch be organized into a cabinet of no more than 15 departments, headed by a secretary that's both appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate. Second, the governor must have the power to appoint the majority of members of boards and commissions that have governing authority over various agencies soon after he or she takes office. Third, citizens should elect the governor and the lieutenant governor as a team.

**Idea #52: Expand Term Limits to All Statewide Offices**

Oklahoma's legislators and the governor are already limited to terms of office, why not other statewide officeholders? Oklahoma's citizens should have the opportunity to vote to amend the state's constitution to limit all statewide officeholders to two terms in office. Currently the lieutenant governor, state auditor, attorney general, state treasurer, commission of labor, insurance commissioner, superintendent of public instruction and members of the state Corporation Commission have no term limits. To promote good government, we should term limit these offices.

**Idea #53: Form a Charter Agencies Program**

The concept of charter agencies focuses on results, rather than rules. Charter agencies spend less time on paperwork and redirect that energy into innovation. These unique agencies can waive

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administrative rules, retain revenue from asset sales and more. Oklahoma should form a charter agency program. State agencies would be allowed to sign up for the program on a voluntary basis and would be required to demonstrate savings. In return, charter agencies would be allowed to be more entrepreneurial and cut through red tape.

**Idea #54–#59: Streamline State Agencies, Boards and Commissions**

Oklahoma has a high number of agencies, boards and commissions. Examples of possible streamlining efforts include:

- ***Merging Oklahoma’s tourism and commerce functions.*** Currently, there is one cabinet position overseeing these two functions, yet there are two separate agencies. At a minimum, Oklahoma should explore coordination and merger of the communications, advertising and marketing efforts of these two entities.
  - ***Merge the Human Rights Commission into the Attorney General’s Office.*** This would provide more stature to the Human Rights Commission and the activities conducted by the commission, and it has the potential to provide the Commission with more enforcement powers.
  - ***Merge Medical Examiner into a larger agency.*** Currently the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is a free-standing agency. The state should move the duties and responsibilities of the medical examiner’s office into the Oklahoma State Department of Health or a state law enforcement entity. This could save the state money by combining administrative duties.
  - ***Consolidate Oklahoma Employment Security Commission Regional Offices and Employees.*** Currently, Oklahoma has 39 OESC office locations. The state should either eliminate multiple OESC office locations or merge a consolidated OESC into the Department of Commerce.
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- ***Combine Commission for Teacher Preparation with the State Regents for Higher Education.*** Because the commission's main objective is teacher preparation, it is only logical that the state entity charged with overseeing the institutions that produce future teachers also develop the professional standards. This shrinks government for the betterment of Oklahoma's students.
- ***Consolidate State Water Functions.*** Currently, seven state entities have jurisdiction over water permitting and use.

#### **Idea #60: Sell Non-performing Government Assets**

Oklahoma's state government should sell non-performing assets in order to return savings to taxpayers or to reinvest in crucial areas. This could include the following:

- Sell certain state-owned lands (surface only), providing hundreds of thousands of acres of taxable land.
- Sell existing investment in electric generation capacity at the Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA) and redeploy the proceeds to add to the EDGE (Economic Development Generating Excellence) endowment. The state should retain control of Grand Lake of the Cherokees itself. In addition to providing investment into economic development efforts, this would also streamline GRDA operations and increase utilities competition.

#### **Idea #61: Require Voter ID**

Oklahoma should require citizens to verify their mailing address when they appear at polling locations to vote. Poll workers should ask voters if their listed address is correct. If the voter has a new address, they would write it down, or a poll worker could write it down for the voter. This would only take a short time, because each voter already signs his or her name. If each voter would simply write in a new or corrected address, then election board employees could later enter updated information. This could help eliminate voter fraud.

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**Idea #62 and Idea #63: Reform the State's Central Purchasing Act and Increase Efficiency in State Purchasing Practices**

- *Reform Central Purchasing Act.* Oklahoma should reform the state's procurement procedures by creating more effective purchasing practices through "e-procurement" while maintaining high-quality government services. The only obstacle in the way of going to an e-procurement system is a provision in the Oklahoma Central Purchasing Act that requires all bidders to submit a notarized sworn statement attachment to each bid. Enacting this reform would lower prices charged to the state, reduce paperwork, provide better services through increased competition, improve vendor diversity and provide more access for smaller businesses.
- *Electronic Reverse Auctions.* Similarly, Oklahoma should establish electronic reverse auction procedures, which act as a sort of "e-Bay in reverse." In an electronic reverse auction, suppliers go online to bid against each other to provide products or services at the lowest price to the procurer. E-reverse auctions can be organized using qualified auction contractors with pre-registered vendors, training and quality controls. This method drives down prices and could save the state millions of dollars each year.

**Idea #64: Require Performance Reviews for State Government**

State government should be more accountable to taxpayers by requiring all state agencies to have mandatory agency performance reviews. This would ensure that all agencies are reviewed and held accountable for their use of taxpayers' dollars. Agencies that are performing well might have opportunities to take over duties of similar underperforming agencies. Underperforming agencies that now "float under the radar" would have to answer for and improve their performances. As part of the performance review process, agencies should be required to post easy-to-read scorecards on external Web sites, so that citizens can track progress. Such external accountability would result in savings and benefits to

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taxpayers because agencies would have an incentive to perform better with existing resources.

**Idea #65: Establish an Office of Technology for Oklahoma**

Oklahoma's state government lags behind many states in the use of technology, and the state lacks a coordinated vision for the adoption of new technology. The state should establish an Office of Technology overseen by a chief technical officer, a cabinet-level office appointed by the governor. The Office of Technology would have authority over all technology-related purchases and projects, including telecommunications, information technology and more.

