

VELOCITY

DECEMBER 2024 • OKCCHAMBER.COM

GREATER OKLAHOMA CITY CHAMBER ANNOUNCES 2025 BOARD LEADERSHIP

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber recently announced its board officers for 2025. During the Chamber's November board meeting, Michael Ross, CEO of INSURICA and executive vice president of American Fidelity Corporation, was named chair-elect.

Ross took the reins as CEO of INSURICA nearly two decades ago, and his leadership continues to drive the company's success. Under his leadership, INSURICA has experienced remarkable growth, expanding from \$6 million in revenue to \$125 million. The company has grown widely, with roughly 600 employees and 33

offices across Oklahoma, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Mississippi and Texas. Ross has set an ambitious goal for INSURICA, hoping to reach \$225 million in revenue by 2025.

2025 officers are as follows:



- Chair: Teresa Rose, JD, Communities Foundation of Oklahoma



- Chair-Elect: Michael F. Ross, INSURICA/American Fidelity Assurance Company Corporate

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THE GREATER OKLAHOMA CITY CHAMBER'S STATE OF THE ECONOMY HIGHLIGHTS AND TAKEAWAYS



MARK SNEAD
Economist

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's annual State of the Economy event featured a panel of distinguished economists and business leaders who discussed the state's economic outlook, workforce development and fiscal policies under the incoming leadership of President-elect Donald Trump.

ECONOMIC POLICIES AND IMPACT ON OKLAHOMA

Mark Snead, an economist with the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, shared his insights on the potential impact of President-elect Trump's economic policies. He noted that while the full outcome remains uncertain, Trump's tax cuts, regulatory rollbacks and proposed tariffs—particularly on China—could have both positive and negative effects on Oklahoma's economy. Snead emphasized the state's strong oil and gas industry as a potential beneficiary of Trump's pro-energy stance, while also cautioning that broad-based tariffs might not gain approval from Congress. Despite these uncertainties, Snead believes Oklahoma businesses could see long-term gains from reduced regulatory burdens.

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A New Noninvasive Treatment for Essential Tremor

OU Health is the first and only health system in Oklahoma to offer an incisionless treatment for patients with medical refractory essential tremor that can result in improvement in hand, head and body shaking as well as increased mobility through a same-day treatment. Called “Focused Ultrasound,” the new technology is for essential tremor patients who have not responded to medication, or who cannot take it.

Focused ultrasound for essential tremor is an FDA-approved, non-invasive procedure that’s transforming patient care. The procedure uses ultrasound waves to target the specific areas of the brain responsible for tremors. Guided by MRI, the soundwaves pass safely through the skull and soft tissues to focus heat on only the targeted area, providing relief from symptoms. With no surgical cuts or permanent implants necessary, there is minimal to no risk of infection, and the treatment is often performed on an outpatient basis. Many patients can expect to resume normal activities within days.

OU Health is proud to be the first in Oklahoma to offer this revolutionary treatment.

To make an appointment or for more information, visit us at OUHealth.com/EssentialTremor

OU Health Physicians — Neurosurgery Clinic
1000 N Lincoln Blvd, Suite 4000
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
(405) 271-4912



LEADERSHIP NOTES



CHRISTY GILLENWATER
President & CEO

As 2024 draws to a close, we reflect on the Chamber’s accomplishments and Oklahoma City’s continued growth. This year, the city added 5,800 new jobs, generated \$358 million in new payroll and saw \$664 million in capital investments across the region. Nonfarm employment rose by 2.4%, highlighting the strength and resilience of our economy.

With the City of Oklahoma City and the Alliance for Economic Development, the Chamber completed a strategic plan to guide our future efforts, focusing on infrastructure, business climate and strategic partnerships—critical factors in positioning our city for ongoing success.

The Chamber also prioritized building key partnerships in biosciences, aerospace and energy. Alongside our statewide partners, we launched Life Science Oklahoma, an industry association designed to drive growth for Oklahoma’s companies. Also, we continued leading the Build Back Better Regional Grant Program, supporting the expansion of life sciences, while also advocating for federal funding to support key local initiatives.

