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## The Safety Net Under Threat: Bills affecting low-income Oklahomans

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*Oklahoma Policy Institute promotes  
adequate, fair, and fiscally responsible  
funding of public services and expanded  
opportunity for all Oklahomans by  
providing timely and credible  
information, analysis, and ideas.*



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*Bills affecting low income Oklahomans fall into 3 categories:*

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
2. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
3. Unemployment Insurance (UI)



# 1. SNAP Bills

## SB 887 – *Transfer of benefits*

8. Transfer any food stamps or coupons, or any benefit or debit card or any other device authorizing participation in the food stamp program, to a person who is not authorized by this act and rules of the Department of Human Services to acquire, possess, or use the transferred food stamps or coupons, or any benefit or debit card or any other device authorizing participation in the food stamp program.

- Increases prison time to 5 years (previously 2) for violation



# 1. SNAP Bills

## *SB 887* – *Transfer of benefits*

- Statute and administrative rules already prohibit transfer
- There are legitimate reasons why recipients might have someone else – a close friend, older child, caregiver – pick up groceries
- Routine household errands are a bigger burden for single working parents and folks with limited mobility



# 1. SNAP Bills

## *HB 1909 Excludes ABAWD working <35hr week*

- Makes nondisabled adults (18-49) without dependent children who work less than 35 hours a week ineligible for benefits (with some exceptions)

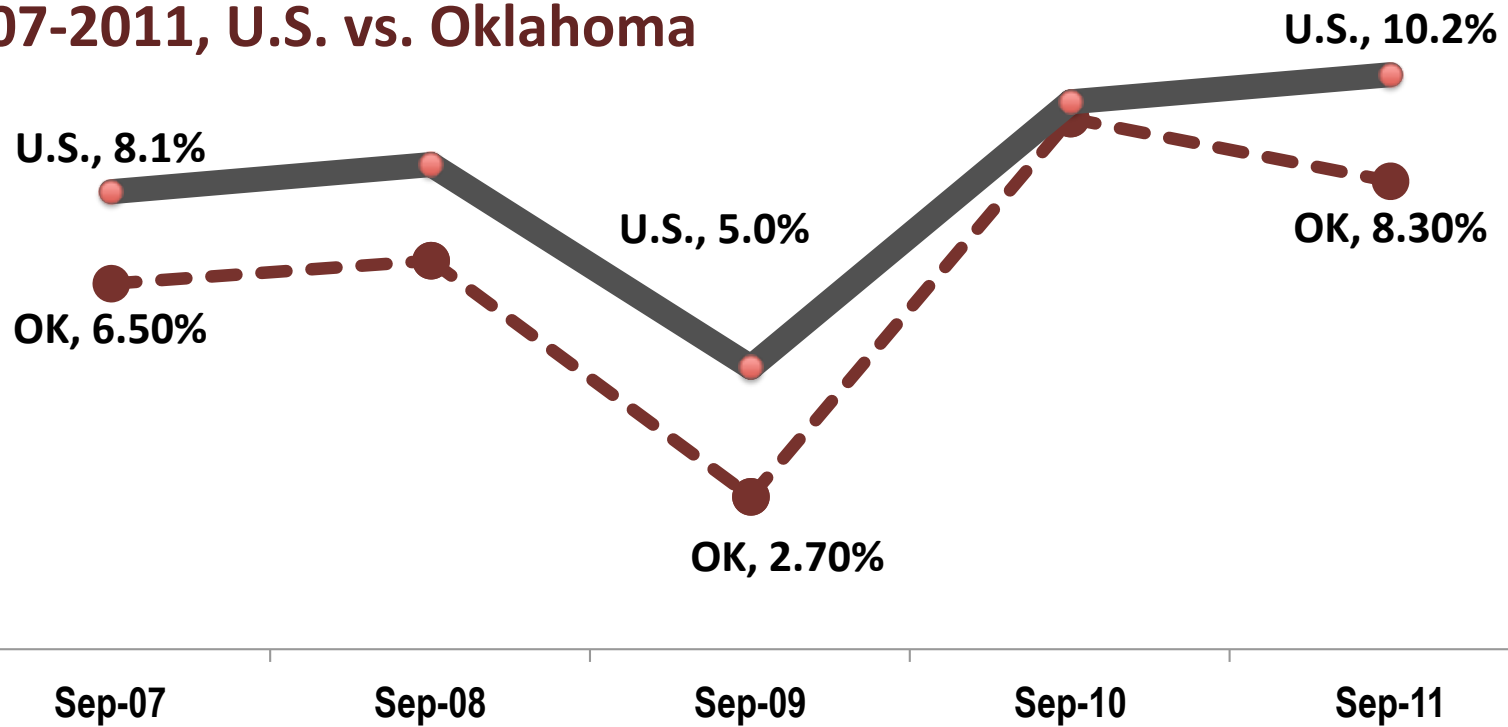


# 1. SNAP Bills

## *HB 1909 Excludes ABAWD working <35hr week*

- Not compliant with federal law, which sets a 20 hr week work requirement (guidance has been requested)
- ABAWDs are a very small share of SNAP in Oklahoma; 40 other states cover more as a percentage of overall recipients in FY 2011
- Save the state \$1M, cost the state \$18.7M