**Idea #66 and Idea #67: Enable Regional Government Partnerships and Regional Jails**

The state should enable city/county governments to have more flexibility in the consolidation of services to eliminate duplication, such as fire services. Enabling legislation would provide a local option to those city/county governments wishing to hold local elections asking citizens to approve the plan. Oklahoma should also examine the concept of regional jails to replace overcrowded and outdated county facilities.

**Idea #68–#70: Restructure and Reform County Government**

Oklahoma's county government has remained essentially unchanged in its first century. A new century calls for new reforms. Ideas include:

- **County Administrator.** Oklahoma should change county government to an administrative model. A county administrator (similar to a city manager) would run the day-to-day affairs and operations of county government, oversee the county budget and make recommendations to the board of commissioners. The board of commissioners would only meet to provide approval for the county administrator's recommendations. Commissioners would not need to be paid as much. Savings could be passed onto
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taxpayers and could be redirected to hire qualified administrators.

- ***Multi-county Officials.*** Oklahoma should consider creating multi-county districts for county offices, similar to the structure in place for district attorneys. District attorneys have been elected to preside over multiple counties for decades. It's time to expand this successful model to other county officials, such as county treasurer or county clerk.
- ***Change County Elections.*** Elections for county offices should be nonpartisan, just as they are for school boards and mayors.

#### **Idea #71–#73: Reform State Pensions and Retirement**

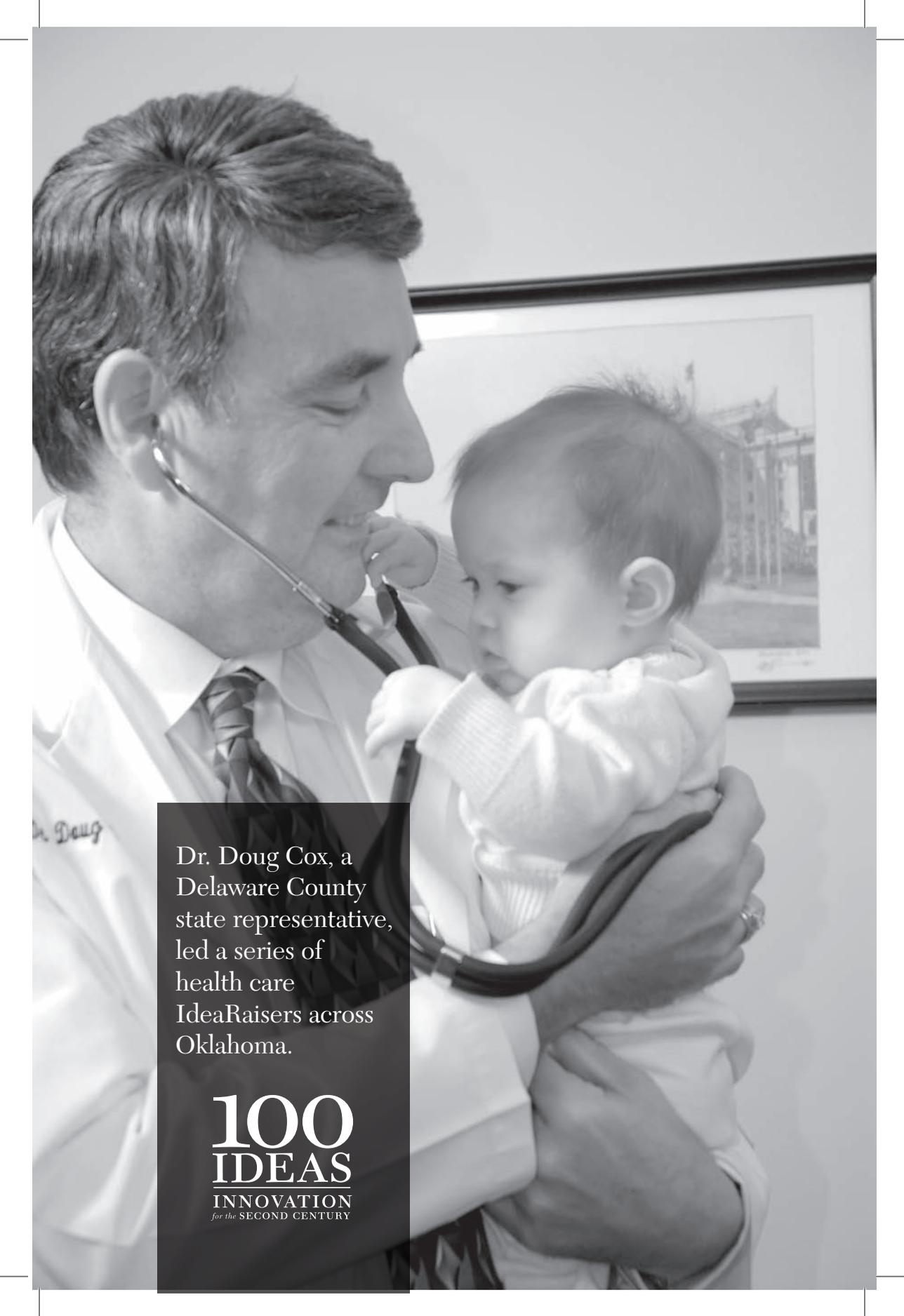
- ***Combine State Retirement Systems.*** Oklahoma policy makers should combine all state retirement systems as the state of Alabama has done with its Retirement Systems of Alabama. Taking this step will enhance economies of scale and provide administrative savings.
  - ***Defined Contribution Plan.*** Additionally, the state's public employee pension plans must move from antiquated and fiscally unsustainable defined benefit to modern, prudent defined contribution plans (similar to a 401(k) or 403(b) plan) found throughout the private sector. Our state's seven pension systems are in crisis, carrying more than \$10 billion in unfunded liabilities, according to the Oklahoma Pension Oversight Commission. The Oklahoma Teachers' Retirement System has more than \$7 billion in unfunded liabilities.
  - ***Increase Matching Dollars for SoonerSave.*** Oklahoma should provide a higher match rate for dollars going to state employees' retirement SoonerSave accounts, which would use pre-tax dollars from the employee. This would encourage savings, cost Oklahoma fewer tax dollars and allow state employees more income when they retire. Through compound interest, the state would be providing more income to state employees, at less cost to taxpayers, than the state currently spends on across-the-board pay raises.
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**Idea #74: Eliminate double pensions for elected officials**