Tourism in Oklahoma City remains robust, fueled by successful marketing campaigns and the city’s ability to host major events, like the Women’s College World Series and the U.S. Olympic Trials. Looking ahead, Oklahoma City was selected as a venue for Canoe Slalom and Softball competitions during 2028 LA28 Summer Olympics, pending final venue approval from the Los Angeles City Council. Voter support for a hotel-motel tax increase further reinforced our city’s standing as a competitive destination for conventions and tourism.

In 2024, the Chamber advocated for business-friendly policies, encouraging members to engage in legislative efforts that will help shape our future.

As we look to 2025, the Forward Oklahoma City VI plan, focused on industry growth and talent development, will drive the city’s prosperity. Thank you for being part of this journey as we work to ensure Oklahoma City remains a hub of opportunity, innovation and success.

»» **READ CHRISTY’S VELOCITYOKC ONLINE STORY OF THE MONTH**

Echo and Russell Westbrook Enterprises invest in Oklahoma City’s future

[VELOCITYOKC.COM/CHRISTYSPICK](https://velocityokc.com/christyspick)



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2024 OFFICERS

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CHRISTY GILLENWATER
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber
President & CEO



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UPCOMING EVENTS



LEGISLATIVE KICKOFF 2025

CALENDAR

(Events are subject to change.
Consult okcchamber.com/events
for the most recent updates.)

DECEMBER 18

Annual Meeting
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
National Cowboy & Western
Heritage Museum
1700 NE 63rd St.
OKCChamber.com/Annual

JANUARY 22

Legislative Kickoff
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
National Cowboy & Western
Heritage Museum
1700 NE 63rd St.
OKCChamber.com/Kickoff

Oklahoma legislature's key leaders discuss critical issues at Legislative Kickoff

Members of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber will get the opportunity to hear from several key legislative leaders during the Chamber's annual Legislative Kickoff scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

A panel featuring the leaders of the Oklahoma Legislature will set the stage for the upcoming 2025 legislative session by sharing their insights on the critical issues facing our state.

The panel includes Speaker of the House-elect Kyle Hilbert; House Democratic Minority Leader Cyndi Munson; Senate President Pro Tempore-designate Lonnie Paxton; and Senate Democratic Leader Julia Kirt.

Tickets are \$65 for Chamber members and \$90 for nonmembers. To register, visit okcchamber.com/legislativekickoff. Sponsor tables of eight with additional recognition are available for \$1,550. Contact Suzette Ellison at sellison@okcchamber.com for sponsor inquiries.



At the Chamber's 2025 Legislative Kickoff event, guests will gain valuable insights into key issues addressed at the state capitol throughout the year, with discussions led by prominent legislative leaders.

SENATOR LANKFORD OUTLINES KEY PRIORITIES FOR OKLAHOMA AND THE NATION AT THE CHAMBER'S ANNUAL D.C. SPOTLIGHT

Senator James Lankford discussed pressing issues in Washington during the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber's D.C. Spotlight event. He shared key legislative priorities as a new Congress and administration prepare to take office, addressing topics like tax policy, government efficiency and Oklahoma's influence on national policy.

Tax policy will be central to the Senate's work in the coming year, as provisions from the 2017 tax bill are set to expire. Lawmakers will determine whether to extend existing policies or implement changes, including adjustments to energy-related tax incentives and restoring charitable deductions for non-itemizers. Lankford highlighted the need to address how eliminating these deductions in 2017 impacted nonprofits and small donors, stating, "The 2017 tax bill eliminated the deduction for nonprofit donations from non-itemizers, and 91% of Americans don't itemize. These small donors are crucial to nonprofits, and if we don't restore that deduction, we risk losing their support and volunteerism."

Lankford also discussed the potential for bipartisan collaboration to enhance government efficiency. He referenced the "DOGE" phenomenon—a humorous nod to the Department of Government Efficiency as coined in online tech communities—and connected it to a serious effort by the Trump Administration to streamline operations. He noted that the administration seeks to reduce redundancies and evaluate workforce structures, especially in the post-COVID era of remote work. Questions about managing telework, geographic flexibility for federal employees and cost savings are central to these efforts. Lankford pointed out that relocating remote federal workers to more cost-effective areas, like Oklahoma, could both benefit taxpayers and leverage regional expertise.

