

News from the Oklahoma Corporation Commission

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OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Corporation Commissioners praise effort that results in canceling of furloughs

(Oklahoma City) Thanks to efforts to allow the agency to broaden its use of existing revenue and internal cost cutting, plans to close all offices of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission one day a month and place employees on unpaid leave have been canceled.

Commission Vice-Chairman Jeff Cloud called the cancellation “the result of extraordinary commitment and cooperation.”

“Legislative and administration officials worked closely with us in our efforts to keep the doors open for business,” said Cloud. “We are grateful for the support shown by Governor Henry, Oklahoma Treasurer Scott Meacham, House Speaker Chris Benge, Senate President Pro-Tem Glenn Coffee, and House Appropriations and Budget Committee Chairman Ken Miller.”

Commissioner Dana Murphy agreed.

“We went to these officials and others to explain the seriousness of the situation and develop solutions,” Murphy said. “They responded, recognizing the concerns of those who do business in the state and know first-hand the negative impact closing the agency would have on business and the state’s economy.”

Commission Chairman Bob Anthony said the agency can now move forward.

“Given this agency’s many responsibilities, we always have a very full plate,” noted Anthony. “However, the current economic and energy challenges faced by the state make it more important than ever that the agency be able to devote its full attention to the issues and problems at hand.”

Because of a funding shortfall, Commission Director of Administration Brooks Mitchell had scheduled the closure of the agency and the furlough of employees for one day a month from August through January, 2010. Mitchell today announced cancellation of that plan, citing the successful effort to find ways to avoid closure. The agency reduced personnel through voluntary buyouts and a reduction-in-force, and has received a commitment from the Governor’s office and legislative leaders to allow the agency to broaden its use of some of its existing earmarked funds to pay for operational expenses, pending approval by the Legislature in the next session. In addition, there will be a review of the budget formula for the OCC. Agency officials say a flaw in the process resulted in a state funding cut of 18 percent, rather than the intended 5 percent.

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission has regulatory responsibility for oil and natural gas production, public utilities, telephone service, trucking, pipelines, rail crossings, and underground petroleum storage tanks.

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