

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR

HOUSE BILL NO. 1817

By: Worthen and Newton

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

An Act relating to waters and water rights; stating legislative findings; creating the Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer Program; providing duties for certain program; providing requirements for certain training program; stating duties of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board; requiring Board partner and provide funding to certain institute of higher education; providing certain criteria to be met; authorizing the promulgation of certain rules; creating the Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer Program Revolving Fund; stating type of fund; stating purpose of fund; authorizing expenditures; providing for noncodification; providing for codification; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

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

The Legislature finds that Oklahoma's groundwater resources face critical threats from depletion and contamination due to unqualified workers and improper water access practices. There is a nationwide geoscience workforce shortage projected by the United States

1 Department of Labor to peak at 130,000 workers by 2029, leaving
2 Oklahoma's groundwater industry struggling to fill positions with
3 adequately trained professionals. The growing reliance on untrained
4 workers in the groundwater industry jeopardizes the safety of homes,
5 businesses, and communities and accelerates the degradation of these
6 essential water resources. Immediate action is needed to protect
7 these vital water resources and to equip the groundwater workforce
8 with the skills necessary to ensure sustainable water management
9 practices.

10 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
11 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1020.16a of Title 82, unless
12 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

13 A. There is hereby created the Oklahoma Water Resources Board
14 Well Driller and Pump Installer Program. The Program shall be
15 administered by the Board and shall have the following duties:

16 1. License well drilling and pump installation professionals to
17 ensure the integrity of well construction, and that those
18 professionals are meeting construction standards to prevent
19 pollution of groundwater in Oklahoma;

20 2. Develop comprehensive standards and rules in cooperation
21 with the Well Driller and Pump Installer Advisory Council, the
22 Oklahoma Ground Water Association, and public stakeholders;

23 3. Provide for training and outreach for licensed well drillers
24 and pump installers;

1 4. Provide technical assistance to the public regarding
2 groundwater and well construction; and

3 5. Focus on funding and supporting the development and
4 expansion of a groundwater professional training program at an
5 accredited Tier 1 research institution of higher education in
6 Oklahoma.

7 B. The groundwater professional training program shall:

8 1. Support and expand an existing groundwater professional
9 training program established by the National Ground Water
10 Association;

11 2. Provide specialized education and skills-based micro-
12 credentials for both current and future groundwater professionals,
13 including water well drillers, pump installers, plumbers, and heavy
14 equipment operators; and

15 3. Partner with state and national industry leaders to ensure
16 workforce training is conducted using cutting-edge, industry-
17 approved methods.

18 C. The Board shall:

19 1. Identify and establish a formal partnership with a
20 qualifying institution of higher education in Oklahoma;

21 2. Provide funding for the program from the Oklahoma Water
22 Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer Program Revolving
23 Fund established in Section 3 of this act;
24

1 3. Provide technical assistance and other support to the
2 institution to enhance the training program;

3 4. Work with industry stakeholders to ensure alignment of the
4 program with current and future workforce demands;

5 5. Oversee the implementation, evaluation, and continuous
6 improvement of the Program; and

7 6. Report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on the
8 Program's progress and outcomes.

9 D. To implement the Program, the Board shall partner with and
10 provide funding for the Program to an accredited institution of
11 higher education in this state that is:

12 1. A Tier 1 research institution of higher education in
13 Oklahoma to ensure access to specialized subject matter experts in
14 groundwater, as well as access to advanced research facilities and
15 modern approaches to solving real-world problems in groundwater
16 aquifer access. The institution shall have active community
17 engagement and outreach to ensure both school-aged children and
18 public populations are made aware of the critical occupations
19 needed;

20 2. An institution that has an existing memoranda of
21 understanding with state groundwater industry partners to ensure
22 programming is created with industry-approved skills and outcomes;

23 3. An institution that has existing, or in-planning,
24 opportunities for both university students and nonstudent

1 populations to earn micro-credentials to showcase their achievement
2 of industry-aligned skills;

3 4. An institution with a demonstrated history of developing
4 groundwater workforce professionals, and the expertise necessary to
5 produce high-quality training in groundwater and water quality
6 subject areas;

7 5. Capable of providing training that has been created by
8 individuals specializing in best practices in both online and in-
9 person education for working professionals and have assessments for
10 both program effectiveness and participant satisfaction; and

11 6. Capable of providing training that is flexible to meet the
12 needs of the current and future workforce.

13 E. The Board is authorized to promulgate rules to effectuate
14 the provisions of this section.

15 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
16 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1020.16b of Title 82, unless
17 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

18 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund
19 for the Oklahoma Water Resources Board to be designated the
20 "Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer
21 Program Revolving Fund". The fund shall be a continuing fund, not
22 subject to fiscal year limitations, and shall consist of all monies
23 deposited to the credit of the fund by law. All monies accruing to
24 the credit of the fund are hereby appropriated and may be budgeted

1 and expended by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board for the purpose
2 of administering the Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and
3 Pump Installer Program established in Section 2 of this act.
4 Expenditures from the fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the
5 State Treasurer against claims filed as prescribed by law with the
6 Director of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services for
7 approval and payment.

8 SECTION 4. This act shall become effective November 1, 2025.

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