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Political change toward conservatism marked 2010

Republicans elected a woman governor - the first in Oklahoma history - and Tulsa's mayor and City Council battled constantly during 2011.

Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Tulsa had great football seasons. One of the largest earthquakes ever to hit Oklahoma did minimal damage and Tulsa laid off police officers.

Those are just some of the stories from 2010. Here are some capsules from stories in the Tulsa Beacon last year.

January

Mayor Dewey Bartlett denied allegations that he was trying to bust the police union with comments about using Tulsa County deputies and moving toward a countywide police force.

Faced with a multi-million-dollar shortfall, Bartlett - unlike ex-mayor Kathy Taylor - vowed to cut expenses rather than try to raise taxes. The monthly sales tax check for the City of Tulsa showed an 11 percent drop since the same month in 2009. Bartlett tells the police and fire unions they must adjust their contracts with the city to take a pay cut or up to 135 policemen and 130 firemen could be laid off.

Bartlett offers a 5.2 percent pay cut to avoid laying off police officers. The police union claims it represents a 13.57 percent cut in pay and benefits. "They have a choice," Bartlett said of the police union. "A plan with zero layoffs - that's a good offer. We want to preserve all the jobs."

A bitterly cold winter storm gripped Tulsa with significant amounts of snowfall.

State officials predict a \$1.2 billion shortfall and State Sen. Randy Brodgon and Sen. Randy Terrill said the answer is to cut spending and reduce the size of government.

Conservative Republicans try to convince former Tulsa University coach Dave Rader to run against U.S. Rep. John Sullivan, who is recovering from treatment for alcoholism at the Betty Ford Clinic. Rader instead accepts a job as an assistant coach at The University of Mississippi.

Oklahoma beat Stanford 31-27 in the Sun Bowl to cap a disappointing 8-5 season. Oklahoma State fell to Mississippi 21-7 in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

State Rep. Mike Ritze filed legislation that will allow lawmakers to once again impeach associate and district judges.

Oklahoma State coach Mike Gundy, who has called plays for the Cowboys in recent years, hired Dana Holgorsen as the Cowboys' new offensive coordinator. Holgorsen spent the past two seasons as the offensive coordinator at The University of Houston. Prior to his stint in Houston, he was on the staff at Texas Tech from 2000 through 2007.

"We're elated that Dana is joining our staff," Gundy said. "He has a great pedigree, and a history of success. We're excited about what he brings to the OSU football program."

Texas Tech University hired Tommy Tuberville as the 14th football coach in the Red Raider program's 85-year history.

February

Tulsa firefighters voted for pay cuts and saved 147 jobs while the Tulsa Police union rejected a pay cut and 124 officers lost their jobs.

Tulsa firefighters said yes to a 5.2 percent pay cut to save the jobs of 147 firemen who had already received pink slips from the city.

The union voted 442-177 in favor of a cut for 17 months plus eight unpaid furlough days and the loss of some other benefits, including fitness pay and clothing assistance. The cuts were needed because the city's general fund has an immediate \$10 million-plus shortfall due to declining sales tax revenues. But the Fraternal Order of Police overwhelmingly voted down a pay cut versus layoffs, accusing Bartlett of not negotiating in "good faith."

Because more than 130 Tulsa police officers were laid off, the department is limiting the number of types of calls it will investigate.

The FOP issued a press release stating, "Officers will not respond to non-injury collisions, fraud and forgery reports, burglary from vehicle reports, larceny reports and other minor property crime reports." Bartlett announces federal grant money will be used to rehire some officers.

A report from the Oklahoma Tax Commission showed sales tax collections for the City of Tulsa have declined 11 consecutive months, with the last eight months having drops averaging 11 percent.

Tulsa School District put forth a \$354,000,000.00 tax increase - believed to be the largest school bond vote in state history.

OU football coach Bob Stoops really likes his 2010 recruiting class, which is comprised entirely of high school players. The class was rated as high as No. 2 in the nation. (Scout.com). Blake Bell (6-6, 215, Wichita, Kan.) was ranked as high as the No. 4 quarterback in the nation. "We met every single need that we had and we did so with very talented players," Stoops said.

