



## Newsletter April 2020



### From the Director's Desk

*Andy O*

Welcome to the new normal. Businesses are shut down, people are sheltering in place, toilet paper is a black market item, Zoom is the new meeting format, chic face masks are the new look, but registrants still have to visit their registration offices in person because no one will change or suspend the law. We have heard that the Oklahoma City police department has substituted telephone registrations, but please confirm this yourself as in-person registration is still the law. Also note that driver's license renewals are not currently being handled in person but are currently being done online. I am told that registrants can complete the entire process from a computer. I will find out next month when I renew, but that beats wasting the morning at a DPS examining center and a follow-up trip to a tag office.

Finally, I want to put out another reminder that scammers are still calling registrants to point out "irregularities" in their registration. If you get a call like this, do not bite. Report as many details as you can remember to your local registration office.

### A Legislative Update

*Mark N*

Legislative Committee Chair

The Oklahoma State Legislature is experiencing an unprecedented session due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Most legislators and staff are working from home while the ones that are going to the capitol are practicing social distancing and not meeting in groups larger than ten. This has obviously changed the legislative process as we know it.

On April 2, Governor Stitt called for a special session to declare a health emergency for the State of Oklahoma. So, what does this mean for the current session and the bills we are following? I contacted John Estus, the Senior Advisor of Policy & Communications in the Oklahoma House Speaker's Office.

The Second Session of the 57<sup>th</sup> Legislature is still in session and running concurrently with the special session called by the Governor. Due to the current emergency status of the legislature, they had to change some of the rules in order to meet the demands of the legislative process.

Mr. Estus informed us that they are going to skip the committee process and send all bills straight to the floors for a vote. Furthermore, he pointed out that not all the bills will be heard. Per the Oklahoma Constitution, the second session will end on May 29th. Any bills not passed by then will be dead.

OKRSOL has been following ten Senate bills and five House bills relevant to registrants. Here are those bills and their current status:

### **Senate Bills**

#### **SB1202** – Senator Pemberton

This bill would require those, who are required to register in another state, would also have to register in Oklahoma. This is already law, but SB1202 passed the Senate Public Safety Committee.

#### **SB1236** – Senator Young

This bill would authorize the DOC to establish a re-entry pilot program with emphasis on post-release services. SB1236 died in the Senate Committee.

#### **SB1298** – Senator Coleman

This bill is a duplicate of SB1236 and only applies to non-violent offenders. SB1298 was withdrawn from the House Public Safety Committee and was sent to the House Floor calendar.

#### **SB1336** – Senator Hicks

This law would forbid Oklahoma institutions of higher learning from inquiring about a prospective student's criminal history at any time during the admissions process prior to their decision to accept or reject the admissions application. However, the institution may inquire on an initial application if the prospective student has ever been convicted of rape, lewd or indecent proposals or acts to a child, obscenity, threats or harassment by any electronic communication, or stalking. SB1336 died in committee.

#### **SB1402** – Senator Thompson

This bill would remove the \$40.00 per month probation fee for Oklahomans on probation. SB1402 died in the Senate Committee.

#### **SB1448** – Senator David

For pardons granted after November 1, 2020, the Governor shall issue an order of

expungement directing all relevant agencies to seal all records related to the pardoned crime. The sealed documents will be sealed to the public but not to law enforcement agencies. There are 4 exclusions to this law, and one of them is registerable sex crimes. SB1448 passed the Senate Floor and has been engrossed to the House.

#### **SB1462** – Senator David

This bill would add the crime of nonconsensual dissemination of private sexual images to the list of registerable sex crimes in Oklahoma. SB1462 passed the Senate Floor and has been engrossed to the House.

#### **SB1698** – Senator Brooks

This is a duplicate bill, the same as SB1336. SB1698 died in the Senate Committee.

#### **SB1798** – Senator Ikley-Freeman

This bill would make oral sex legal which technically has been illegal in Oklahoma. It also would increase the statute of limitations on sex crimes to 50 years from the discovery of the crime by law enforcement. SB1798 died in the Senate Committee.