Lankford also highlighted Oklahoma's strengths in energy production, low electricity costs and a workforce



Senator James Lankford shared his perspective on key priorities in Oklahoma and the nation during a Q&A with Chair Teresa Rose at the D.C. Spotlight event.

known for its skill and dedication. "We have the lowest electricity rates in the country," he said. "There's a lot of things that we're doing right now that's attracting business into us based on our cost of living, and quite frankly, our workforce."

He stressed that these factors are drawing businesses and investments to the state while positioning Oklahoma as a leader in national policy discussions. Oklahoma's delegation in Congress, including leaders such as Appropriations Chair Tom Cole and Policy Chair Kevin Hern, further strengthens its voice in Washington.

Reflecting on election outcomes, Lankford noted that economic concerns overwhelmingly drove voter sentiment. "The economy was number one in every single poll," he said, emphasizing the need for actionable policies to address public priorities. Looking ahead, the Senate faces an intense schedule, including the passage of appropriations bills, disaster aid and key federal nominations.

Lankford concluded by asking hard questions about Oklahoma's growth and competitiveness, comparing it to the rapid expansion seen in regions like Dallas-Fort Worth. These conversations, he suggested, are vital as the state continues to draw national attention for its economic and legislative leadership.

A VISIONARY TRIP TO LEARN FROM A MODEL OF URBAN SUCCESS: THE CHAMBER VISITS ATLANTA FOR ITS ANNUAL INTERCITY VISIT

Each year, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber organizes the InterCity Visit benchmarking trip to assess the city's progress compared to competing markets. This trip offers business and community leaders the chance to explore the assets and opportunities of other regions.

This year, Atlanta was chosen for its successful economic development strategies in business growth, infrastructure, innovation and hosting major events, such as the Olympics and conventions. The trip provided valuable insights on urban planning, regional collaboration, tourism, investment and fostering a vibrant business environment. Additionally, Atlanta's focus on diversity, urban development and its role as a transportation hub offered key lessons.

EXPLORING ATLANTA'S INFLUENCES AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Held October 24–25, the trip began at Las Ventanas, a premier event space with sweeping views of downtown Atlanta. The first session, "Atlanta Influences Everything," was led by Bem Joiner, a founding member of the creative branding agency, The Tmrrws. Joiner shared Atlanta's evolution and how its culture has shaped its identity and national influence.

The day continued with a discussion on the role of Atlanta's six historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in workforce development. Attendees heard from Dr. Charlene Gilbert, Provost at Clark Atlanta University, on how these institutions empower the region's workforce. Spelman College alumna Che Watkins, executive director of Braven, spoke about preparing individuals from diverse backgrounds for career success.

The afternoon included tours of two key Atlanta landmarks: Tyler Perry Studios and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. Tyler Perry Studios, one of the largest in the U.S., provided an inside look at Atlanta's booming film industry, complete with a tour from Studio



A group from InterCity Visit Atlanta tours the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, highlighting Atlanta's crucial role in the journey for social justice.

Operations President Steve Mensch. In Oklahoma City, over \$20 million was spent in FY24 through feature films, highlighting our ever-growing industry.

At the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, guests learned about Atlanta's pivotal role in advancing social justice. The visit highlighted the role of cultural institutions in shaping public policy and encouraging civic dialogue.

EXPLORING INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND REVITALIZATION

On day two, the group explored the legacy of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta, led by A.J. Robinson, President of Central Atlanta Progress. Robinson discussed how the Olympics positioned Atlanta on the global map and influenced the city's growth. Attendees also learned about Atlanta's expertise in hosting major events, including the World Cup and Super Bowl, from Jason Lusk, vice president of sales at the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Tom Weyandt, former deputy chief operating officer for the City of Atlanta.

At lunch, the group toured the Atlanta BeltLine, a transformative urban revitalization project. Ryan Gravel, founder of Sixpitch, shared his vision for the 22-mile network of former railway corridors, now a vibrant, multi-use space with parks, trails and transit routes that connect neighborhoods. Gravel was joined

by Kraig Torres, CEO of Hop City, who discussed how the BeltLine drives economic growth by fostering new business opportunities. The group also learned about Atlanta's affordable housing initiatives from Matt Bedsole, leader of the Housing Innovation Lab, and Alan Ferguson, president and CEO of Atlanta Habitat for Humanity.

DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

The trip also included a session on Atlanta's transportation systems, led by Mike Alexander, chief operating officer of the Atlanta Regional Commission, and Scott Haggard, director of government and external affairs at the Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority. They discussed the development, challenges and future of transportation in Atlanta, covering topics such as MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority), regional transit improvements and efforts to enhance connectivity between the city and surrounding areas.

The visit ended with a session on Centennial Yards, a 50-acre redevelopment project in downtown Atlanta, led by Ben Vera, vice president of Centennial Yards Company. The project aims to transform underutilized property into spaces for business, retail, entertainment and housing.

CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

The final stop was Truist Park, home of the Atlanta Braves, located in The Battery Atlanta, a mixed-use development. Lauren Abernathy, vice president of marketing for Braves Development Company, discussed how the district has contributed significantly to the region's economy.

Throughout the trip, attendees learned valuable lessons on urban transformation, talent development, infrastructure and business growth. The visit to Atlanta has provided key takeaways to help strengthen Oklahoma City's growth and partnerships.



GRAND OPENINGS

Congratulations to Chamber members on their recent Grand Openings! To see the schedule of upcoming Grand Openings or subscribe to the Grand Openings calendar, visit okcchamber.com/grandopenings.

Esperanza Elementary School (Garden sponsored by OKC Beautiful)
3517 S. Linn Ave.
OKC, OK 73119

KOSU Public Radio
18 N. Klein Ave.
OKC, OK 73106





DEVON ICE RINK

The Devon Ice Rink in the Myriad Botanical Gardens celebrated its 13th season with a grand opening in November. The ice rink will remain open until February 2.

The ice rink is open seven days a week with hours as follows:

- Monday – Thursday: 3-9 p.m.
- Friday: 3-11 p.m.
- Saturday: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- Sunday: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Admission to the ice rink is \$14 including skates and \$9 if you bring your own skates. Discounts include \$9 admission for military personnel, \$10 for Myriad Botanical Gardens members and a \$10 group rate for groups of 10 or more.

The Devon Ice Rink's winter break schedule is as follows:

- December 23 – January 4: 11 a.m. – 11 p.m.
(11 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Sundays)
- Tuesday, December 24: 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Wednesday, December 25: 12-6 p.m.
- Tuesday, December 31: 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.
- Wednesday, January 1: 11 a.m. – 11 p.m.

OKLAHOMA CITY EMBRACES THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF FESTIVITIES, LIGHTS AND COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

The holiday season in Oklahoma City is in full swing, offering a variety of festive activities for all ages. From ice skating at the Devon Ice Rink to light displays at the Oklahoma City Zoo's Safari Lights, there's something for everyone to enjoy. With so many events taking place, Oklahoma City provides plenty of opportunities for the community to come together and enjoy the holiday season.



Oklahoma City residents and visitors enjoy ice skating at the Devon Ice Rink, open during select hours throughout December.



MYRIAD AND BRIGHT

Oklahoma City residents can attend Myriad and Bright this holiday season at the Myriad Botanical Gardens, with daily hours of 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. until December 24.

In addition to the outdoor gardens, the Inasmuch Foundation Crystal Bridge Conservatory will stay open until 8 p.m. on Thursdays through Sundays, November 29 to December 29.

On December 13 and 20, guests can enjoy a light and music show in the conservatory from 5-8 p.m. An artisan market with holiday vendors and entertainment performances, sponsored by the Arts Council OKC Art Moves, will take place in the lobby before the show.

On December 14 and 21, the gardens will provide multiple holiday activities. Children can take photos with Santa, listen to a story from Ms. Claus and create holiday crafts from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Crystal Bridge will showcase live music from 2-4 p.m., with a light and music show following from 5:30-8 p.m.

'TIS THE SEASON AT SCISSORTAIL PARK

'Tis the Season at Scissortail Park offers holiday activities for the whole family, from the 'Tis the Season Market & Concert to Santa visits and more. Until December 24, Scissortail Park's 'Tis the Season is open daily from 2-7 p.m.

Santa will visit the park on December 14 and 21, from 5-8 p.m. in the North Trellis Garden. On December 14, from 5-8 p.m., the park will host a showing of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" on the great lawn.

A Menorah Lighting Celebration with Chabad Community Center will occur on December 29 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the Love's Travel Stops Stage. Lights will also be featured around the park until the beginning of the new year.

OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO SAFARI LIGHTS

Family and friends can enjoy the wildlife-themed sculptures, animated light displays, musical light shows and more at Oklahoma City Zoo's Safari Lights, open until January 1.

With one drive-thru course and multiple walk-thru courses, Safari Lights offers an abundance of holiday light displays. In addition to the lights, attendees can partake in photo opportunities, snack stations and more.

THE HOLIDAY SEASON AT OAK

This holiday season, OAK features activities for the whole community to enjoy. Selfies with Santa will be hosted December 13 and 15 from 4-7 p.m.

Throughout the holiday season, until January 20, OAK on Ice takes place at the community's outdoor rink located in Heartwood Park, with tickets starting at \$10 every day.

Daily hours of operation include:

- Monday – Thursday: 4-9 p.m.
- Friday: 4-10 p.m.
- Saturday: 12-10 p.m.
- Sunday: 12-9 p.m.
- Christmas Break (12/21-01/06): 12-10 p.m.
- Christmas Eve: 12-5 p.m.
- Christmas Day: 12-10 p.m.

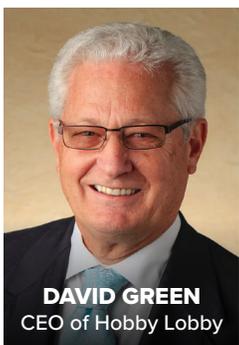


'24 ANNUAL MEETING

GREATER OKLAHOMA CITY CHAMBER

Wednesday, December 18 | 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

HOBBY LOBBY CEO DAVID GREEN TO SHARE INSIGHTS AT THE CHAMBER'S ANNUAL MEETING EVENT



DAVID GREEN
CEO of Hobby Lobby

The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber will host its Annual Meeting on December 18 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, featuring keynote speaker David Green, CEO of Hobby Lobby.

With more than 1,000 locations across the United States, Hobby Lobby is the world's largest privately-owned arts-and-crafts retailer, employing over 46,000 people across 48 states. Despite its expansive reach, the story of Hobby Lobby's rise is rooted in humble beginnings.

Founded in 1970 by David and Barbara Green, the company started with a \$600 loan to operate a small-scale business selling miniature picture frames from the Green family's home. Two years later, they opened their first retail location—a 300-square-foot store in Oklahoma City—and from there, the Hobby Lobby franchise continued to grow.

Hobby Lobby's success can partly be attributed to its commitment to its core values. From its founding, David and Barbara Green laid the foundation for a business model that focused on decision making, corporate culture and business conduct. Hobby Lobby's core

values include a strong commitment to the Christian faith, offering customers exceptional selection and value, providing employees with a positive work environment and investing in the communities where they operate.

These principles continue to shape the company today, even as it has expanded into new areas. Initially focused on arts and crafts, Hobby Lobby now offers a wide variety of products, including jewelry-making supplies, fabrics, floral arrangements, wedding decorations, holiday merchandise and home decor.

Today, Hobby Lobby's corporate headquarters in Oklahoma City spans over 12 million square feet, encompassing manufacturing and distribution facilities, as well as office space. Aside from its stores in the United States, the company operates in Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Yiwu, China.

In addition to its retail growth, Hobby Lobby has highlights for some of its distinctive business practices. Notable examples include closing all stores on Sundays and paying employees above the national minimum wage.

Despite the challenges of running a large retail chain, Hobby Lobby has remained steadfast in its core values, maintaining a loyal customer base through its focus on quality and service. Its journey from a small family business to an international retail leader is a testament to vision, hard work and faith.

To hear Green's story of entrepreneurship and philanthropy, as well as gain valuable insights into his path to success, register for the Chamber's Annual Meeting on December 18. Tickets are \$80 for members and \$100 for nonmembers, and registration closes on December 11.

OKLAHOMA CITY TO HOST 2025 SPROUTS FARMER'S MARKET COLLEGIATE QUAD



a gymnastics academy in the region, and two other Olympic champions—Nadia Comaneci and Shannon Miller—also have ties to the metro area.

Oklahoma City will host the 2025 Sprouts Farmers Market Collegiate Quad at Paycom Center on January 10-11, spotlighting 12 top NCAA women's gymnastics teams in three quad meets. This event marks the second year of the Collegiate Quad and Oklahoma City's role as a key location for high-profile gymnastics competitions.