OSU signed 27 football players last week, including four who have been tabbed as high school All-Americans.

"We obviously like our class," said Gundy. "It's a testament to our program, and to our current student-athletes, that we can sign a class of this caliber."

The Tulsa Golden Hurricane signed 22 newcomers to add to four signees on campus as coaches looked to boost TU's defensive depth.

March

Focus on the Family's James C. Dobson, Ph.D., stepped down as board chairman of the ministry he founded 32 years ago. His wife, National Day of Prayer Chairman Shirley Dobson, also left the Focus on the Family Board of Directors. They have been elected to the positions of Founder and Chairman Emeritus and Director Emerita, respectively, for the nonprofit ministry they started in 1977.

The United States won a record 37 total medals (9 gold, 15 silver, 13 bronze) during the Olympic winter games, the most ever by any country, and the first time the United States has led the medal count since 1932 at Lake Placid.

The Oklahoma Senate passed two education reform bills, Senate Bill 1862 and Senate Bill 2033, authored by Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, with both receiving bipartisan support.

Students and parents in Oklahoma's two largest cities will see the expansion of school choice with Senate Bill 1862. This legislation grants the mayors of the state's two largest cities chartering authority, and removes the number of caps on allowed charter schools.

America took a big step toward socialized medicine as Democrats ignored bi-partisan opposition and passed a giant "health care reform" package.

President Barack Obama, who favors total government control of health care, praised the vote, which followed weeks of arm-twisting to get Democrats - particularly those who call themselves pro-life - to vote for the bill. Accusations of bribery and coercion flew after stories of special favors - including a ride on Air Force One for an Illinois representative - and "bribes." A vote-getting appropriation for Nebraska was stripped from the bill but money for what is being called the "Louisiana Purchase" was left in.

Tulsa Public Schools is preparing to cut 225 teaching positions due to cuts in state education funding. The school board okayed a plan that would cut the number of Tulsa teachers and save the district almost \$10 million. Superintendent Keith Ballard said he anticipates that 100 current teachers will retire at the end of the school, reducing the cuts to about 125.

April

Newt Gingrich's Renewing American Leadership organization praised Dr. Everett Piper of Oklahoma

Wesleyan University for sounding an alarm about a federal takeover of welfare. Gingrich's website issued a release regarding the federal takeover of student loans from private banks and its relationship to the health care scheme.

Several thousand Tulsans listened to patriotic speeches about curbing the size and influence of the federal government as the Tea Party Express arrived at Expo Square. State Rep Mike Ritze and State Sen. Randy Brogdon spoke against the federal takeover of health care.

Tulsa's sales tax collections continue to decline but the city administration's fiscal forecasts are finally coming true. Tulsa's sales taxes, based on comparisons from the same month in the previous year, dropped for 13 months.

That may be an unprecedented decline.

State Rep. David Derby urged legislators to support the passage of a resolution that would force Attorney General Drew Edmondson to file suit against the federal government over the federal health care reform. Edmondson declined.

OU's Landry Jones completed 17 of 34 passes for 211 yards and two touchdowns to lead the White team to a 23-0 win over the Red in OU's Spring Football Game.

The Oklahoma State football team put a cap on its 2010 spring practice with the offense claiming a 55-39 win over the defense using a modified scoring system in front of approximately 7,000 fans at Boone Pickens Stadium. Led by junior Brandon Weeden's 257 yards and four touchdowns on 22-of-34 completions, Cowboy quarterbacks passed for 423 yards on the day.

Randal O'Toole, a scholar from the CATO Institute, said PlaniTulsa looks a lot like what Portland, Oregon did beginning 20 years ago when it embraced New Urbanism.

And that should worry people in Tulsa.

Oklahoma Coach Bob Stoops was happy for the four Sooners (Sam Bradford, Gerald McCoy, Trent Williams and Jermaine Gresham) drafted in the first round - all in the first 21 picks. "I am so happy for these guys mostly because of the way they represent themselves," Stoops said. "They are a credit to our university and our football program. I could not be more pleased for them."

May

The Oklahoma Turnpike Authority received funding/authority to conduct a feasibility study regarding construction of the remaining planned Gilcrease Expressway as a toll road.