Oklahoma should eliminate double pensions for elected officials. Currently, an elected official can qualify for a double pension if they retire while holding an elected position and have held office for six consecutive years leading up to retirement. Regular participants in the state retirement system receive 2 percent of their salaries for each year they worked, while elected officials receive 4 percent. But elected officials can also receive 4 percent for their previous service as state or county workers. This “multiplier effect” should end.

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Dr. Doug Cox, a Delaware County state representative, led a series of health care IdeaRaisers across Oklahoma.

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## CHAPTER 9

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### Challenge 5: A Healthy Oklahoma

*“An idea is salvation by imagination.”*

*~Frank Lloyd Wright*

**H**ere’s a startling fact that serves as a wake-up call about Oklahoma’s health: our state has dropped to 47th in the nation in overall health.

In 1990, Oklahoma ranked 34th in the nation in overall health.

A 2007 study by the United Health Foundation attributed the low ranking to the high prevalence of smoking and obesity among other factors. The report also said Oklahoma has a high rate of deaths from cardiovascular disease, with 412.1 deaths per 100,000 residents. Since 1990, obesity has increased 148 percent in the state.

Life expectancy in the United States is 29th in the world. But in Oklahoma, death rates started to climb in the 1990s, while the rest of the nation saw decreases.

As predicted by the age adjusted death rates, Oklahoma ranks near the bottom for the major causes of death—47th in the nation for deaths due to stroke, 49th for deaths due to heart disease and 40th in the nation for deaths due to lung cancer. Average life expectancy in Oklahoma is two years less than the national average.

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Such a litany of grim statistics can be disheartening. And while it's troubling to learn about Oklahoma's low rankings compared to the rest of the United States, there's good news on the horizon.

Oklahomans have a wealth of generosity and friendliness. It's one of the state's best natural resources. And Oklahoma certainly has no lack of pioneer spirit. But one of the biggest barriers to continued economic growth may be the heart of the matter—too much smoking, too much eating and too little exercise. These poor health habits have a real economic impact on our state.

Certainly during our first century, Oklahoma has developed a stronger health care system that, as health officials point out, provides safer food, immunizations, injury prevention, improvements in care for mothers and babies, a decrease in the use of tobacco products, and more.

Oklahoma health officials rightly point to positive developments, such as a rise in immunization of children ages 19-35 months, with 80.4 percent of children now fully immunized against 10 potentially deadly diseases, including polio and hepatitis B. And the prevalence of smoking has decreased by 24 percent since 1990, although the annual rate has remained at about 25 percent since 2000.

Oklahoma's health care leaders have also taken the lead with initiatives like the annual "State of the State's Health Report" issued by the Oklahoma State Board of Health.

The 2007 report makes it plain that, as proud as Oklahoma should be of its progress in its first century, significant challenges remain. The 2007 report points out that during the last decade, the state's health compared to the rest of the nation has not improved. But it hasn't grown worse during the past several years, either. And Oklahomans from all backgrounds are stepping up to the challenge of creating a healthier state through public-private partnerships, advocacy groups, coalitions and public awareness campaigns aimed at helping Oklahomans make simple healthy lifestyle changes.

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One such example is Oklahoma Turning Point, which formed as a response to Oklahoma’s poor health rankings and sought to decentralize the state’s approach to public health and move away from a “cookie-cutter” approach to communities.

Instead, Turning Point used a model that is in some ways similar to the 100 Ideas Initiative—actively engage communities by forming stakeholder groups. Almost 50 Turning Point partnerships have formed, reaching out to community, business, health care, faith and education leaders. These partnerships have increasingly found that our state’s poor health is negatively affecting economic development, placing a strain on our state’s social safety net and increasing the cost of health care for everyone.

As Turning Point has conducted its work, other public-private partnerships have also emerged.

For example, the Fit Kids Coalition launched several years ago.

As doctors statewide increasingly expressed alarm about growing numbers of kids and teens with type II diabetes (in the past a disease seen in older adults with obesity), a growing consensus began to emerge that food choices in schools and a lack of physical activity among children were both contributing to the problem.

“We began to ask ourselves basic questions. As the largest provider of health services in Oklahoma, ought we to be taking proactive positions in public health issues? And if not us, then who?” says Integris Health CEO and President Stanley Hupfeld. “Our answer was, ‘Yes,’ we should take a more proactive role. We thought the easiest place to grab hold was in the school system. While at the same time we understand it’s certainly family and societal based, schools shouldn’t make the problem worse.”

During the past few years, the Fit Kids Coalition has emerged as an advocate for healthy changes across the state—joined by other organizations, such as Schools for Healthy Lifestyles—and has advanced legislation at the state Capitol.

