

1 **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - FLOOR VERSION**

2 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

3 1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

4 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
5 FOR
6 HOUSE BILL NO. 1817

By: Worthen and Newton of the
House

and

Pederson of the Senate

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10 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

11 An Act relating to waters and water rights; stating
12 legislative findings; creating the Oklahoma Water
13 Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer
14 Program; providing duties for certain program;
15 providing requirements for certain training program;
16 stating duties of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board;
17 requiring Board partner and provide funding to
18 certain institute of higher education; providing
19 certain criteria to be met; authorizing the
20 promulgation of certain rules; creating the Oklahoma
21 Water Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer
22 Program Revolving Fund; stating type of fund; stating
23 purpose of fund; authorizing expenditures; providing
24 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:

1 The Legislature finds that Oklahoma's groundwater resources face
2 critical threats from depletion and contamination due to unqualified
3 workers and improper water access practices. There is a nationwide
4 geoscience workforce shortage projected by the United States
5 Department of Labor to peak at 130,000 workers by 2029, leaving
6 Oklahoma's groundwater industry struggling to fill positions with
7 adequately trained professionals. The growing reliance on untrained
8 workers in the groundwater industry jeopardizes the safety of homes,
9 businesses, and communities and accelerates the degradation of these
10 essential water resources. Immediate action is needed to protect
11 these vital water resources and to equip the groundwater workforce
12 with the skills necessary to ensure sustainable water management
13 practices.

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

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

20 1. License well drilling and pump installation professionals to
21 ensure the integrity of well construction, and that those
22 professionals are meeting construction standards to prevent
23 pollution of groundwater in Oklahoma;

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

4 3. Provide for training and outreach for licensed well drillers
5 and pump installers;

6 4. Provide technical assistance to the public regarding
7 groundwater and well construction; and

8 5. Focus on funding and supporting the development and
9 expansion of a groundwater professional training program at an
10 accredited Tier 1 research institution of higher education in
11 Oklahoma.

12 B. The groundwater professional training program shall:

13 1. Support and expand an existing groundwater professional
14 training program established by the National Ground Water
15 Association;

16 2. Provide specialized education and skills-based micro-
17 credentials for both current and future groundwater professionals,
18 including water well drillers, pump installers, plumbers, and heavy
19 equipment operators; and

20 3. Partner with state and national industry leaders to ensure
21 workforce training is conducted using cutting-edge, industry-
22 approved methods.

23 C. The Board shall:
24

1 1. Identify and establish a formal partnership with a
2 qualifying institution of higher education in Oklahoma;
3 2. Provide funding for the program from the Oklahoma Water
4 Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer Program Revolving
5 Fund established in Section 3 of this act;
6 3. Provide technical assistance and other support to the
7 institution to enhance the training program;
8 4. Work with industry stakeholders to ensure alignment of the
9 program with current and future workforce demands;
10 5. Oversee the implementation, evaluation, and continuous
11 improvement of the Program; and
12 6. Report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on the
13 Program's progress and outcomes.
14 D. To implement the Program, the Board shall partner with and
15 provide funding for the Program to an accredited institution of
16 higher education in this state that is:
17 1. A Tier 1 research institution of higher education in
18 Oklahoma to ensure access to specialized subject matter experts in
19 groundwater, as well as access to advanced research facilities and
20 modern approaches to solving real-world problems in groundwater
21 aquifer access. The institution shall have active community
22 engagement and outreach to ensure both school-aged children and
23 public populations are made aware of the critical occupations
24 needed;

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

4 3. An institution that has existing, or in-planning,
5 opportunities for both university students and nonstudent
6 populations to earn micro-credentials to showcase their achievement
7 of industry-aligned skills;

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

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

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

18 E. The Board is authorized to promulgate rules to effectuate
19 the provisions of this section.

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

23 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund
24 for the Oklahoma Water Resources Board to be designated the

1 "Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and Pump Installer
2 Program Revolving Fund". The fund shall be a continuing fund, not
3 subject to fiscal year limitations, and shall consist of all monies
4 deposited to the credit of the fund by law. All monies accruing to
5 the credit of the fund are hereby appropriated and may be budgeted
6 and expended by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board for the purpose
7 of administering the Oklahoma Water Resources Board Well Driller and
8 Pump Installer Program established in Section 2 of this act.
9 Expenditures from the fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the
10 State Treasurer against claims filed as prescribed by law with the
11 Director of the Office of Management and Enterprise Services for
12 approval and payment.

13 SECTION 4. This act shall become effective November 1, 2025.
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15 COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
16 OVERSIGHT, dated 03/05/2025 - DO PASS, As Amended and Coauthored.
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