Environmental extremists in the Obama Administration have enacted new mandates that will cost every American thousands of dollars in home repairs. On April 22 (Earth Day), the EPA began enforcing that "renovation, repair and painting rule" for professional remodelers in homes with lead-based paint. Heat and air contractors, carpet installers, plumbers, painters and any contractor that does work in a home built before 1978 must now test for lead paint or assume that the house is infested with lead.

Biblical scholar and author Terry James said America's fortunes - now and throughout history - are affected by its relationship to Israel and the Jewish people. James was one of seven speakers at the Mid-America Prophecy Conference, sponsored by The Prophecy Watch, a Tulsa-based Christian ministry. The Rev. Franklin Graham issued tough remarks on the administration's role in revoking his invitation to speak at the Pentagon's National Day of Prayer event, charging that Obama is "giving Islam a pass" rather than speaking openly about the "horrific" treatment women and minorities receive in many Muslim countries.

Carving out a legacy as a pro-abortion politician, Gov. Brad Henry vetoed a bipartisan bill that would have given the state information about abortions while protecting the privacy of women who abort their unborn babies. The Oklahoma House of Representatives voted 84-13 to override the governor's veto of House Bill 3284 and it was overridden in the Senate.

June

U.S. Rep. John Sullivan teamed up with Patrick J. Kennedy, one of the most liberal congressmen in the nation, to create a new government-run council on health care education. Sullivan, who was treated at the Betty Ford Clinic for alcoholism last year, joined forces with Kennedy, D-Rhode Island, to introduce a bill to create a new bureaucracy, the Council on Integration of Health Care Education.

Dewey Selmon, a two-time Academic All-American during his playing career, was announced as one of

four inductees for the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA) Academic All-America Hall of Fame.

State Rep. Paul Wesselhoft awarded his fourth annual "skunk master award" to the higher education appropriation bill - the "stinkiest bill of the session." "Higher Education never steps up and takes their fair share of budget cuts; this is massively resented by other agencies. Higher Education relies on other agencies to make the sacrifices that they are unwilling to make. And what little cut they endure; they annually threaten to raise tuition to make up for the difference. Of course parents and students pay the bill," said Wesselhoft, R-Moore.

Sen. Randy Brogdon is author of Senate Bill 1633, which creates the School District Transparency Act, which has been signed into law. The bill is an expansion of Brogdon's 2007 Taxpayer Transparency Act, which created a website to show taxpayers how the state spends their tax dollars. "The Taxpayer Transparency Act was a tremendous success and citizens appreciate having full disclosure of how their tax dollars are spent. Senate Bill 1633 was the logical next step in my effort to open up the government process," said Brogdon, R-Owasso.

The Big 12 will have 10 teams and the Big Ten will have 12 teams. And it looks like the Pac 10 will have 11 or 12 teams. Texas stunned the football world by announcing it would remain in the Big 12, even though the defection of Nebraska to the Big 10 and Colorado leaves the Big 12 with 10 teams. Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M quickly followed suit. Much to the relief of Kansas, Kansas State, Iowa State and Baylor, five of the teams in the Big 12 South will not accept an invitation to join the Pac 10 to become a 16-team super conference. The decision may have been based on a new TV deal for the Big 12 which could double the payout for most schools and put the schools on a par with the Big 10.

Despite reports in the national and local media, Oklahoma made its decision to stay in the Big 12 based on what is best for the Sooners, not what they were forced to do by Texas. That was the message OU Athletic Director Joe Castiglione sent during a press conference.

Oklahoma shut out No. 1 Virginia 11-0 a Monday night to earn a berth in the College World Series in Omaha.

Bowing to pressure by homosexual groups, the Tulsa City Council for the first time in the city's history officially granted special rights to a group based on its sexual behavior. Led by Councilor G.T. Bynum, the council voted 6-3 to raise "sexual orientation" to the same level as race, color, sex, religion, national origin, political beliefs, age, ancestry and disability. Bynum, a registered Republican, Maria Barnes, Chris Trail, Roscoe Turner, Jack Henderson and Bill Christiansen voted to give homosexuals special rights.