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In 2007, the Fit Kids Coalition and Turning Point teamed up to present the 10th annual Turning Point Forum as a joint conference.

The 2006 State of the State's Health Report summed up this increased statewide activity for positive change: "We now have an infrastructure in place. The question now is what we do with this infrastructure for change. How do we build and maintain a strong and healthy Oklahoma?"

That was a major concern for the 100 Ideas Initiative as well.

Remaining true to the 100 Ideas vision for citizen involvement and answers, participants came forward with real solutions to Oklahoma's health in IdeaRaisers held across the state.

Some of those solutions are described in this chapter.

Participants in IdeaRaisers did not limit themselves solely to the challenge of increasing healthy lifestyles or to boosting healthy options in our schools.

Oklahoma's citizens realize an important truth. As the state enters the second century of its history, it's time to start looking for solutions that will transform the entire approach to health care.

Some positive developments in this area have already happened in the past few years. First steps have been taken toward reforming Oklahoma's Medicaid system by introducing competition and market-based solutions. A statewide private-public partnership to boost access to prescription medications for low-income and senior citizens has also been created. And efforts toward expanding telemedicine in our state grow every year.

The ideas presented here—and more available on the 100 Ideas Web site—are only the beginning of a conversation about how the state can create a healthy Oklahoma in the 21st century.

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**Idea #75: Implement Better Electronic Health Records**

Better availability of electronic health records in Oklahoma will improve quality of care, reduce medical errors, save money and save lives. Better implementation of electronic records is also a public safety issue. For example, while drug addicts can try to game the system by visiting multiple physicians seeking prescriptions, electronic records would make it far easier to stop this activity in its tracks. Electronic records could be a lifesaver in an emergency, allowing first responders to determine a patient's allergies or other health conditions almost instantaneously. The vast majority of the public favors electronic health records. A November 2007 *Wall Street Journal*/Harris Interactive poll found that 63 percent of adults believe electronic health records could significantly decrease medical errors, while 67 percent of adults said the use of EHRs could improve quality of care by reducing duplicative or unnecessary tests.

**Idea #76 and Idea #77: Build Physician Manpower and Create a County-By-County Health Resource Directory**

- *Physician Manpower.* Access to health care is an enormous challenge, particularly in Oklahoma's rural areas. Policy makers have begun to confront this critical shortage of health care personnel in rural areas with incentives for clinicians, including scholarship assistance in return for a commitment to practice in a rural area for a defined period. The state should continue to look for innovative ways to provide incentives (such as tax deductions) to medical and nursing students to stay in Oklahoma and provide their services.
  - *Health Resource Directory.* Oklahoma should implement a county-by-county health resource directory. The resource directory would compile data by county for the health department. All counties would maintain a health resource list. This Web-based list would provide a variety of links to the Web sites of organizations that conduct or support activities concerning health. The site will also include a speaker's bureau
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listing of individuals from the organizations available for meetings. One example of how such a resource would be helpful: a health care consumer in one county could determine the availability of specialists in surrounding counties quickly using this “one stop shopping” approach.

**Ideas #78: Reform Oklahoma Food Stamps Program**

Oklahoma can encourage personal responsibility for health by increasing the value of food stamps when they are spent on healthier products and by examining options to encourage purchases of food from local farmers and manufacturers.

**Idea #79: Boost Nutritional Options in Schools**

Too often, our schools are filled with sugary soft drinks and fattening snacks that contribute to a rise in obesity and type 2 diabetes among children. Oklahoma should adopt public policy goals that replace unhealthy food options with healthy choices, such as fruits and vegetables. The state should also encourage better nutritional instruction and awareness in our schools.

**Idea #80: Boost Physical Education in Schools**

Oklahoma should strive for a minimum in weekly statewide physical education hours for children grades K-8. Most Oklahoma children and teens do not receive more than 60 minutes a week of structured physical education. Health experts say they should receive at least 150 minutes weekly. At a minimum, the state should consider doubling the weekly amount to 120 minutes of physical education.

**Idea #81: Report Hospital Infection Rates**

Oklahoma does not currently require the reporting of hospital infection rates. The state should move in a careful, thoughtful direction to track information that will help the public identify infection rates among health care providers. A fair and objective infection reporting system could help cut back on infection-related

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complications. And it would assist health care consumers in Oklahoma in making informed decisions.

**Idea #82: Increase Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Throughout Oklahoma**

Oklahoma should develop a concerted strategy through state and local policies, development codes and incentives to cultivate more pedestrian and bicycle trails throughout the state. Our state should foster livable communities with increased sidewalks in subdivisions, streets that incorporate pedestrian/bicycle pathways and community planning guidelines that include walking and biking travel. In addition to the health benefits derived from increased access to walking and biking opportunities, communities will also benefit economically by enhancing desirable amenities.

**Idea #83: Create the Oklahoma Land Run Marathon**

The Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon has been a tremendous success, and a wonderful testament to Oklahoma's generous spirit of volunteerism and optimism. Oklahoma should encourage more events like these. As a positive emphasis on our state's pioneer spirit, concerned organizations should join together to coordinate "The Oklahoma Land Run Marathon," an event that will place a major emphasis on health and childhood obesity problems in our state. With an optimistic brand name tied to a historic event, this would be a worthy cause. With the right level of support, marathons in Oklahoma could rival larger-scale marathons in other regions for media attention during the next 100 years.