#### **SB1838** – Senator Ikley-Freeman

This is a duplicate bill, the same as SB1448. SB1838 died in the Senate Committee.

### **House Bills**

#### **HB2876** – Representative Dunnington

This bill would repeal the death penalty in first degree rape cases and in cases where a person is convicted of rape two or more times, rape by instrumentation, forcible anal or oral sodomy, or lewd molestation of a child under 14 years of age. SB2876 died in the House Committee.

#### **HB3024** – Representative Bush

This bill would eliminate the statute of limitations on sex crimes. HB3024 was rushed through the House Committee and sent to the House Floor. However, it was not voted on by the House Floor before the voting deadline.

Technically it died on the House Floor, but when we consider the current situation and the bending of the rules, it will not be a surprise if this one is passed into law this session.

**HB3168** – Representative Kevin West

This is a duplicate bill, the same as HB3024. HB3168 died in the House Committee.

**HB3564** – Representative Ford

This bill would have been known as The Sex Offender Registration Act of 2020. No language was ever introduced into this “shell bill”. HB3564 died in the House Committee.

**HB4136** – Representative Roberts

This bill would have been known as The Oklahoma Sex Crimes Act of 2020. This bill was also a shell bill containing no language. However, in week six of the legislative session, new language, added by the committee substitute, removed HB4136 from our genre of bills to follow.

Because of the legislative process changing the current procedure, we have continued to list several of the bills as “**Died in Committee**” or “**Died on the Floor**”, when, in fact, they may still be alive. It would be a guess to state which ones will make it and which ones will not. We will continue to follow the process and provide updates as they occur. These weekly updates are posted on our online discussion group for our members, but there will be a final list published in our next newsletter.



**Hope to the Hopeless**

In 1996, a man had a vision. Hand Up Ministries began in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that year as

a place where men, just released from prison and with nowhere else to go, could find housing. Under the leadership of Rev. David Nichols, it began with just a few beds and slowly grew. In particular, those with a sex offense found Hand Up to be one of the only places they could legally live. Many had mental health issues. By 2011, Hand Up had about 250 residents, mostly living in mobile homes. In that year, the local police chief had an issue with housing registrants in the same mobile home as it made investigating possible crimes more difficult. He was incensed that so many registrants were living on Hand Up property and became determined to put them out of business. He asked a state senator to fix this “problem”, and as a result an existing law was modified to prohibit more than one registrant from living in the same mobile home.

When the law took effect the following year, about 110 residents had to be evicted. Hand Up erected tents to circumvent the new law, but the police chief immediately disallowed this arrangement, stating that the property was not zoned for camping. Many became homeless with some registrants living in the woods adjacent to the facility. Several committed suicide. One killed himself in the woods. Two others stepped in front of a train, and the ministry almost went bankrupt. Hand Up filed a lawsuit over the new law but lost. David then borrowed some money, purchased more property, and Hand Up slowly began to bounce back. Registrants, faced with Oklahoma’s 2,000-foot residency law, still had nowhere else to go and began to return.

Today Hand Up houses about 350 people spread over three properties. About 250 of them are registrants, making Hand Up the largest organization in the state of Oklahoma housing those with a sex offense outside of the Department of Corrections. They are also one of the largest in the country. Rev. Nichols is currently looking at expansion into neighboring states and is in discussions with churches in Arkansas and Louisiana.

Hand Up provides low-cost housing, food, clothing, transportation, job search, mentoring, and life skills training. Recidivism is a fraction of what it is for those not in the program. Their slogan, “hope to the hopeless, a home to the homeless, and remembrance to the forgotten” is truer now than ever. Empowerment is an essential element of what they do.

David’s desire is to expand and provide more beds for registrants needing a place to go. If you are interested in Hand Up and would like more information, please fill out the return sheet in this newsletter. Someone will be in touch.

(This article, provided by OKRSOL, was released nationally when it also appeared in the [April 2020 NARSOL Digest](#).)