## ABAWD as a share of SNAP participants, 2007-2011, U.S. vs. Oklahoma







# 1. SNAP Bills

## *HB 1909 Excludes ABAWD working <35hr week*

- Many Oklahomans work part-time for reasons beyond their control
- 141,000 Oklahomans who usually work full-time worked part-time in 2011
- 252,000 Oklahomans work part-time



# 1. SNAP Bills

HB 2014 – *Makes ‘drug felons’ lifetime ineligible*

- There is no legitimate rationale
- Ex-felons much more likely to be unemployed and earn very low wages



# 1. SNAP

## HB 2017 – *Imposes asset limits*

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law not to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes reads as follows:

Pursuant to the authorization given to the states under 7 U.S.C. 214(j), the state shall deem ineligible any individual previously deemed automatically eligible under this statute who maintains over Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) in "liquid resources" as defined below:

1. Cash on hand;
2. Checking or savings account balances;
3. The cash value of savings certificates; and
4. The cash value of stocks or bonds.



# 1. SNAP Bills

## HB 2017 – *Imposes asset limits*

- Savings are precisely the kinds of resources that allow people to move off public benefit programs
- Asset limits don't just discourage – but forbid – anyone receiving or considering public benefits from saving their income
- Eligibility should be pegged to income, not assets



# 1. SNAP Bills

## *Economic Impact of Cutting SNAP Eligibility*

- Does not produce savings for the state
- Prevents vulnerable Oklahomans from reaching financial stability
- Deprives vendors and farmers of revenue
- Approx 250,000 Oklahomans are drug felons and work part-time for economic or hardship reasons
- If 20% cut in participants = **\$192M** annual losses statewide



## 2. TANF Bills

### *SB 667 EBT cards at illicit establishments*

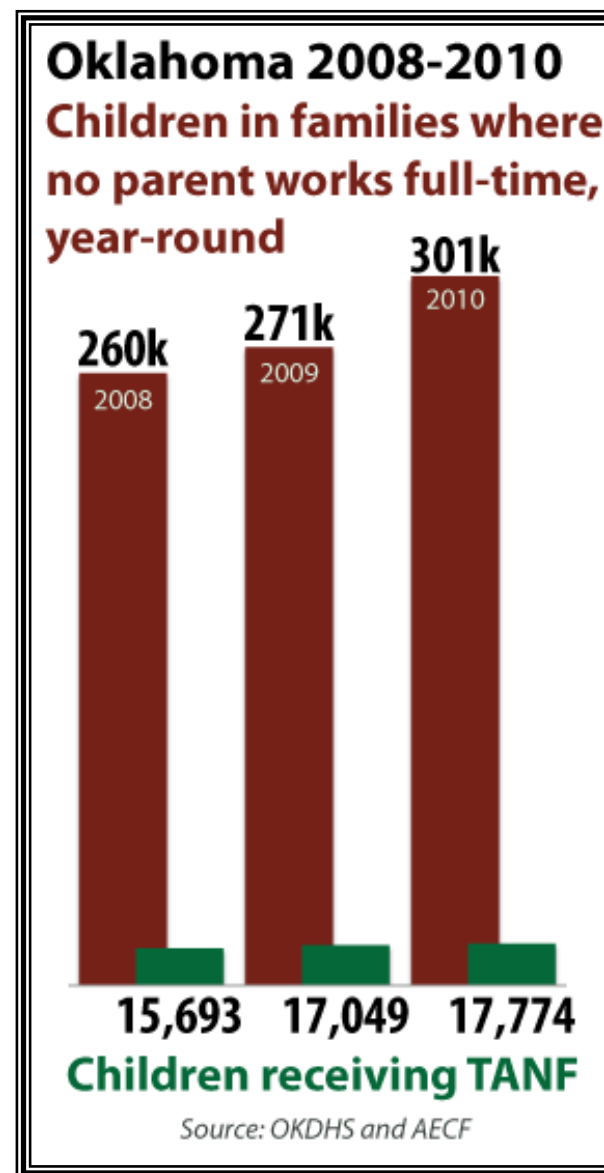
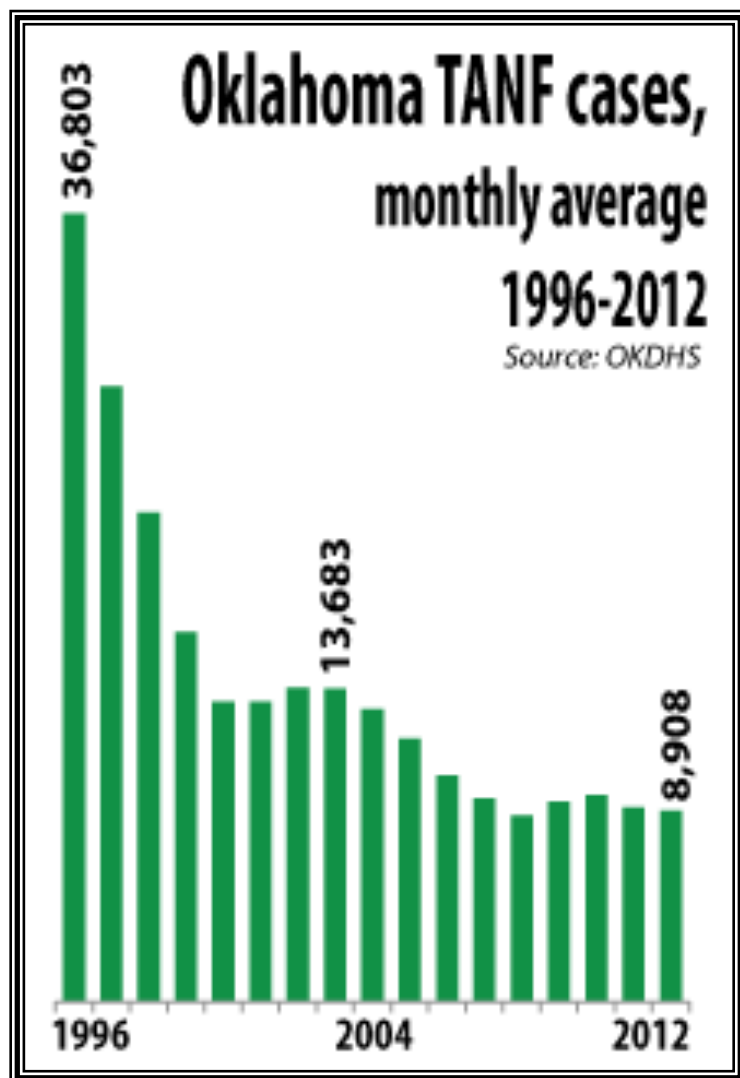
- Enacting legislation for new federal law barring EBT use at such establishments, directs DHS to develop an implementation plan by August 2013
- Does not require enacting legislation