July

In a continuing battle with Mayor Dewey Bartlett, the Tulsa City Council voted to override Bartlett's line item veto of changes they made to his original 2010-2011 fiscal year budget. The city council voted to put back in the budget two police helicopters, overtime and sand for winter storms, highway lighting, pothole repairs, restoration of some Fire Department benefits and the end of eight furlough days for some city employees.

State Rep. Mike Ritze, D.O., said he applauds the latest U.S. Supreme Court decision, McDonald vs. Chicago, which ruled that the Second Amendment does protect an individual's right to keep and bear arms. "This is a step in the right direction," said Ritze, R-Broken Arrow. "The court has made clear that citizens have a right to self-defense that cannot be regulated away. In light of this ruling, I hope we will move forward with open-carry legislation next session."

Sen. Tom Coburn thinks we should either try to win the War in Afghanistan or pull our troops out. Coburn said the first thing Gen. David Petraeus, new commander of the troops in Afghanistan, will do is change the rules of engagement.

"We were handicapping ourselves," Coburn said. "It's true that we don't want to harm any civilians over there. But there is no way we should put one of our soldiers at risk taking that kind of risk in terms of rules of engagement."

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality issued a warning about mercury levels in fish in

some Oklahoma lakes. The lakes in Oklahoma with fish consumption advisories pertaining to the amount of mercury in the fish are: Atoka Lake, Boomer Lake, Broken Bow Reservoir, Coalgate City Lake, Draper Lake, Elmer Thomas Lake, Hugo Lake, Kaw Reservoir, Lake Heyburn, McAlester City, Lake McGee Creek Reservoir, Pine Creek Reservoir, Quanah Parker Lake, Rush Lake, Sardis Lake and Wister Lake.

Tulsans are so disgusted with the disputes between the City Council and Mayor Dewey Bartlett that they are ready to vote them all out, District 6 Councilor Jim Mautino said. Mautino said Tulsans are “fed up with the Council and the mayor. They just want them all out.”

Three Tulsa citizens are suing the nine city councilors for allegedly violating Oklahoma’s Open Meeting Act over an incident in which Bartlett was barred from a closed executive session on June 17.

With little discussion, city councilors approved PlaniTulsa, a New Urbanism design for the city’s Comprehensive Plan for future development. That vote could affect how Tulsans live for decades.

Randy Bright, a Tulsa architect and columnist for the Tulsa Beacon, has written that it is part of a New Urbanistic-style form-based code. Form-based codes describe how structures will be placed and to a degree, how they look according to the “community vision.”

Oklahoma, with headliners Jeremy Beal and Travis Lewis, stole the show in the Preseason All-Big 12 Football Team as OU captured seven slots.

August

Oklahomans will elect a woman to replace Gov. Brad Henry on Nov. 2. U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin won the GOP primary July 27 and Lt. Gov. Jari Askins narrowly defeated Attorney General Drew Edmondson in the Democrat race to set the stage for Oklahoma’s first woman governor. Fallin, a former lieutenant governor, outgained State Sen. Randy Brogdon, who ran a conservative grassroots campaign with only a fraction of the funding available to Fallin.

A conservative newspaper has rated Rep. Mike Ritze of Broken Arrow as one of the top seven most conservative legislators in the state. The Oklahoma Constitution published its 32nd annual Oklahoma Conservative Index and listed Ritze plus the following legislators with a 100 percent ranking: Officials with the cash-strapped Oklahoma State Penitentiary and the head of a state employees’ association discussed the possibility of an additional 20 percent funding cut to Oklahoma’s prison system at a press conference in McAlester.

Nearly 200 teachers have been recalled at Tulsa Public Schools, with 62 teachers still on a district-maintained recall list. Over half of those remaining teachers, however, have already been offered an opportunity to teach when the school year begins.

Latest figures show that as many as 80 of the Oklahoma students graduating from high school don’t meet national standards for admission into college. According to the website of the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, “many Oklahoma students fail to meet ACT’s benchmark scores that measure the number of graduates likely to be prepared for college-level work. As few as 19 percent of students met all four of ACT’s benchmark scores in English, college algebra, social science and biology. This is 5 percentage points below the national average.”

