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Governor Mary Fallin Calls Special Session to Provide Oklahoma Health Care Authority Funding to Avoid Provider Rate Cuts, Address Long-term Budget Solutions

OKLAHOMA CITY – Governor Mary Fallin today issued an executive order formally calling for a special session of the Oklahoma Legislature for lawmakers to address immediate budget issues facing the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, while continuing negotiations on long-term budget solutions.

The governor recommended lawmakers address funding the Oklahoma Health Care Authority to avoid provider rate cuts for the current fiscal year, which ends June 30.

The governor called for the second extraordinary session of the 56th Legislature to convene Monday, Dec. 18.

The Oklahoma Health Care Authority lost \$70 million when the state Supreme Court struck down the proposed \$1.50-per-pack cigarette cessation fee. A budget bill at the end of the special session in November restored \$22.8 million for the authority, which oversees Oklahoma's Medicaid program, called SoonerCare. The governor vetoed parts of the budget bill, leaving the critical health care funding intact, with the intent to call lawmakers back for a second special session to approve long-term funding issues.

“This week’s discussions with a bipartisan group of legislative leaders along with community leaders’ input, it was determined we need more time to work toward a long-term, predictable solution to fix our budget problems,” said Fallin. “For next week, immediate attention must be given to the funding situation at the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. It’s difficult to restore cuts in provider rates once they are made.”

In the meantime, the governor and lawmakers will continue to work on an Oklahoma plan during the special session for a long-term solution to budget deficits experienced by the state the past few years.

“We must find sustainable, predictable recurring revenue to fund our core services and get us out of the constant crisis,” she said.

Fallin also said she will continue to push for a pay raise for teachers and state employees.

“I’m encouraged by the good-faith pledge to me from legislative leaders of both parties that they will work on tackling these problems,” the governor said.

Web: www.governor.ok.gov

Facebook: www.facebook.com/GovernorMaryFallin

Twitter: www.twitter.com/GovMaryFallin