**Idea #84: Sponsor Farmers Market and Family Days**

Communities should sponsor a combined "Farmers Market and Family Day" in downtown areas or local farmers market locations. Oklahoma City, for example, could organize such an event in Bricktown providing family-centered fun as well as an outlet for local farmers. Tulsa could sponsor a similar event, as

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could other Oklahoma communities large and small. The events would bring increased revenue for downtown businesses. These festival events could also feature arts and crafts vendors, local musicians and informational booths on preventive health and education.

**Idea #85: Foster Health Care Faith-Based Initiatives**

Innovative faith-based organizations are addressing real community needs for a variety of concerns. In 2007, Oklahoma lawmakers passed legislation to foster faith-based groups in state prisons to help reduce repeat offenders. Why not pass legislation to encourage more faith-based initiatives with a health care mission? Examples include community clinics that provide health services to the poor, addressing a lack of access to care and reducing the overall costs of health care statewide through preventive medicine.

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Two-time Olympic weightlifter Shane Hamman has been considered the strongest man in America. Hamman participated in the Sports IdeaRaiser at the Bricktown Ballpark in Oklahoma City.

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## CHAPTER 10

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### Challenge 6: Increasing and Enhancing Oklahoma's Quality of Life

*“An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not  
an idea whose time has come.”*

*~Victor Hugo*

**I**n Oklahoma, you can travel from cypress swamps to tallgrass prairie land in the span of an afternoon drive. Oklahoma is blessed with a varied geography, moderate weather, beautiful natural landscapes, and abundant outdoor options.

Forests cover nearly a quarter of Oklahoma's land, and four mountain ranges stretch across portions of the state: Ouachitas, Arbuckles, Wichitas, and the Ozarks. According to the state Department of Tourism, Oklahoma has more man-made lakes (200) than any other state, more than 1 million surface-acres of water, and 2,000 more miles of shoreline than the Atlantic and Gulf coasts combined.

Oklahoma is one of only four states with more than 10 ecoregions, as determined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Our ecoregions include Rocky Mountain foothills, cypress swamps, tallgrass prairies, hardwood forests and pine-covered mountains.

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With an annual average temperature of a balmy 60.5 degrees, our state experiences a lengthy and mild fall season, short winters and more than 300 days of sunshine year in and year out.

Oklahoma has so much to offer—abundant green space, lakes and parks—plenty of room to move and grow.

Our major cities have some of the best commute times in the country: According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey, Tulsa has an average one-way commute of 20.88 minutes (third shortest among 65 major metropolitan areas) while Oklahoma City averages 21.57 for a one-way commute (the seventh shortest).

In 2007, Oklahoma City made progress toward having a National Basketball Association franchise, and the city's Bricktown and downtown river areas continue to thrive and grow.

Both of our state's major metropolitan areas have started to make significant economic gains in recent years. An October 2007 Forbes.com "Best Cities for Jobs" ranking placed Tulsa at No. 7 in income growth, No. 10 in cost of living, No. 18 in job growth, and No. 23 in low unemployment. The city's overall ranking was No. 6. Oklahoma City ranked No. 10. It was both cities' first time in the top 10 on the list.

A recent study by Coldwell Banker states a 2,200 square-foot home costing \$130,000-\$135,000 in Oklahoma would have a price tag of \$188,000 in Dallas and nearly a quarter of a million dollars in Colorado. Meanwhile, "Relocate America" has ranked Edmond, Norman, Ponca City and Bartlesville among its top places to live, with Edmond and Bartlesville making the top 10.

Oklahomans know their state is a grand place to live, whether they're taking a leisurely drive along old Route 66, spending the Fourth of July weekend at one of the state's abundant lakes, or digging for salt crystals on the Great Salt Plains.

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As the 100 Ideas Initiative traveled across the state, IdeaRaiser participants voiced significant pride in Oklahoma. Citizens also voiced a repeated clarion call to take full advantage of our state's assets to improve Oklahoma's quality of life.

Making Oklahoma a more livable and attractive location boosts the economy and it boosts the health of our citizens. A better quality of life will keep and attract the best and the brightest to the state.

IdeaRaisers held across the state sparked optimistic discussions about policies and ideas to make Oklahoma an increasingly attractive place to live, raise children and retire. Topics addressed in this chapter range from policies on natural resources, tourism and the arts to public safety.

#### **Idea #86 and Idea #87: Improve Oklahoma's Image at Entry Points**

Oklahoma should take significant steps to improve the first impression of the state given to visitors, particularly at places like rest stops and visitor centers. As many participants in the 100 Ideas Initiative observed, while Oklahomans are known across the nation for their friendliness, many of Oklahoma's rest stops do not send a positive message about our state to visitors.

- ***First-impression Zones.*** One idea is to establish “first impression zones” at major entry points into the state. Along with quality visitor centers, these zones will also feature messaging about the state's economic growth, cultural amenities and tourism opportunities through multiple media, including billboards and low-frequency radio broadcasts.
  - ***Improve Welcome Centers.*** Oklahoma should make an effort to improve our state's tourist information centers—for example by working with museums, institutions of higher education and local communities to provide interesting displays and information. The goal of these centers should be to sell and promote the state of Oklahoma.
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**Idea #88: Establish the Oklahoma School of the Fine Arts**

Oklahoma should build a residential, two-year advanced high school for students who are gifted and talented in the fine arts and music. Many world-renowned musicians, visual artists, performers and authors come from Oklahoma. Our state already has a tremendous pool of talent, along with wonderful resources and programs like the Quartz Mountain Summer Arts Institute for high school students. Oklahoma should take such efforts to the next level and make our state a showcase of creative talent.