Mayor Dewey Bartlett and some councilors are seeking arbitration to end the running feud between the mayor and the City Council.

“Most of the council and I agree, Tulsans have had enough and they want this to be over. We must act now. We need to identify our common ground and begin working together again as soon as possible.” Bartlett said.

Big change is coming for almost everyone who uses a telephone in the 918 area code. The area code is running out of numbers, so the Oklahoma Corporation Commission has approved the addition of a new 539 area code. On April 1, 2011, the new 539 area code numbers will be available.

The City of Tulsa’s sales tax collections for mid-July to mid-August, as reported by the Oklahoma Tax Commission, are slightly above last year’s and higher than budget predictions.

September

According to published reports, a state auditor’s report shows that Broken Arrow Schools made millions of dollars in payments in violation of state law. The report alleges that school officials tried to cover up a

paper trail of corruption by shredding documents. State Auditor and Inspector Steve Burrage refused to release the audit of Broken Arrow Public Schools and stated that the report will not be made public. Burrage said since he did not sign the first audit, it is not a public document and not open to Oklahoma Open Record laws and subject to release to the public.

Tulsa Community College has the largest enrollment in its 41-year history due partly to an increase in the number of those seeking certificates and degrees in health programs. TCC reports 20,042 students enrolled for fall classes, its fourth fall increase in four years.

City officials unveiled an efficiency study by KPMG that pointed to numerous areas ripe for improvement in Tulsa government. The report took a look at 1,512 services in 20 city departments. The City Council, the Tulsa Airport Authority and Gilcrease were not studied. The report found 1,100 situations that could be improved in city government - about double what KPMG normally finds in a city the size of Tulsa.

Tulsa city councilors dropped efforts to have a criminal investigation of Mayor Dewey Bartlett and Chief of Staff Terry Simonson after no one offered to investigate. The Oklahoma Attorney General notified the Council that he could not investigate whether Bartlett or Simonson had allegedly lied about the timing of federal funding for police salaries.

October

The "rebuilding effort" at OSU may be complete following a 65-28 demolition of Tulsa in Stillwater.

Oklahoma State leads the nation in passing offense with 391 yards per game and 13 touchdowns.

If history repeats itself, Oklahoma is in the driver's seat when it comes to winning the Big 12 South Division and the conference championship. "It's a special game," OU coach Bob Stoops said of Saturday's 28-20 win over Texas. "It gives us a good boost for the start of conference play but as I said coming into the game a bunch last week, we have seven-straight games coming, hopefully eight."

Tulsa's October sales tax check is higher than the same time last year and higher than projections by city financial advisors. The City of Tulsa's sales tax collections for mid-August to mid-September, as reported by the Oklahoma Tax Commission, are \$17,103,619, up 5.6 percent from the \$16,201,499 collected during the same period last year. The projected budget estimate for the period was \$15,421,000. For the year to date, sales taxes total \$66,821,867, slightly above the \$66,190,064 collected to this point last year.

America is not paying attention to the threat of radical Islam and will pay a price unless it wakes up, said Brigitte Gabriel. Gabriel, who travels with armed bodyguards and only speaks with heavy security because of threats to her life, spoke to a packed house at Immanuel Baptist Church in Skiatook.

Jenks, Union, Bixby and Broken Arrow Public Schools, some of the states' largest school districts, are refusing to implement a new scholarship law designed to benefit students with disabilities. House Bill 3393 created the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program Act during the 2010 legislative session. Under the new law, children with disabilities who have an individualized education program (IEP) qualify for a scholarship to attend any private school that meets the accreditation requirements of the State Board of Education. The law went into effect August 27.

One of the biggest earthquakes ever recorded in Oklahoma shook high-rise buildings in Tulsa but did no major damage - even though it was felt in four states.

At 9:06 a.m. on Oct. 13, an earthquake located five miles northeast of Noble and eight miles southeast of Norman occurred about eight miles underground. Its center was in Thunderbird State Park. It was felt in Dallas, Wichita, Kan., and Arkansas. No aftershocks were felt on Oct. 13 but officials from the Oklahoma Geologic Society said aftershocks would be normal and could happen later. This earthquake did not occur on a known fault, but there are more faults in the rocks in the subsurface of Oklahoma than could possibly be counted.