## 2. TANF Bills

### HB 1908 *TANF funds for marriage PSAs*

- Uses TANF funds for public service campaign promoting marriage
- No evidence suggesting advertising increases marriage rates
- TANF can't afford it: Oklahoma is already 1 of only 2 states who spend less than 10% of their TANF budget on direct cash assistance







### 3. Unemployment Bill

HB 1911 *Shifts burden of proof onto employee*

- Drastically restructures eligibility for unemployment benefits in multiple ways
- USDOL has already indicated to OESC that major portions of this bill aren't compliant with federal law



## 4. General Safety Net Bills

### *SB 959* *Police questioning*

B. Upon the arrest of any person for a drug-related offense, the arresting peace officer shall ask the arrested person the following question: "Are you currently receiving public assistance, including, but not limited to, food stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF-formerly known as welfare), housing assistance or Medicaid?". Responses to such questions shall be collected by the law enforcement agency and shall be made readily available to the Legislature upon request.

# Status of Bills

<a href="#"><u>SB 667</u></a>	Prohibits the use of public assistance debit cards, that have state or federal funds on them, from being used at liquor stores, gaming establishments, and strip clubs (Sen. Standridge, Rep. Echols)	Approved 46/0 by Full Senate
<a href="#"><u>SB 959</u></a>	Adds provision to bill requiring law enforcement officers to ask people arrested for possession of a CDS if they current recieve assistance from TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, or housing assistance (Sen. Standridge, Rep. Derby)	Set for Senate Floor Agenda 3/5/13 (must receive another vote in next 3 days or goes dormant)
<a href="#"><u>SB 887</u></a>	Prohibits transfer of food stamp benefits to persons not authorized by act relating to poor persons; extends imprisonment time for convictions; corrects location of imprisonment (Sen. Holt, Rep. Grau)	Pending action

# Status of Bills

<a href="#"><u>HB 1911</u></a>	Modifies conditions for unemployment; modifies discharge for misconduct and places burden of proof upon applicant; changes policy regarding employees terminated for refusing to take a drug test (Rep. Shannon)	Approved by committee/s	Pending action
<a href="#"><u>HB 2014</u></a>	Directs the Governor to inform the federal government that Oklahoma will not opt out of the law that disqualifies individuals from participating in the food services program if they have a felony (Rep. Roberts, Sen. Stanislawski)	Approved by committee/s	Pending action
<a href="#"><u>HB 2017</u></a>	An Act relating to poor persons; providing that state shall deem certain individuals ineligible to receive certain benefits (Rep. Roberts)	Approved by committee/s	Pending action

# Status of Bills

<a href="#"><u>HB 1909</u></a>	Relating to food stamp eligibility; requiring certain individuals to be engaged in work activities to be eligible for food stamp benefit (Rep. Shannon, Sen. Holt)	Approved by committee/s	Set on House Floor agenda 3/6/2013
<a href="#"><u>HB 1908</u></a>	Relating to social services; creating a public service announcement campaign to promote marriage as a tool against poverty (Rep. Shannon, Sen. Holt)	Approved by committee/s	Set on House Floor agenda 3/5/2013