**Idea #89: Establish a Fine Arts Endowment**

Oklahoma should develop a fine arts endowment to provide permanent funding for organizations such as the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, Canterbury Choral Society, Ballet Oklahoma and the Tulsa Opera, as well as visual arts organizations and more. By encouraging and supporting cultural amenities, Oklahoma increases its competitiveness in the global marketplace. The financial support of these organizations is vital to attract new businesses and job opportunities to the state.

**Idea #90–#92: Host Events to Bring International Focus and Attention to Oklahoma**

The state should seek to host events that will put our state on the national and international stage in our second century. Ideas put forward have included bringing the National Finals Rodeo back to Oklahoma City to capitalize on our state's Western and Native American heritage; a bid to host the Summer Olympic games; or an effort to host a World's Fair in our next century.

Admittedly, these are ambitious goals. But Oklahoma should form organized committees and working groups to begin exploring these opportunities within the next few decades. Simply aspiring to such goals will bring increased publicity to Oklahoma and potentially attract other national and international sporting event opportunities.

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Certainly cities smaller than Oklahoma City and Tulsa have vied for the Olympics. Oklahoma City has hosted major national and regional sporting events, such as the Big 12 Baseball Tournament, the World Cup of Softball, the 2005 NCAA Men's Basketball First and Second Round and more. Tulsa has hosted four PGA Championships and three U.S. Opens, the most recent in 2007. With both of Oklahoma's major metropolitan areas boasting large and increasingly diverse economies and some of the largest corporations in the nation, Oklahoma is poised to make competitive bids for events like the Olympics in coming decades.

Oklahoma should also establish a statewide Sports Commission to combine the duties of smaller commissions, such as the state's Professional Boxing Commission and the Horse Racing Commission. At the same time, Oklahoma should continue to seek opportunities for major league sports franchises (such as NHL, NBA and NFL) for our major urban centers.

#### **Idea #93: Require Community Service from Students**

Oklahoma should require community service for children each year as part of their education. High school teens, especially, have a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm the state should muster. A statewide community service requirement could be flexible both in terms of timing and types of service opportunities. Students could work on organized community or school projects, volunteer for faith-based or community organizations offering social services to the needy and more. Such an endeavor would teach students about the need for volunteerism and would instill pride in community. A modest requirement of a few hours a year could begin in primary school, with increased requirements in secondary school.

#### **Idea #94: Establish a Family Justice Court System**

Oklahoma should create a family justice court system where the same judge oversees all cases related to a family.

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**Idea #95: Increase Green Space**

Oklahoma should increase incentives to set aside more green space in the state. One idea is to encourage golf courses to adopt a green space model by working with the existing landscape and by creating wildlife sanctuaries. According to an August 12, 2007, article in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, there are more than 2,000 golf course superintendents around the world already working with Audubon International, a nonprofit group funded in part by the United States Golf Association, to conserve natural resources on courses. Built on a landfill instead of open farmland, a new Missouri golf course will feature natural obstacles, including native grasslands and a grove of sycamore trees surrounding a creek bed.

**Idea #96 and Idea #97: Encourage More Trees**

Trees add many quality of life benefits to communities that can pay off in economic dividends, increasing property values and more. Besides preventing soil erosion and providing shade, trees make communities and neighborhoods more aesthetically pleasing. David Ross Boyd, the legendary first president of the University of Oklahoma, planted thousands of trees in old Norman with his own money. A portrait of Boyd finishing the planting of a sapling hangs in the state Capitol, and the century-old trees shade the OU campus and the streets of surrounding neighborhoods to this day. Oklahoma should strive to leave a similar legacy to future generations. Two ideas in this area are: New home builders should be required to have at least one existing tree per lot as well as add a new one when completed. And Oklahoma should have a goal of encouraging the planting of 1 million trees statewide through incentives within a certain number of years.

**Idea #98: Increase Litter Fines**

Oklahoma should increase enforcement on littering and boost penalties, earmarking funds acquired for state beautification efforts.

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**Idea #99: Require Seat Belts for School Buses**

Oklahoma should mandate that school busses be equipped with seat belts for children. Oklahoma already requires drivers to wear seat belts, and bus drivers themselves must wear seat belts. School buses should have the same safety restraint systems the state requires for smaller passenger vehicles. It's just common sense.

**Idea #100: Establish an Iconic Landmark for Oklahoma**

Oklahoma needs an iconic landmark, both as a way to instill pride in our state and as one way for the state to stand out in the national imagination (just as the St. Louis Gateway Arch does). Examples suggested at IdeaRaisers ranged from the world's largest fountain to a landmark memorializing our state's proud petroleum heritage.

The state commemorates its Western heritage with the world-class National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. The state celebrates its Native American cultures and history among our 39 tribal complexes, and a national Native American Cultural Center and Museum is in development.

But what about the state's rich petroleum history? Currently, there's nothing that truly represents the scale and scope of that part of the state's heritage. Oklahomans have made their indelible mark on the pages of world petroleum history. These innovators and innovations should never be forgotten.