Oregon is ranked No. 1 in the AP poll and Oklahoma is No. 1 in the first release of the Bowl Championship Series rankings. The Sooners lost a chance to play for the national title in a mistake-filled loss to Missouri, 36-27, a week after being ranked No. 1.

November

U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin made history as the first woman to be elected lieutenant governor of Oklahoma

and now she is the first woman to become governor. Fallin, who was also the first Republican to be lieutenant governor, defeated sitting Lt. Gov. Jari Askins, a Democrat.

A wave of conservatism fell over Oklahoma Nov. 2 as Republicans captured eight of eight statewide offices and increased their power in the Legislature.

Four Republicans - including three incumbents - won seats in the U.S. House of Representatives with the lone Democrat being Rep. Dan Boren in the Second District. U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, one of the most conservative senators in the nation, easily won re-election.

State voters defeated State Question 744 - a proposal by the National Education Association and the Oklahoma Education Association to force the state to give millions of additional dollars to public education. It was defeated by a 4-to-1 margin.

Oklahoma was undefeated and rated No. 1 in the first BSC rankings but has lost twice in three weeks in games at Missouri and Texas A&M.

After a search inside and outside Tulsa, Mayor Dewey Bartlett has named Chuck Jordan Tulsa Police Chief. Jordan has served as interim chief since the departure of Ron Palmer. Unlike Palmer, Jordan will take a permanent, civil service slot. Palmer was an at-will hiree of ex-mayor Kathy Taylor.

John 3:16 Mission is attempting to collect 5,000 frozen turkeys and other Thanksgiving food items to give to homeless people and low-income families in the Tulsa area for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

The march toward a Big 12 championship game continues as OSU beat Texas 33-16 for the first time ever under Coach Mike Gundy.

Tulsa officials vow to stockpile enough salt to ensure a reasonable level of safety during snow and ice storms this winter.

Declining beef inventories are causing some in the U.S. cattle industry to wonder how beef production can be maintained.

The U.S. beef cowherd has decreased 12 of the last 14 years, dropping from a cyclical peak of 35.3 million head in 1996 to the January 2010 level of 31.3 million head.

This represents the smallest beef cow herd since 1963.

December

U.S. District Judge Vicki Miles-LaGrange issued an injunction that keeps a ban against Islamic Sharia law out of the Oklahoma Constitution. The amendment, which was passed by more than 70 percent of state voters on Nov. 2, prohibits the use of international law in deciding cases in Oklahoma. Sharia law is based on the Quran and the teachings of Mohammed. Miles-LaGrange sided with an Oklahoma City Muslim who complained the law violated his constitutional right for "religious freedom."

A study by a marketing firm is suggesting the City of Tulsa quit paying the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce millions of dollars to "promote the city."

History does seem to repeat itself as OU will face Nebraska for the Big 12 Championship in Dallas Saturday night. The Sooners finished in a three-way tie with OSU and Texas A&M atop the South Division. Per conference rules, the team ranked highest in the BCS standings represents the division in the title game. Oklahoma was ranked No. 9 (.6780) in the latest BCS standings while Oklahoma State was No. 14 and Texas A&M was No. 18.

Sen. Tom Coburn has verbally supported a plan that cuts federal spending while raising some taxes because he is concerned about the fragility of the nation's finances. Coburn, a fiscal conservative who supports smaller, more efficient government, seems willing to agree to tax hikes to avoid a crisis.

A win over Nebraska in the Big 12 Championship game has earned Oklahoma a berth in the Fiesta Bowl to play Connecticut, champion of the Big East Conference. The last two trips to Arizona have resulted in losses to underdogs (Boise State and West Virginia) and the 8-4 Huskies will be heavy underdogs to the No. 8 Sooners (11-2).

The bickering between Mayor Dewey Bartlett and the City Council kept pace last week as councilors turned down a \$7,028 donation for the mayor's travel expenses.

Councilors claim that Bartlett violated a city ordinance because he took a trip and got reimbursed without prior Council approval.