The competition features nationally ranked teams, including LSU, OU and the University of Utah, with Session II airing live on ABC, a milestone for NCAA gymnastics viewership. Among the athletes is LSU gymnast Livvy Dunne, the most followed female NCAA athlete on social media and one of the top NIL earners in college sports, valued at approximately \$4 million. With 5.4 million Instagram followers and 8.1 million TikTok followers, her presence brings additional visibility to this event and the city. Dunne will begin her final collegiate season in Oklahoma City, adding excitement to the lineup.

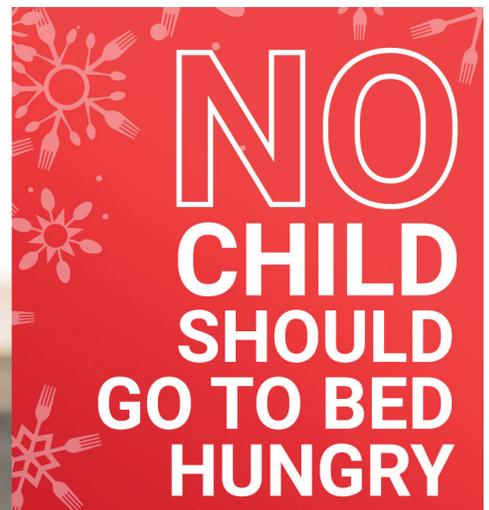
Oklahoma City's gymnastics legacy is central to this event. Bart Conner, an Olympic gold medalist, operates

The city has hosted USA Gymnastics events since 2023,

positioning gymnastics alongside softball and paddle sports as signature athletics.

Oklahoma City's decades-long support of women's sports is also highlighted by its hosting of the NCAA Women's College World Series (WCWS). As the second-largest women's collegiate sporting event, WCWS draws over 110,000 fans annually, with millions watching through ESPN. Notably, its 2022 broadcast marked the first-ever NCAA women's championship aired on ABC, underlining the city's dedication to elevating women's sports.

The Collegiate Quad adds to this legacy, strengthening Oklahoma City's reputation as a home for elite athletic events while promoting growth in gymnastics and women's sports.



Visit feedthechildren.org/nohungerholidays to make a difference.



NEW LEADERSHIP (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)



- Immediate Past Chair: Sean Trauschke, OGE Energy Corp.



- Vice Chair, Convention and Visitors Development: Bill Lance, The Chickasaw Nation



- Treasurer: John Hart, Continental Resources



- Vice Chair, Marketing and Communications: Jenny Love Meyer, Love's Travel Stops



- Corporate Secretary: Tom J. McDaniel, American Fidelity Foundation



- Vice Chair, Innovation and Bioscience: Rick Muncrief, Devon Energy Corporation



- Vice Chair, Strategic Planning: Clayton I. Bennett, Dorchester Capital



- Vice Chair, Economic Development/Forwards Oklahoma City: J. Larry Nichols, Devon Energy Corporation



- Vice Chair, Education and Talent: Bob Funk, Jr., Prodigal



- Vice Chair, Government Relations: David E. Rainbolt, BancFirst Corporation



- Vice Chair, Membership: Judy J. Hatfield, CCIM, Equity Commercial Realty Advisors, LLC



- Vice Chair, Military and Aerospace: W. Kent Shortridge, Oklahoma Natural Gas Company



- Vice Chair, Business and Economic Inclusion: Rhonda Hooper, Jordan Advertising



- Greater Oklahoma City Chamber President & CEO: Christy Gillenwater

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION NEEDS

The conversation shifted to workforce development; a topic that has garnered significant attention statewide. Bob Dauffenbach, from the University of Oklahoma, highlighted recent efforts to address skills shortages, such as the establishment of the Oklahoma Workforce Commission and the formation of the Oklahoma Office of Economic Development. He stressed that improving both technical and general education, as well as soft skills training, will be essential in meeting the demands of tomorrow's economy. Dauffenbach said that Oklahoma's younger generation must be better prepared to thrive in the future, calling for enhanced investment in education and training programs.

Mark Snead echoed these points, highlighting the importance of increasing overall educational attainment and labor force participation. He points out the direct correlation between higher education levels and higher incomes, indicating these factors as fundamental drivers of economic growth.

