



# TOWN HALL RECAP

PUBLISHED: 03-20-2025

## Town Hall Recap: Representative Mark Tedford Hosts Well-Attended Community Discussion

Contact: [Fritz@TomahawkStrategies.com](mailto:Fritz@TomahawkStrategies.com) | Office Phone: (539) 867-1441

TULSA, OK – Representative Mark Tedford hosted a well-attended Town Hall event at the Jenks Chamber of Commerce last evening, March 19, 2025 from 6 pm - 8 pm, drawing (92) engaged citizens from across the district. With the State Capitol on spring break recess, Rep. Tedford used the opportunity to provide a timely and candid update on major policy debates, legislation in progress, and his priorities as the Legislature enters its final week of floor votes.

### Key Legislative Issues Discussed

#### 1. Wind Energy & Regulation

Rep. Tedford addressed ongoing conversations around Oklahoma's "All of the Above" energy policy, which encourages all energy types without state-level subsidies that favor specific technologies. He highlighted the growing debate over appropriate regulations for new green energy developments, particularly wind. He supports reasonable setback regulations, indicating that a likely compromise will be a 110% fall height distance and a 1/4-mile buffer from residential structures.

#### 2. Tax Reform

Oklahoma already ranks in the bottom ten states for tax burden (which is a good thing from conservative policy perspective), but the structure of taxation remains a concern. Rep. Tedford noted that shifting from income taxes to consumption taxes remains a key focus, though negotiations are still underway.

He expressed strong support for implementing a flat tax that eliminates the bottom tax brackets, estimating it would benefit working Oklahomans with a modest budget impact of roughly \$90 million.

### **3. Education Policy**

Education performance remains a top priority. Tedford emphasized that teacher recruitment and retention are central to improving Oklahoma's education outcomes. He supports recruiting bonuses for teachers and competitive salaries to address the national teacher shortage. He also highlighted the need for better support systems, such as aiding emergency-certified teachers in achieving full certification.

Rep. Tedford strongly advocated for increased classroom spending and voiced concern over funding being diverted to non-instructional programs. He praised Mississippi's reading program model-often referred to as the "Mississippi Miracle"-and urged Oklahoma to invest more heavily in similar teacher training initiatives.

### **4. Election Reform**

Tedford shared his perspective on Oklahoma's declining voter turnout, noting that while registration hit a record high (over 2.4 million registered voters, with 141,000 new ones), participation dropped between 2020 and 2024. He attributed this to the lack of competitive races due to the Democratic Party's low registration numbers in the state.

He reaffirmed his opposition to open primaries, stating that political parties should control who votes in their nominations. Tedford also defended partisan elections, even at the local level, arguing that party affiliation provides a useful baseline for voters and encourages accountability.

He expressed concern about "voter fatigue" due to the sheer number of election dates and proposed consolidating election calendars to reduce costs, simplify voter engagement, and support election staff.

Regarding absentee voting, he praised Oklahoma's current safeguards and noted that he regularly uses absentee ballots due to legislative duties.

## **5. Health Insurance & Medicaid Expansion**

Turning to healthcare, Tedford addressed growing concerns related to Medicaid expansion under State Question 802. Currently, the federal government covers 90% of expansion costs, but a proposed drop to 60% would create a massive budget shortfall for Oklahoma, potentially requiring \$500-\$750 million in state funding. He warned this could force a ballot measure to reverse the expansion.

He also noted that temporary Obamacare (ACA) subsidies under the American Rescue Plan-which expanded eligibility to those earning over 400% of the poverty level-are set to expire at the end of 2025. With 9% of the state using ACA coverage, and 97% receiving subsidies, he emphasized the need to prepare for a future with a potentially much larger uninsured population.

## **Bills in Progress**

Rep. Tedford concluded by summarizing legislation he is actively working on, covering a range of topics from healthcare transparency to parental rights and education:

- HB1512 - Healthcare marketplace reform
- HB1161 / SB1096 - Legislative impact study
- HB1082 - Parental equity
- HB1496 - Board of Adjustment appeal process
- HB1084 - Assignment of Benefits reform
- HB1081 - Appraisal transparency
- HB1497 / HB1498 - Oklahoma Insurance Department cleanup
- HB1160 - Insurance guaranty fund reform
- HB1085 - Fee disparity adjustments
- SB434 - County retirement changes
- SB726 - Insurance exception policy
- SB833 - Tort cap revisions

- SB901 - OMES marketing reforms
- SB911 / SB924 - Unemployment (SUTA) reform
- SB1101 - Dental Medical Loss Ratio transparency
- SB555 - Education reform and funding

### **Closing Remarks**

Rep. Tedford thanked constituents for their thoughtful questions and active participation. With 92 attendees, the town hall reflected the community's deep engagement in shaping Oklahoma's future. He pledged to continue listening and leading on issues that matter most to the district and encouraged ongoing dialogue as legislative work resumes next week.