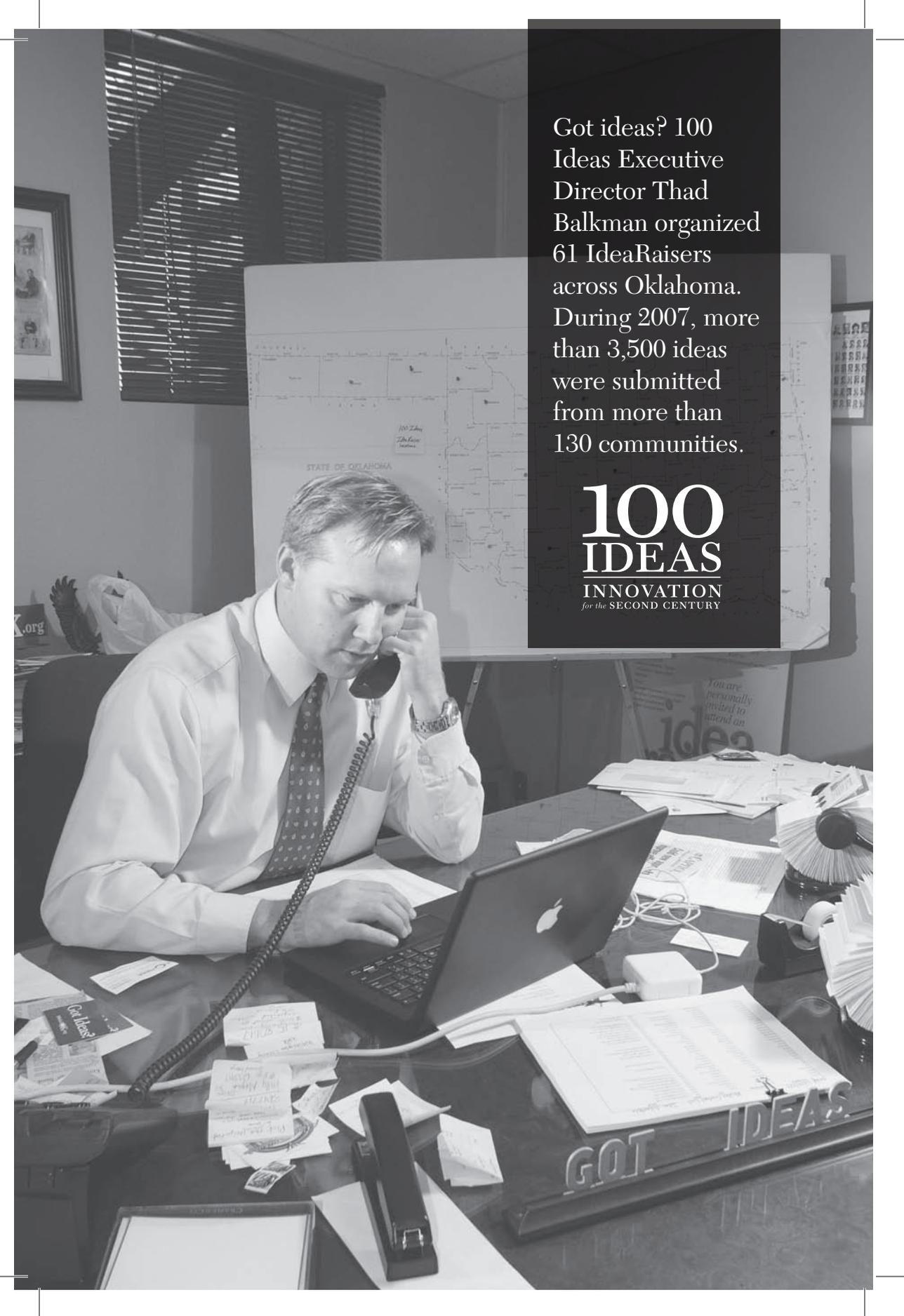
One idea is to construct an Eiffel Tower-style structure that replicates the feel of an oil derrick—sheathed in stainless steel, complete with two observation decks, gift shops and a restaurant. The monument could be equipped with water cannons and have regularly scheduled explosive geysers to recreate the feeling of an oil gusher experience, as well as laser light shows. It could straddle the Oklahoma River which would act as a natural catch basin for the water from the cannons. On the observation deck overlooking the Native American Heritage Museum, a commemorative plaque

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would link the monument to the Native American usage of oil and gas in Oklahoma.

To maximize positive publicity and to ensure the best design, an organizational committee could solicit proposals world wide for design submissions.

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Got ideas? 100  
Ideas Executive  
Director Thad  
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61 IdeaRaisers  
across Oklahoma.  
During 2007, more  
than 3,500 ideas  
were submitted  
from more than  
130 communities.

**100**  
**IDEAS**  
INNOVATION  
*for the SECOND CENTURY*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**T**housands of individuals are responsible for the content of this book, and we have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of ideas from the citizens of Oklahoma.

We have compiled a list of contributors, drawing from more than 61 IdeaRaisers and thousands of ideas submitted online. With so much participation, it is impossible to ensure the listing of every single participant, and we apologize to anyone who was mistakenly omitted. We did not attach specific names to individual ideas, as most ideas were submitted numerous times in various forms. The final versions were approved by our advisory board. We are continuously grateful to every contributor.

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A former television reporter and anchor, Damon Gardenhire (left) was the editor of this book. His writing has been published in the *Dallas Morning News*, *The Houston Chronicle*, *National Journal* and the *Oklahoma Today* magazine.



Dana Shadid, assisted by Jodi Lewis (right), served as facilitators for the 61 IdeaRaisers held across Oklahoma. Shadid and Lewis work for the Oklahoma Community Institute, an organization dedicated to improving communities.