STATE TAX REVENUE OUTLOOK AND FISCAL CHALLENGES

Dr. Russell Evans of Oklahoma City University discussed the state's tax revenue situation noting that while wage growth has helped increase income tax revenues, sales tax collections are suffering due to consumer distress. Despite these challenges, Evans reassured the audience that the state's reserve funds



The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber hosted its annual State of the Economy event, which focused on economic-driven conversations surrounding the incoming leadership of President-elect Donald Trump.

remain robust, offering some cushion in the short term. However, he acknowledged the delicate balancing act between maintaining lower taxes and investing in critical public services, a challenge that requires careful consideration by both state and city leaders.

VISION FOR OKLAHOMA'S FISCAL FUTURE

The panel concluded with a final discussion on what changes could improve Oklahoma's fiscal health. Bob Dauffenbach humorously suggested waving a magic wand to transform politicians into statesmen, while Dr. Russell Evans called for a shift away from GDP as the primary measure of economic success. Mark Snead offered a bold proposal: he suggested redirecting a portion of the state's excess funds into higher education, specifically by expanding engineering and computer science programs at Oklahoma universities. This, he argued, would help address the state's workforce challenges by producing more high-skilled workers in critical fields.

The discussion provided valuable insights into the economic, educational and fiscal challenges facing Oklahoma, highlighting the need for continued collaboration and strategic investment in the state's future.



Greater Oklahoma City Chamber Chair Theresa Rose discusses economic outlook, workforce development and fiscal policies with a panel of distinguished economists and business leaders in Oklahoma City.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Businesses who join the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber are part of the largest coalition of businesses in the state and make the Chamber's work in the community possible. Each member level is identified on the listing below.

ADVISOR

Encore Group (USA) LLC

Audio-Visual Production Services
Mr. John W. Scarritt.....(405) 320-3220
100 Mick Cornett Drive
Oklahoma City, OK 73109-1101
www.encoreglobal.com

SumnerOne

Business Machines
Mr. Mark Bryan.....(405) 232-4288
1710 N. Broadway Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73103-3417
www.sumnerone.com

Warriors Rest Foundation

Nonprofit / Service Agencies
Ms. Sandra Leaver(405) 833-9406
755 W. Covell Road, Suite 200
Edmond, OK 73003-2382
<https://warriorsrestfoundation.org/>

EMERGING LEADER

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Oklahoma City Southeast - I-35

Hotels & Motels
Ms. Sara Poteat.....(405) 602-6611
1629 S. Prospect Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73129-2903
www.hiexpress.com/okcityse

ASSOCIATE

Dave & Buster's

*Amusement / Entertainment / Attractions
Restaurants*
Mr. Thomas Law.....(405) 254-9900
5501 N. May Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73112-5451
<https://www.daveandbusters.com/us/en/about/locations/oklahoma-city>

Photographic Society of America

Art Galleries & Dealers
Ms. Twila Bourlon.....(405) 843-1437
706 N. Broadway Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73102-6077
psa-photo.org

CORE

AUSA - Thunderbird Chapter

*Associations / Membership Organizations
Nonprofit / Service Agencies*
Ms. Summer Tiffie.....(405) 323-1976
1047 NW 68th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73116-7201
<https://www.ausa.org/chapters/thunderbird-chapter>

Holiday Inn Express & Suites OKC West-Yukon

Hotels & Motels
Ms. Sara Poteat.....(405) 494-7171
700 Shedeck Parkway
Yukon, OK 73099-6022
www.holidayinnexpress.com/yukonok

InterWorks, Inc.