### **My Story...**

I was born in eastern Oklahoma. My mother was a strong woman who raised my five sisters, my brother, and me. She taught us morals and values, and she made sure we attended church so we could learn about God and our savior Jesus Christ. When I was 13 years old, I was baptized in the cold waters of a creek just outside of town. I attended church throughout my teen years and volunteered to help the missionaries who came to our church each summer. We built classrooms, an ambulance garage, a basketball court, and a medical clinic.

My mother was my hero and my role model. I had some tough times as a teenager, but it was because of her that I graduated from high school. I was the middle child in my family. My three older sisters dropped out of school, and I was the first of two siblings who graduated from high school.

I joined the Air Force a few months after I graduated from high school and proudly served our country. I was stationed on the east coast during most of my time in the service and then returned home after discharge. I went back to the place where I learned small town values. The following year, I began studying radiologic technology at the University of Central Arkansas. Four years later, I received my bachelor's degree. I began my career as a radiographer in North Little Rock, and I started a family. I had a wife and three children. Five years after receiving my bachelor's degree, I enrolled at Southern Technical College and earned an associate's degree in electronic technology. I got a job with DuPont (a Fortune 500 company) and moved to Oklahoma City.

While in the military, I got heavily into drinking and partying with my friends. This behavior continued into college and thereafter. Thus, my downward spiral began. I stopped going to church, and because of my drinking, I failed as a husband and father. I also lost my job. Because of my education and background, it wasn't difficult to find another good job, but I continued drinking. It wasn't long before I committed a crime against a minor girl. I touched her inappropriately while I was drunk. I was prosecuted for this crime and went to prison.

After prison, I came to Hand Up Ministries to live since there was no other place available to someone on the registry. I spent time getting reacquainted with my youngest daughters' mom. I could no longer work in the fields of study I received my degrees in. No major company would hire me due to my offense. So, I had to take a minimum wage job to survive, and it was an uphill struggle trying to abide by the registry living restrictions. My daughter and her mom wanted me to live with them, but that would have required moving them into some of the worst parts of the city just for me to have a place that was legal to live in. My daughter and her mom accepted that in time we would be able to live under the same roof. After 9 years and 8

months, I was finally able to buy a home in NW Edmond, and we became a family again.

The residency restrictions, the requirement of registering every 3 months, and the stigma of being registered makes things hard. Some neighbors ignore me, and I can tell it is due to being registered. Neighborhood portals refuse to allow me or my family on social media to keep up with things happening in the neighborhood. When a person asks for an ID, they sometimes look at you kind of strange when they see the “stamp” on your license. Even police officers, who see your license, seem to treat you differently. These are all challenges and

setbacks I have faced since registering. Some families cannot survive the challenges they face, but I was fortunate that we were able to reunite and live under one roof again. Many registered men and women are not so lucky. They lose their support system due to the registry and the many restrictions. I pray that our lawmakers will open their eyes and see that they are doing more harm than good with these bills they pass.

**Do you have a story to tell?**

Contact us at [www.ok-rsol.org/contact](http://www.ok-rsol.org/contact) or call 405-294-4299 and tell us about it.



**Oklahoma Reform Sex Offender Laws, Inc.**

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**OKRSOL Contact and Newsletter Subscription Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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Due to the generosity of those who financially support OKRSOL, you are receiving this newsletter in the mail. With 7,000 plus on the registry, we cannot mail to all registrants with every newsletter, but we do send them out when our funds allow. Our members and subscribers receive every newsletter. If you would like to join OKRSOL or begin a subscription, please contact us. Fill out, cut off, and mail this form to the address printed above and check all boxes below that apply, or you can email us today at [okrsol.info@gmail.com](mailto:okrsol.info@gmail.com), and tell us of your interest. You can also start a digital subscription and receive every newsletter directly in your email inbox by going to: [www.ok-rsol.org/newsletter](http://www.ok-rsol.org/newsletter).

- I would like to start a newsletter subscription.
- I am interested in becoming a member.
- I am interested in Hand Up Ministries.
- I have a question. Please contact me.

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