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  - Tatsuo Sawakami
  - Schuyler Schaffer
  - Katherine Scheirman
  - Michael Scherlag
  - Stephen Schneider
  - Sarah Schneringer
  - Eric Scholl
  - Shelly Schoonover
  - Bob Schultz
  - Karen Schultz
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  - Jona Schweinberg
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  - Rowena Scott-Johnson
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  - Rusty Shackelford
  - Amanda Shankle
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  - Julie Shannon
  - Kim Shannon
  - Mark Shannon
  - Kyle Shelton
  - Robert Shelton
  - Sharon Shelton
  - kermet sheppard
  - Alex Sherry
  - Amanda Shirey
  - Joe Sieber
  - Joseph Sieber
  - Wayne and Leta Sikes
  - Mandi Simmons
  - James Simms
  - R. Simon
  - Rick Simon
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  - Michael Slkebakken
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  - Brad Smith
  - Eric Smith
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  - Jennifer Smith
  - Jim Smith
  - Jordan Smith
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  - Andrea Stewart
  - Jordan Stewart
  - Suzy Stewart
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  - Matt Tate
  - Paul Tay
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  - Toby Taylor
  - Calvin Tease
  - Shelli Temple
  - John Terneus
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  - Jim Therrell
  - Lance Thomas
  - Lorie Thomas
  - Donna Thomason
  - Charles Thompson
  - Jason Thompson
  - Lois Thompson
  - Jennifer Thomure
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  - Shaun Ukens
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  - Shelia Unger-Fritts
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  - Cindy Van Kley
  - Nathan Vann
  - Krishna Vedala
  - Doug Vincent
  - Louisa Voden
  - J.T. Voth
  - Thomas Vu
  - E. Wagner
  - Wally Waits
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  - Rose Walding
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  - J.B. Wallace
  - Brenna Wallach
  - Lindsay Walle
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  - Craig Williams
  - Deann Williams
  - Jake Williams
  - James Williams
  - John Williams
  - John Morris Williams
  - Sarah Williams
  - Seth Williams
  - Sherrice Williams
  - Cathy Williams-White
  - Bruce Willingham
  - Elizabeth Willner
  - Nancy Wills
  - Sarahi Wilson
  - Willis Winder
  - Elizabeth Windsor Post
  - Brandon Winfrey
  - Sue Winn
  - S. Wofford
  - Joey Wolfe
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- Hayley Wolff
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- Doleta Wood
- Ed Wood
- Frances Wood
- John Wood
- Raymond Woodall
- Lynn Woodward
- Shane Woolbright
- Dewayne Woolf
- Kassey Worley
- Cody Worrell
- Marcus Wray
- Chris Wright
- John Wright
- Michael Wright
- Andrew Wunder
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- Felicia Wyatt
- Wayne Wynecott
- J. Wyrick
- Woody Yaklin
- Jonathan Ybarra
- Bill Yeager
- Virgil and Betty Yeargain
- Emily Yeo
- Jonathan Young
- Jordan Young
- Denise Yzaguirre
- Bob Zapffe
- Rachel Zebrowski
- Lee Zimmerman

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  - Michael Beavor
  - Jerrica Becker
  - Lacey Benda
  - Sandra Bennett
  - Jessica Bisel
  - Amber Bolinger
  - Ryan Bowers
  - Lisa Braden
  - Sarah Brockhaus
  - Casey Burns
  - Jamie Butemeyer
  - Tiffany Cheng
  - Josh Cline
  - Maggie Cochrane
  - Amanda Collins
  - Savannah Collins
  - David Collins
  - Jessica Cook
  - Matthew Cox
  - Taylor Crawford
  - Dustin Crenshaw
  - Alex Crowe
  - William Cunningham
  - Caleb Davis
  - Matt Day
  - Eric Dean
  - Jason Dill
  - Jeff Dittenber
  - Levi Dobbs
  - Katie Dudley
  - Zach Dunn
  - Christopher Dunn
  - Emily Dyer
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- Rachel Everett
  - Ashley Fancher
  - Ian Fullington
  - Twyla Gable
  - Keenan Garrett
  - Jacob Goeken
  - Patrick Grewe
  - Laura Gricol
  - Sarah Hagan
  - Whitney Hamar
  - John Tyler Hammons
  - Leslie Herring
  - Hilary Holder
  - Natalie Houtz
  - Danielle Hubble
  - Sam Hughes
  - Huston Hulse
  - Chelsey Hunt
  - Summer James
  - Cody Jaynes
  - Jenna Kelly
  - Kaleb Kemp
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  - Justin Kennedy
  - Ryan Kilpatrick
  - Jennica Kinney
  - Gloria Kun Ying Lau
  - Erica Lawrence
  - Emily Leahey
  - Sarah Mahaffey
  - Richard Martin
  - Malia McFadden
  - Madison McKnight
  - Noah Morris
  - Sean Mullins
  - Klint Neal
  - Mark Nehrenz
  - Will Osborn
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  - Nathan Owens
  - Whitney Pebsworth
  - Jared Pembrook
  - Alyssa Phillips
  - Lori Phillips
  - Michelle Plasters
  - Dillon Price
  - Geoffrey Rains
  - Isaac Regier
  - Ashley Reynolds
  - Lance Rhodes
  - Ann Riley
  - Bailey Ringer
  - Cade Roberts
  - Miranda Royer
  - Sarah Schneringer
  - Marie Schreiner
  - Alex Sherry
  - Jordan Stewart
  - Stephen Stites
  - Kevin Tapley
  - Austin Taylor
  - Donna Tucker
  - Jessica Tucker
  - Shaun Ukens
  - Shelia Unger-Fritts
  - Krishna Vedala
  - J.T. Voth
  - Kathryn Walker
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  - Jessy Walton
  - Allyson Walton
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- Lucinda Ward
- Daili Wedel
- Blake Wieland
- Derick Wilder
- Rachel Wilkerson
- Sarah Williams
- Sarahi Wilson
- Elizabeth Windsor-Post
- Kasey Worley
- Andrew Wunder
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