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www.interworks.com

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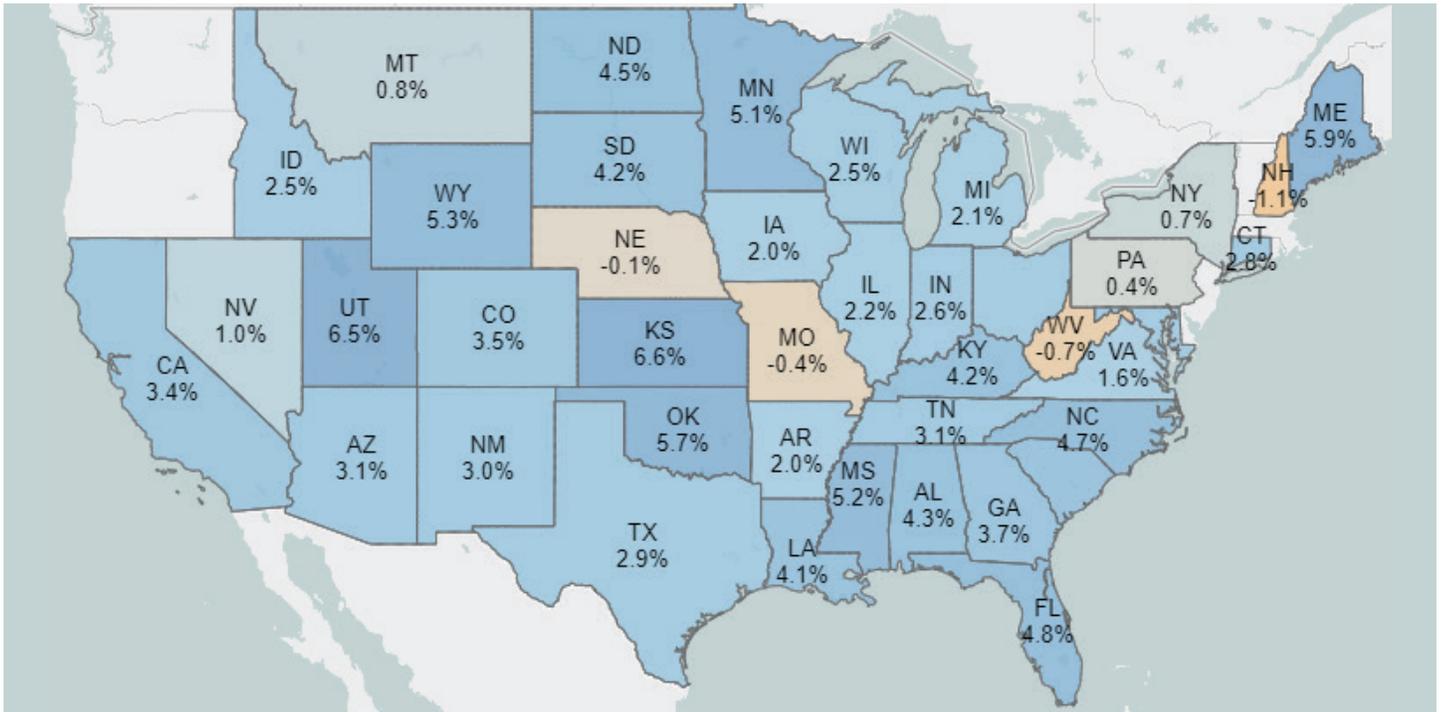
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Oklahoma City, OK 73170-6943

OKLAHOMA HIGHER EDUCATION ENROLLMENT ENJOYS 4TH HIGHEST INCREASE IN THE NATION

Fall 2024 Enrollment Changes by State: Undergraduate Students



Source: *The Oklahoman*: Oklahoma bucking national trends as more freshman enroll in public colleges, universities; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center;
Note: Data for all states is not available

- Fall 2024 enrollment in Oklahoma’s public higher education system increased, reaching **169,004 students**—a **5.7% increase** over prior year (4th highest increase in the nation).
- While 18-year-old freshman enrollment declined by **5.0%** nationally in fall 2024, Oklahoma was one of only five states to avoid this drop.
- A significant contributor to this growth is the **concurrent enrollment program**, which saw a **10% rise**, nearly **17,000 high school students**. This program not only boosts university enrollment but also reduces higher education costs for Oklahoma families.

Why is this important? Higher education enrollment is a key indicator of workforce development. Growth in programs like concurrent enrollment prepares a skilled pipeline of graduates, which is essential for attracting and retaining businesses in the region.

For comprehensive Economic Indicator and Regional Data, please visit your Greater Oklahoma City Chamber Economic Development Division at www.greateroklahomacity.com/economicindicators or contact Eric Long, Research Economist, at 405-297-8976; elong@okcchamber.com.

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24 ANNUAL MEETING

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The officers and directors of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber invite you to attend the highlight event of the year - the 2024 Annual Meeting!

Wednesday, December 18 | 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum